



Blog | Talk Radio Online | Columnists | Your Opinion | The News | Photos | Cartoons | Books & Movies | Issues | Action Center

PTSD: NAMB chaplains get biblical training

Baptist Press

Thursday, July 02, 2009

SEOUL, South Korea (BP)--Chaplain (Major) Ed Choi understands the reality of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Deployed as a U.S. Army chaplain in Iraq for tours of duty in 2004-05 and 2006-07, Choi lost more than 30 soldiers and conducted 18 memorial services. He returned from combat burnt out, angry and frustrated.

"I was on my knees in my living room, crying out to God," Choi said. "I read Matthew 12:18-21, and verse 20 spoke to me -- 'a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.' I knew I needed help, but then my wife also told me I needed help. When she speaks, I listen."

Choi attended the Advanced School for Chaplains at Fort Jackson, S.C., also known as the Captain Chaplain's Career Course or C4. At the Advanced School, he realized that he was suffering from compassion fatigue, and he was diagnosed with PTSD.

"At C4," Choi said, "I realized I was not alone."

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder affects approximately 5.2 million people in any given year. The National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder estimates that 70 percent of the general population will experience a traumatic event in their lives. Of that 70 percent, 20 percent are likely to develop PTSD symptoms, which include reliving the event, avoiding situations that trigger memories of the event and feeling numb or jumpy. Those who live and work in dangerous situations are at greater risk. Military chaplains are certainly no exception.

Chaplain (Colonel) Kenneth Kerr, the command chaplain for the 8th U.S. Army stationed at Seoul's Yongsan Garrison, also is the senior ranking Southern Baptist chaplain on the Korean peninsula. "Military chaplains go into battle as non-combatants," Kerr said, "yet they see and experience all the bloodshed and violence of a combat soldier. The role of a military chaplain in combat is to provide pastoral care, counseling and religious support to soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, but their proximity to the front lines of battle also exposes them to the trauma of war."

For this reason, the North American Mission Board chaplaincy evangelism team is providing all its chaplains with training in compassion fatigue and PTSD.

"This is the second of a three-year program," team leader Keith Travis said. "Last year, we focused on compassion fatigue. This year, we are providing training on PTSD, and next year we will provide a spiritual respite, when chaplains can come together in various settings simply to focus on God through prayer and fasting."

The goal of the program is to provide all NAMB chaplains with the tools they need to recognize the effects of PTSD and respond in a biblical way.

In Seoul, Chaplain Steve Evans, U.S. Navy captain retired, and his wife Sally conducted the training for the 13

Trust Roger

"Roger has saved us time, money and hassle...refinancing our home twice."

A message from
Hugh Hewitt

[Click Here for MinuteMortgageGuy.com](#)
Call: 866-304-9378

Southern Baptist chaplains and their spouses currently stationed on the Korean peninsula. Of those, eight have served in combat, and two others likely will be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan in the coming months. All have served soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines who have ministered in a war zone.

Evans holds a Ph.D. in psychology specializing in pastoral care and counseling. In addition, Evans has served combat tours both in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. On Sept. 11, 2001, he was stationed in the Washington, D.C., area. In the aftermath of the attack on the Pentagon, he was part of the body recovery team and ministered throughout ground zero to first responders, victims and families.

Evans told the group, "For these two days, we just want you to exhale emotionally and to take advantage of the resources that are available to you."

Evans regards the strongest method of support for military chaplains and their spouses to be sharing their stories with one another. For this reason, the training he leads includes a number of small group sessions for chaplains and spouses to talk through the material presented and to incorporate it into their personal experiences.

NAMB also is piloting a program to provide a licensed counselor to offer wellness assessments to military chaplains and their spouses. Psychologist Sheila W. Speight, the wife of an Army chaplain stationed at the Pentagon and mother-in-law of a U.S. Navy officer, has contracted with NAMB's chaplaincy evangelism team to provide these assessments through the end of 2009, meeting individually with chaplains and their spouses to provide counseling and advice as part of the assessments.

"All conversations remain confidential, and under the terms of my contract, I do not provide any information either to the U.S. military or to NAMB," Speight said.

The chaplains who attended the two-day training in Seoul agreed that it was worth the time and effort. Chaplain (Captain) Cheun Yoo specifically appreciates the biblical approach to PTSD that the training offers.

"As a chaplain, I need the spiritual approach," Yoo said. "I will use this training just as it was presented when I go back to my unit."

Choi agreed, "The U.S. Army does a good job of providing training in PTSD from a psychological perspective, and our counterparts in mental health do a good job of bringing things to the table from a mental health perspective. But this training is unique because it focuses on PTSD from a biblical and spiritual approach without minimizing its psychological, emotional and physical aspects."

In addition to the PTSD resources for chaplains, NAMB also has developed resources for pastors and church leaders who find themselves ministering to parishioners returning from combat.

Travis noted: "All over America, members of National Guard and Reserve units are returning home to their churches. Since PTSD normally manifests itself in risky behavior that may lead to relationship issues or drinking or drug addictions, pastors may be dealing with PTSD and not know it. Our goal is to provide them with the training they need to provide a biblical response to PTSD."

NAMB already has held PTSD training sessions at a handful of U.S. military installations and two Southern Baptist seminaries this year, with plans provide it at other installations and seminaries in the months ahead. The video sessions also are available at no charge on iTunes and through NAMB's website: www.namb.net/chaplain, then select "Resources for pastors and chaplains." Materials include a six-session video training with an accompanying manual on PTSD. Other resources include a 13-week Bible study on combat stress and a ministry care plan for Reserve Component chaplains. All resources are provided free of charge.

Ann Lovell is a media worker based in Thailand with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

Copyright (c) 2009 Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist Press www.BPNews.net

Copyright © 2009 Salem Web Network. All Rights Reserved.

[How to make electricity](#)

Don't pay for electricity, you can make it simple & cheap at home.

MakeHomeEnergy.org

[Flagpoles at Night](#)

Flagpoles With Down Lighting Big Power Savings, LED Lighting

www.flagpolewarehouse.com

[ThompsonCigar.com](#)

Samplers, Humidors & Accessories Huge Selection of Top Brands

www.ThompsonCigar.com

Ads by Google