

Military and Mental Illness 4 by Ben Huot

Military and Mental Illness 4

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Inspired by a Bible study on Job and research on study Bibles

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Broken and Unexpected

Some answers only come
When you have a blank page
Some prayers are only answered
Once you deprive yourself of something

How must we pour our heart out
Unless we first let You in?
How do we know what direction to go
If we are unwilling to go all in?

There is always room for more
But seldom do we learn to forget
It is hard to be comfortable with silence
Only in the waiting is faith built

I do not understand why
Many times a day
But I still learn more
Every time I pray

There is little we really need
Most things can be done without
Ceremonies impress others
But real decisions happen in private

It is often that I need help
But I fail to ask immediately
Even though You always answer
With better solutions

Why do we ponder the future
When we cannot even control

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Something as simple as our desires
Or stop our exposure to evil?

How can we think that God suffers
But He doesn't mind our impatience?
How can we be so reckless
With the lack of our own faith?

We need to stop fighting God
When He is already committed
To rescue us in His timing
If we would only wait for Him

We cannot speed up change
And be surprised by conflict
There is no way to have freedom
Without a degree of risk

Next time I stop worrying
I will be in the afterlife
We fear what we don't expect
But not all roads lead home

In each step forward
We need to stop complaining
When truly in need
We will accept better answers

One thing I always remember
Is how to lose my mind
Struggle is never eternal
Because there is always an exit

I do not understand
Everything I have ever said
That never means

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That I do not care

I step without hesitation

Only on my first time

Running away from danger

Next stop is my memories

Psychology

Mr. Fix It

Like shifting a load
From one hand to another
Some things are just difficult
In very different ways

Letting go is hard sometimes
As is leaving problems alone

In each phase of life
Metamorphosis becomes more complex
The subtleties of the friendship
Bring forth new blossoms

Sometimes there are no solutions
That can be achieved by seeking them
Letting our companions find their own path
Is the only way for them to grow

Independence is worth fighting for
Whether in youth or maturity

We need to keep our grip loose
So we can shift our perspective
As seasons change course

I enjoy the freedom of adulthood
But I often feel very young
Not in body but spirit
There are so many things to learn still

While I spent time away from fellowship
I developed a kind of confidence

I have always been ambitious

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I used to think of it as weakness
But no one overcomes great obstacles
Without a stubborn heart

Moving forward often strains the muscles
But the journey is worth the effort

We begin running
Later it is enough to just walk
As long as the direction is forward
Time will allow opportunity for change

When I get hot with anger
It inspires me to be self reflective
When my moral compass is challenged
I see the world differently

With help and direction
Anyone can pursue self improvement

When your environment appears safe
You can get too comfortable
And forget the dangers inherent
In the destinations ahead

Words can inspire or correct
But seldom do they give no effect
If I can overcome the limitations of fear
Maybe I can restore the heart of my youth

Where is this happy place
Between despair and enthusiasm?
How can a person be radical
While still being traditional?

When you have a sure outcome

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You do not have to worry about getting lost

The only way to accept
All that happens in a season
Is to accept what is given
With open arms and a smile

Sometimes we can laugh at sorrow
Other times we can do little
But look on and stand nearby

At times I eat more than I can swallow
I have hungered for knowledge for many years
Like some hunger for vacation

This is not the way of peace
To never be satisfied
But it does help the journey to succeed
Even when setbacks are abundant

I do not know how to heal
In a way that does not require strain

It is ok to be happy
For where you have been planted
But stagnation causes some to lose hope

The point is often lost
When the words miss their target

Sometimes I cannot express the depths of my heart

When fear and misunderstandings
Surround me like a forest
I cut through everything

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The only way in which I know to find peace
Is to keep pruning the new growth

Never Change

We are in a society that thinks it both possible and wise to change others' views at the drop of a hat. We have a poor understanding of others because we have a poor understanding of ourselves. We arrive in this situation, because our culture does not emphasize self reflection or give us time to do so.

We live in a very anti-intellectual culture, because why would those in power want to raise more leaders or deal with new ideas? Most people throughout most of recorded history and the world today are often smart but not very educated classically and that is not by accident. Today we are afraid that our culture will be dictated by politics and not by facts but this has happened since ancient times across every culture.

One of the biggest cross cultural concerns of the ruling elite throughout most of history was legitimacy. Our leaders realize they have to justify why they should lead our country. This happened and was the reason why we have Confucianism and Russia as we now know it. Western Europe developed the way it did for the same reason. It was a big concern amongst Arab rulers too.

This idea of election plus advertising by mass media is brilliant, because it gives the illusion of choice, without any risk to our leadership. The US is still new to history and so did not have the deep divisions that most of the world has had for centuries or millennia. This creates divisions amongst issues our leaders don't care about because they are irrelevant to them.

Basically our leaders care about money and popularity. They are as concerned about major changes in society as we are because rapid change means they lose power. Power to them is like a drug that they are addicted to and it is the one thing that matters to them.

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It is interesting that the only thing we can agree upon is in business where we can all agree on the objectives - money. One of the biggest ways we can differentiate ourselves from non-believers is by using means other than money and power to further evangelize the world.

It is unwise to change your beliefs based on argument because otherwise you would change your views just because someone else is better at arguing. We see the world in terms of trying to make sense of the world in terms of our earlier experiences and this is how it should be. Our leaders understand this and this is why they appeal to emotional arguments and repetition, not logical reasoning.

It is similar with the military - they do not expect you to change how you believe and they do not care. They do not teach you complex skills that require you to have advanced degrees to understand. They teach you to respond fast and do some very specific but simple things under great stress.

The military likes you being weak and afraid because that means you will follow orders better. Courage is defined as acting in spite of fear. If you act without fear when you are in danger, you are being foolish, not brave. The military does not want heroic individuals or creativity.

The reason why we dominate the world and not other countries is that our culture is based on cooperation not individuality. This works well for combat with foot soldiers armed with guns. We are better at logistics than the rest of the world. In some cultures, middle level management is encouraged to be creative while in our culture we discourage it at this level.

The corporation is very much run like the military. It is very hard to get someone to re-enlist in the military. I was able to leave early from the military, because of my mental illness. I was stationed in Hawaii and everyone in my unit wanted to leave as

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well. People were given huge monetary bonuses and / or big concessions, like choice of base and going to school full time while being paid, to re-enlist.

This is why it is so hard to get good NCOs or Sergeants, who act as middle managers in the military. This is why managers move up a company so fast and also move around locations so often. You easily get burned out, when your life is the company. You are responsible for things getting done no matter what it takes for them to get done.

The difference between the corporation and the military are money and difficulty level of circumstances. The military is paid so low that many who have a child and spouse are under the poverty line in America. They often receive food stamps while in the military and after leaving. You also have the likelihood for personal physical or psychological injury. I told you that I ended up with Schizophrenia and chronic allergic pink eye. I believe I got off very easy.

There are so many people who lost legs in the military that it is even common for high ranking officers. I thought the gas chamber was rough, but many service members deployed to the Middle East got smoke from burn piles, that gave them colon cancer. The military just recently was pressured into routinely screening for that. They still use burn piles though, like they have for the past 30 years or more.

Order of Revelation

One of the major misunderstandings of the Bible, for both believers and unbelievers, is that they think that the Old and New Testament somehow show a fundamentally different God. Christianity is a revealed religion like Hinduism or Islam, which means that God gradually revealed more about Himself over time.

One of the big differences ethically, that the Bible shows about morality in the Old Testament, is that God reveals the concept of divine command ethics before value ethics. Just like when my parents raised us and I experienced in Army Basic Training, the first thing you learn is to follow orders without explanation. Later you get explanations. But you must always remember that, although it is nice and helpful to be given explanations, you need to do as told, no matter what, without question or delay.

The brain operates this way too. The reptilian brain responds very simply and very fast, in times of danger, when you need to run away or otherwise act without thinking. This does not require the more complex intellectual brain and purposely bypasses it. Schizophrenia affects this rational part of the brain. People like myself, that suffer from it, do not always do things that make sense from a cultural point of view.

One of the points of showing the history of a nation and how it responded to God not only provides us a way to to reflect on how we act in relationship with Him, but also allows us to see the idea of corporate sin. This is where the Prophets come in and prepare the way for Christ.

Basically, the Prophets go the opposite direction as the history of Israel. One man turns into a nation in the history, while the prophets talk at first about judgement on a national scale. Later, they go to talking about what God wants us to do as individuals.

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Christ ends up dwelling inside us, while previously He basically was tied to a building in one city, and in between was a Person like us.

Like anyone young, we don't understand well at first why we need to do things our parents say that seem irrelevant. Later on, when we become adults, we understand why we were taught those fundamental things as kids. We are equipped to understand our parents point of view eventually. Then we can survive on our own and often times are able to take care of others.

In the military, they start out with a clean break from your past. You are then put into a situation that forces you to see directly why you need to cooperate. This is sometimes referred to as trial by fire. You are thrown into a chaotic situation and you have to figure it out quick.

Basic Training, as most infantry training in the military, is all designed this way to test you psychologically. This is because the most advanced skills only require a 6th grade level developmental intellect. You are also tested early on for physical fitness standards.

Just as the parent or Drill Sergeant is thought of as cruel, many of their children or trainees later realize they were firm but loving. The same is true with God. God trains us to stay away from evil not because He wants to deny us fun, but that He wants to keep us from suffering later pain.

In the Old Testament, God deliberately waited to bring Jesus, so that they could be prepared to understand the severity of the consequences of sin. This was necessary, so that they could understand the point of Jesus' death and resurrection. We often talk about the suffering of people in the Old Testament, but not enough on the suffering of Christ. Jesus suffered in many ways His entire life which, many of which we choose not to understand.

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The disciples then were totally abandoned and were utterly confused twice. The death and resurrection of Jesus was not clear to them at the time and then Jesus left them again. It makes you wonder how we would respond to Christ's second coming, if we cannot understand the most basic and fundamental aspects of His lessons for us.

For people who talk a lot about having faith and forgiveness, who are we to tell God what is right and wrong? We expect those who know much less than us, as unbelievers, to give up their entire belief system on faith, but we do not have the faith to accept God at His Word.

Why We Don't See

Many Christians think that they would want more perception of the supernatural. It makes sense from a worldly point of view. We often confuse ethics with the supernatural, we are a very visual culture, and it sounds like a secret. So everyone wants to know about it.

My pastor once said that a person can know either too much or too little about the supernatural. Either way the devil is pleased. The world is a dangerous place. It would stand to reason in a bigger world, with more possibilities, it is actually more dangerous. Just like most sins, it appears fun at first, but it later produces depression and turns people into slaves to their addiction.

Christ was considered foolish in His generation. He appeared irrelevant and someone who just did not get us. He very much knows us better than we know ourselves, or even the devil knows us. We have a very romantic view of power and opportunity. We think if only we had more influence or money, we could solve the world's problems.

Many Americans see our role in the world is to make other countries emulate our behavior. We then expect them to be able to have our wealth and the safety and comfort it allows us to have. We see the rest of the world as dangerous, with good reason, but we do not accept that the world is never fair.

The reason why much of the world is so poor compared to us is not because they are lazy. Our wealth comes at their expense. The only way everyone can get wealthier is to have the resources continue to expand, which are never limitless.

Part of this is geography, part is history, and another part is inertia. We were basically at the right place at the right time. You

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can never have equal distribution of wealth, unless you have communism. If everyone had the same amount, no one would agree to the system. We in America would have much less than we do now, in such a system.

So what we should focus on is not the flashy and fleeting race to get more stuff, whether material or spiritual. Instead, we should focus on the longer and harder road, to build ourselves into more ethical people and draw closer to God. It is like the difference between spending your time purchasing things, that will soon wear out, and learning skills, that are useful for making more money.

The relatively easy and obvious path will end in pain, for ourselves and everyone else. We see how our ideas on how to run the world are not working out. There will never be enough energy, because the more we get, the more we want. Everything we want to do takes exponentially more power to run.

Solving every problem with ideology, technology, or laws does not work long term. This is because we are the root of our own problems. It is not just our world, where this happens. It has happened all throughout history.

China had a meritocracy and that almost destroyed everything. Salvaging their country required giving up their entire belief system to survive. Russia had their own utopia and they were victimized by their own police system. They ended up being a poorer and less effective version of the country that they hated most.

The Europeans went out to civilize the world and teach them science. Later they destroyed each other in two world wars and inspired and developed the technologies for modern terrorism. Now instead of multiple empires, they have to all join together as Europe to have any power.

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Even all together they will do anything for oil or electronics, neither of which can they make for themselves. They actually invented the ideas of the modern world and most its technologies and yet they are easily surpassed, by one of their former colonies.

If Jesus came to America today, do you really think He would be pleased with our country? We can all agree to the answer to that question. The problems we think caused it are opposite things. This is part of the problem.

The bigger problem is trying to solve this, without taking the long and slow route of bringing people to God, one person at a time. The Church does not need more money, power, or popularity. What we need to do is to improve the lives of the people, who we are placed in proximity to.

We cannot deal with what is right in front of us, because we are so distracted by money and power. Having supernatural knowledge will not solve our problems, because, if it did, we would be given complete access by God at birth. Furthermore, we are motivated to follow God, because we are lacking in power and this helps illustrate why we need Him. Finally, faith is based on action with, the concept of limited knowledge.

If we knew much more, we would become proud and be distracted from God. We would be unable to find peace with Him. It is hard to be both humble and powerful.

Finding Faith

Many people brought up in the faith end up giving it up later on for ethical reasons. What gives? I have not raised kids myself, but I still remember being a young adult and my parents raised me well. The military trained me well too. So from those experiences I have some ideas.

I think this boils down to the over emphasis on sheltering a kid, so when they grow up, they are unprepared for the difficulties of independence. I went to public school all the way from elementary through college. I also went enlisted in the Army. I think that is an example of not being sheltered.

I do have my own faith and I base it on different reasons and experiences than my parents had. I do not have these views, because I was raised in the church, although those experiences helped me as well in my faith.

One thing I have learned, living in the city I do, which is known, for being hostile to faith is that non-believers are not necessarily immoral or hedonistic. They can and many times do have values, but in many ways these values are in opposition to those of the Bible. With all the divisions in the Church, at least some of us have very different values.

One of the issues that bothered me from an early age was suffering. At a young age, my mom suffered from bad health. Later I learned the depths of suffering, that happens in war, in military training. Miraculously, I was not deployed into a war zone (although I very easily could have). I left the military with chronic allergic pink eye and a few years later found out I had Schizophrenia.

So the issue of suffering was both personal and very real to me. This is one of the reasons why I studied major world belief

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systems for so long. This is also why I especially focused on those originating in India and China. I even adopted some of the ideas of the Chinese philosophers. Many in the Church think this is morally wrong, but this is mostly due to ignorance.

If you study philosophy in college, as a major, you generally only study the Enlightenment strain of thought. You have to study religion as a major to get a basic understanding of world belief systems. Many people in Christian circles are highly educated, but not so much about Asia outside Biblical Israel. The time between the Middle Ages or Premodern Period and the modern world is almost completely forgotten.

Even major universities in America seldom publish books on topics about Asian history, literature, or belief systems. Many people honestly think that Christianity's geographic center was in Europe, until modern times. This is very much not true at all by the way. We have missed this era called the Early Modern Period and so we are shocked by the politics of Asia today. For over a thousand years at least, only Asia was basically the world that mattered.

We study history and literature the way we do, because of political and religious reasons. People from both parties would be wise to challenge this for different reasons. Just studying the history of America and only English language literature is not preparing people to live in today's world. This is in addition to the obvious racial and religious assumptions inherent in this decision.

This basically reinforces this idea that we need to get the rest of the world to follow our ideas, so it will solve all their problems. What an extreme form of arrogance, but this is our foreign policy since World War II. We are taking on the same ideas of the British empire, but are more effective at hiding it, from our homeland population.

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To find faith for young people, we need to pray for them, they need to seek God with all their heart, and wait for life experiences to reinforce what they were taught as children (if they were raised in the Church). For people who have not been taught the faith in their youth or had trauma as children, we can develop personal relationships with them. These friendships can allow them to have some idea of who God is and why they might want to be reconciled with Him.

But defending the faith intellectually does not prepare young people for most the spiritual challenges they will face as adults. Keeping them ignorant of evil was never possible, after the fall of Adam and Eve. In todays world, there is no way to shelter a person sufficiently, to keep them from finding ways to do evil.

Trying to Help

Like a hunter stalking their prey
Emotions tend to sneak up on you
Like being startled by a sudden noise
Depression can come out of nowhere

It is hard to define how I feel
As emotions change like the direction of the wind
In a series of waves like the ocean tide
I am easily overcome with feelings

Depression is a feeling of hopelessness
While paranoia is an instinctual terror
Depression makes a person feel like not trying
Paranoia often drives a person to try too much

When the hurting is not visible
Other people don't know how to understand
When the hurting is not something they have experienced
Other people do not know what to say

Even while hurting and alone
It is important to remember
Only so much can be expected of others
People can only give of themselves so much

Our energy is not endless
And all of us can be pushed over the edge
Eventually professional help is what is needed
One individual will burn out
If they do the job of four people

Like trying to be politically neutral
Or making a church multicultural
There is little a church can do

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That will help all mental needs

It is endearing and extraordinary
To want to help everyone
But some things are just too complex
And require too much time and energy
To bring about a stable condition

Too often we expect religion
To solve all problems
Or think that just knowing God
Will resolve longstanding difficulties

Some pain and misunderstanding
Will be there until Christ returns
As the consequences of sin are grave

Spiritual death is no small thing
Whether it is us or the world that has died

I can empathize with with those
Trying to understand
How to deal with issues
They cannot relate with
Either by experience or training
But still wanting to help

Maybe we have to accept imperfection
In the Church
Whether it is doctrinal or cultural issues
Medical or financial

The Church has faced many crisis
As do their members
Sometimes daily
As the song goes

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“I need thee every hour”

Today the American church faces an existential crisis
What role does the church play in society?
How are we to work in a world
That has given up on God?

We cannot give up on them ever
As God never gives up on us
Maybe we just need to be silent
And wait upon God to respond

We need to learn from our history
We need to sever political connections
We need to more gentle about evangelizing
We need to speak out on financial inequality

We need a parallel church
That would be everything the American church is not

It would be mystical, personal, and small
It would focus on the needs of a neighborhood
And not identify with any political issues

It would make peace with unbelievers
And it would accept
That not all things
Can be solved through doctrine

The Church does not need to give up on meetings
But maybe the way we structure churches
Could benefit from radical change

Maybe a house based Bible study church
Would be a successful model
For a society where the Church is being marginalized

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Instead of us resisting cultural threats
To our race, class, and language
We need to celebrate these demographic revolutions

When there are so many problems
And such limited time and resources
We need to find a way to prioritize

If evangelism is our priority
We need to let things go
That sidetrack this objective

What does the Church want to be known for?
Race, class, and language
Or faith, patience, and self-control

Who do we want to be as Christians?
We need to not just repeat
What we have heard from others

We need to make a choice
And we will have to live with the consequences
Now much of society sees Christians
Like they see the mentally ill

It would be good if they keep from
Seeing us as a serious threat
We don't want to set up ourselves for persecution
If we suffer it should be for God
Not for cultural issues

Being Different

I have been told I am unique
But I think it is more
That I have an unusual combination of views

Other people thought of these ideas long before me
And these ideas would not be considered to be so unusual
At almost any other time in history

Many people today want to be different
But being truly different does not make you famous
And it is much harder to sell truly original things

Being unusual makes it harder to fit in
This is not a good thing
This makes you feel uncomfortable within every group

There are so many people in the world
There must be many people in your same position
No matter how original you think your ideas are

One of the ways to find joy in life
Is not to be at the center of attention
Living for something greater than yourself
Brings joy and fulfillment

Not everyone can or should be a leader
If there are no followers
There is little point in creating a group

Some people do have their own culture
But you can get to be so different
That other people cannot comprehend a word you say

Having a common purpose is important for national security

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Ideology is more important than the military for a nation

Every country has a slightly different social contract with the people

This is their justification as to why they should rule

And their competitors shouldn't

This is one of the major drivers of history

I do not comfortably fit in to any group

I have to get good at explaining myself

I have to quickly justify why I think the way I do

Unique or different may be cool

In some regions or cities in this country

But things are developing in the opposite direction

In other regions and cities in this country

There are certain specific behaviors

That are more accepted today

But none of these involve accepting different ideas

Creativity is a great strength

That I hope everyone can master

But it is most effective in solving problems

Being creative is not entertaining for the most part

But it does help a person cope

With problems they encounter in their lives

With the common goal of living with less pain

Conforming to other people's ideas

Has gotten a bad reputation lately

But when you have any kind of movement or organization

You inherently already have mass conformity

Most successful attempts at free expression on a large scale

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Have been successfully sabotaged
By corporations seeking to sell more things
To make a mockery of independent thinking

No one wants you to have your own ideas
And if you want to really change something
That would affect many people
You will inherently run into opposition

Our situation was designed the way it is
This wild ride we are on through technological change
And its various effects on our culture
Is not accidental

People in power deliberately created the situation
That we are in today
Because they wanted the things to happen
That most people see as negative

Whenever you try to make a meaningful change
You are inherently challenging their power
And they will effectively resist your efforts

If that is not effective at making your ideas
Not work or not be adopted
They will keep changing tactics

Eventually they will go after
Your family or your reputation

But in cases that require this
You may simply disappear
And wake up at a dark site

Some hole somewhere with very good security
Likely on some boat in the middle of the ocean

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The kind of place designed to hold agents
And keep them from escaping

I learned as a kid to try to change the world
Later I learned the world is a very cruel place
And trying to change this at scale
Will make your life miserable

But one thing you can change is yourself
You can change your thinking
And this will change your actions
This will improve your life more
Than any external factor

This is also the way to making lasting change
In the world today
It is hard to argue with someone
Who wants to improve their own morality

And this will have ripple effects
This will produce changes too subtle to track
And no one will be willing to accept
That this was the cause

Remember evil does run this world
But Christ has overcome death and hades/hell
The devil can only do limited damage
As he has to get permission from God
To do anything of significance

Joy of Uselessness

All of us seem to encounter
At least one life changing crisis
Over the course of our lives
Some we may not even want to survive

There are many things in life we cannot avoid
Today everything of interest is public or will be soon

But today like throughout recorded history
We have been able to avoid being targets
Of powerful and violent people
The trick is to truly offer no value to such people

There really is no point in being famous in America today
We have transformed our society
Into one where you can technically express yourself
But only in very specific ways

Today America's world empire
Is being backed by an ideology
With complete and blind acceptance and ownership
No matter what the personal cost
By at least millions of people in the homeland

The Church which constantly fears their ideas
Might shift a little in different cultures
To adapt to different needs and different expressions of faith

Have without any kind of reservation or reflection
Decided that you must accept Evangelical culture
To go to Heaven and be right with God
And similar ideas have been synchronized
With the Christian faith in many cultures

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The greatest ideological threat to the Church
Outside America is its connection to America

If Americans get to claim
They are closer to God and more devout
Because they have more wealth and a more powerful military
Why can't Christians in other countries
Have an even better claim to be true believers
As they are more likely to suffer for their faith?

This arrangement only advantages a few rich people
Who have no loyalty to anyone but themselves
And are not in any way meaningfully affiliated with Christianity
But have the Church's unwavering and unconditional support

Democracy never had a chance
They don't want to leave
The important issues up to a vote
If they did that then
The outcome might not be easy to control

America is hated throughout the world
Because we want the world's resources cheaply
But we don't want to bother
To learn about any other culture
Because we think people in other countries
That reject our culture are evil for doing so

We think the solution to problems
The world has struggled with for millennia
Can be solved in a few years
If we send in our military

We think we can destroy their country
But save their lives
And get them to abandon their culture in appreciation

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This is one of the reasons
Why I would never travel outside America
In my military service I very closely missed
Getting thrown into some very scary situations

This is why I now take as few risks as possible

I deliberately talk in generalities
When I criticize what I think is wrong in the world
And have no interest in connecting the dots
That would identify those who control such things
Or the means in which they control these things

I do not try even if I could
To get in any position of power
I try to treat others as gently as possible
And interact as little as possible online

I learn enough about technology
To stay a little ahead of the curve

There will likely be a time in the near future
That I will not be able to speak as freely
Because of the unintended consequences
Of legislation targeting tech companies
Or evolution of technology
That makes writing irrelevant

Everything has a cost
You cannot make money off of free
You may find someone to serve as your patron
But they will want something valuable in return

I am in the unusual situation
That I have never made any money

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Off of any of my creations

Throughout history most writers needed financial backing
They could not speak as freely as I do
Because they needed money to survive while creating
And writing has always been a niche market

We see the academic world today as very biased
But this has always been true

Most writing has had extremely political
Motivations and meanings
This is why writers are often persecuted
If they are viewed as relevant
To established powers

The biggest protection of a country is its ideology
And the best protection of an individual
Is to not stand out

So you may question why
I do not promote my ideas better
I see little advantage in doing so for anyone

Some ideas are only relevant
To a very small group of people

Americans have the freedom of expression they do
Because a few companies control all the means of publication
Individual voices are lost in the static of millions of others

This is a good thing and makes me happy
It only sounds negative
To those who would not be interested
In what I am trying to communicate

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It is almost completely nonsensical
For society to adopt individuality
On a massive scale

This has been a strategy of the powerful
To destroy the message of those
Who want to live differently

I am not afraid of that outcome
As there is no easy money to be made
With my ideas
As too few people
Would care about my ideas

Mature Faith

I have often thought that I should
Do everything I can
To prepare for any scenario

But I have recently realized
That just like Christ told us
To prepare for His second coming
By being kind

So the best method of protection
Is to pray to God

We cannot expect God to prevent
Anything bad from happening to us
But He does love us unconditionally

If we want God to forgive us
No matter what we have done
We should accept whatever God sends our way

Just like if we want God's mercy
We must forgive our enemies
A relationship has to work both ways

We live in God's world
And we have to accept Him
Despite not knowing our future

Like joining the military
You make a commitment
Before you have any idea
Of what you have committed to

God truly controls everything

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So it make sense to go to the top position
If He is willing to listen

I cannot reject God
Even if I disagree with Him on some things
Because He accepts me
And I know I have done things He disagrees with

The best antidote to fear is thankfulness
If we are going to fear trials
And question why God allows them
It is only fair to feel gratitude
When something good happens

If we want a mature relationship with God
We have to put in some work as well

God does not need to be forgiven
Because He cannot do evil

Maybe we need to accept
That it is acceptable to disagree with Him
But we still need to obey Him

Is it true that God gives us rules
That we need to follow
To have a happier life
But it is enough that He commands us

We need to follow Him
Even when we don't understand
Or the answers are not always given

There are many things beyond our understanding
Suffering might just be one of those things

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It is good to be responsible
Treating others kindly and avoided accidents
Wisdom can help us escape
Some of the worst fates many times

But we need to accept that this is not our home
And we are not the ones in charge here

God is good and wants the best for us
Suffering does not negate this
I just means that we do not have a simple answer

The Bible is not always comforting
Especially for non-believers
Or believers shortly after sinning
But it is always true

I have trouble getting myself to read the Bible
But afterwards I am always glad I did

Unfortunately we live in a dangerous world
And we still have a very limited understanding
Of even just the physical world
There are factors we cannot comprehend

Furthermore we have very little wisdom
As reflected in the problems
That we get ourselves into

The only sure thing is that Christ
Has made a way
To be reconciled with our Creator

It cost Him everything
But it is available to all people
This should give us hope

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We should be gracious about it
Because He was willing to suffer for us
He will never leave us alone
Or force us to do
Anything we don't want to do

Maybe the best way to deal with suffering
Is to do everything we can do
To stop the suffering of others

The only thing we can really change
Are our own actions and beliefs
Maybe even simple kindness
Is more powerful than we think

Biography

Feeling Mad: Part 1

Having Schizophrenia feels very different, depending on whether or not you are on medication. If you are on the medication, people can respond very differently to it, as well. I have always stayed on my medication, because, for all its various downsides, it ultimately reduces my pain more than it causes pain.

I know a person, who I lived with, for something like 9 months, in a mental health group home, with about 5 other mentally ill people. I met him many years later and his personality is opposite. He was very quiet, withdrawn, and easily stressed out, on his medicine. Seeing him on drugs on the streets, with no medicine, he was talking faster than a politician on cable news, but much more animated.

I was only off my medication, before I had my first paranoid episode or psychotic break, when I was first diagnosed. Then I had a huge amount of energy, as I was afraid all the time. I talked so fast doctors thought I was on drugs and I could not sleep very well.

I realized later that I did have very paranoid ideas, though, at the time, they seemed like what was actually happening to me. Without the medicine, I could not distinguish fantasy from reality. The reality of what happened in my mind was so intense, that I still believe there must have been some truth, as to what I thought was happening to me, at that time.

In the hospital, when I first was prescribed and took my first antipsychotics, I have only fragmented memories. I had to fight, to stay awake, to get anything done, for at least a decade. There are a lot of other more unusual side effects that anti-psychotics can cause too.

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On one antipsychotic, I released some sort of scent, that attracted insects and I got severe depression about an hour, after taking it. When I went on bipolar medication, for a few months, the only effect I felt was that I kept losing coordination, so that I kept poking my fingers into my eyes. Recently, one antipsychotic caused me to always feel that I needed to go to the bathroom, but I usually couldn't pee.

My experiences with hearing voices is all over the place. I have heard things as simple as repeated sounds to entire realistic voices. I have even recently hallucinated a smell one time.

Paranoia is not like a phobia, which you can overcome. Paranoia is also not tied to one factor that you can desensitize yourself to. This is because paranoia is a general fear of the future and the exact trigger can and does change over time. Technically, paranoia is described as a type of delusion, where you think you are being stalked, by a person or spirit.

I often get physical pain, in various parts of my body, that are intensified by increased stress levels. I also get physical pain, due to depression, as well, in my intestines and head. Yes, Schizophrenia causes depression as well.

For a long period of time, maybe 2 years, when my antipsychotic was upped, I was more depressed and when my antidepressant was upped, I was more paranoid. I had both severe depression and paranoia at the same time. I finally resolved that it was more about depression than paranoia. The prescriber changed my antidepressant, I made some lifestyle changes, and the combination help bring me out of my difficult period.

For two decades, I tried to stay busy, to distract myself from the paranoia. The side effect of this is it makes it harder, for a person to sleep, with this strategy.

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To deal with this situation, the VA, who I see for my care, has decided to train us all in mindfulness meditation. All the techniques are specifically Buddhist, but they claim it is not belief system specific. I figured out how to meditate, but it takes so much energy, that I end up stressing myself out doing it.

Feeling Mad: Part 2

I learned philosophy, during this period. I then took many ideas from Philosophical Taoism and Christian Existentialism. These ideas help me deal with my mental illness.

One of the big ideas of Taoism is finding a way to deal with failure in life. I believed I had failed, because I was unable to complete both my schooling and my military service. Another concept from Taoism, that was helpful, was the idea of uselessness. This is where you realize you are safe, because you are not important enough to harm.

I have embraced skepticism, because I have lost trust in the government, as they have lost trust in us. I am surprised society has not collapsed yet and that gives me incredible joy. I have basically no expectations of anyone now.

One of the chief reasons for Taoism is to reduce the suffering you can and accept what is inevitable. I avoid suffering, by not taking needless risks, by not traveling or engaging in high adventure type activities. I am ok with my difficult situation, because many people deal with much worse problems.

Taoism also makes us doubt our confidence in what we think is real. We think the waking world is real and the dream world is not. Who are we to make such a distinction? I have adopted a kind of pacifism, because I cannot be sure of what I perceive as always being real.

Christian Existentialism teaches grave responsibility, with free choice, as the decisions you make are universal. Existentialism does not endorse the sacrifice of the few for the many. Existentialism is skeptical of any system used to explain people, because it is hard to predict outcomes, or do a fair analysis, when you reduce people to numbers.

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Existentialism does not believe people can be objective, because only God can be. Kierkegaard believed people were closest to God shortly after they sinned.

He believed that we should pattern our Biblical ethics after romantic reasoning. We would rush out to help those we love, when they are in trouble. In the same way, we should do what we know the Bible says, that we know, before we endlessly debate what we cannot know.

Kierkegaard was a romantic and a man of action. He believed in taking time to enjoy life and our interactions with God. Camus felt similarly.

Camus called his philosophy Absurdism, because he believed there was no legitimate reason why there should be an increase in suffering, in the modern world. He famously made the analogy of a person or god being punished, in the underworld, by being forced to repeat the same task, over and over again. Camus imagined that he would be happy. Camus was very sarcastic.

Existentialism has inspired me, to make the most of my situation, be focusing on the things I can change. I do not see the need to explain everything in life, or everything I do as well. Our situations can often appear hopeless, but maybe we should expect less of life.

I am not going to suffer myself anymore, for the good of some general idea. I am going to focus on getting closer to God and transform myself, by making better decisions in my life. I think people are always worth more than a good cause.

I believe the individual people I interact with are as important as what happens on a national scale. I say this as Jesus only impacted hundreds or thousands in His lifetime. Centuries later, billions are saved by Him as He multiplied His efforts over time. I

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can find purpose in life, even with my limitations, by being creative and working on a micro scale.

Mind, Soul, and God

I am fully aware people in the majority of the world go through much more than myself continually. But this does not make me feel any better. It only makes me feel worse about myself.

I have had a number of mystical experiences, but they have all been very painful. I think many of us have trouble seeing God, when we are in shock. But when I have had direct spiritual attacks, God has always saved me immediately. In a number of cases God was working in the background, but in some situations I still do not understand, even decades later.

In many ways, I wrestle with fear continually, all the way back to after about a month into being a soldier. The fear I get comes from Schizophrenia and chronic allergic pink eye both of which I got from my military service.

It is a general fear of the future, but the brain wants to make sense of it. The brain does this by producing physical pain and paranoia about specific situations. I have always suffered more from paranoia than voices. I have never had what psychiatrists call disorganized thought.

I also struggle with depression from time to time. I went through a long period of depression around 2008-2010. I had to accept that the world as we know it can end at any time with no notice.

Three major changes in my life happened at the end of this struggle. I got on a new antidepressant, I moved into a new apartment, and I got the just released iPad 1. When COVID broke out in America I was pleasantly surprised things remained as normal as they did.

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I have realized Hollywood is the source of a major part of the world's suffering directly or indirectly. Over time I have been cutting Hollywood out of my life more and more.

I stopped watching news around 2008-2010, but I still read about technology news almost daily. I stopped watching science fiction in 2017. I have stopped watching Apple TV this year in 2024.

I used social media briefly, but currently have no active accounts and do not desire to ever set any up ever again. I considered using Facebook, to promote my website, many years ago. But I never did so because they would not allow you to disable comments, no matter how much you paid them, even for business or government accounts.

My first way of dealing with my illness was to stay busy. I had and still have a strong desire to give back to the world. I know living as an American has a very negative impact on the majority of the world.

Most people contribute by working jobs, but I am unable to work. I tried volunteering many times, but due to not being able to commit to doing something regularly, not having a car or being able to drive, and not being able to be around cleaners or other toxic chemicals, I have not found any volunteer positions I could fill.

This has lead me to release my writing and graphics, for free, on my websites. Websites take up a huge amount of time, but not much money, depending on how you do it.

I had to cease major development of the website this year due to its size and complexity. It will remain online and functional for the foreseeable future. It has already been online for 25 years now.

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Recently I have come back to church in 2021 and am currently working on learning more about God and the Bible. This is one of the best things for me to spend time and money on. It is one of the few things I will take with me after I die.

Word of God vs. Word of People

I must preface this discussion, by first saying, I only speak for myself. I am generally someone, who doesn't fit comfortably, into any group of people. This is true, even though, most of the time, I wish it wasn't.

I have had some more unusual experiences at a relatively young age. These have further reinforced what I previously believed. I grew up in a normal family and was raised well and my entire family was good to me. Despite only having a lower middle class income, I was in many different activities from the time I was in elementary school. This has been the source of a lot of the stability in my life.

One of the things that affected me greatly was my military training. I came in as an individual and since I followed orders instantly and always gave 150%, I never changed the way I thought.

I went in enlisted in the Army for several reasons. One was that I got somewhat low grades in school, so I would get in debt, if I went to college without being in the service. Another reason was that I believed that God wanted me to do so. Finally, I thought it was a way to give back and do something important with my life.

I chose the Army, because I saw it as the people's service. I have never wanted to associate myself with the powerful or the dominant group. I really appreciated that the Army seemed to accept me. I came to believe that they were actually as kind with us as possible and they had a very tough job to do. The Army prides itself on being the best service for educating service members.

I left the military early and thought at the time this was my failure. I did get an honorable discharge, but I thought it was due

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to my eye condition. I did not find out I had Schizophrenia, until a few years later. This was shortly after I had my first and only psychotic episode. Even when I voluntarily committed myself in a psychiatric ward, I thought I just had an emotional breakdown.

Shortly after leaving the military, I wanted to stay Christian, but I sensed intuitively that, although I appreciated and learned much from the local church I went to, that I wanted to find a different way to express my faith. Before I was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, I realized something was wrong with me. I just assumed I was a Goth for a few years.

While attending college, around that same time, I majored in business, even though I found it both difficult and boring. I was able to take a year long course in Chinese Literature and later in one of my summer terms I ended up taking a course in Existentialism. These ideas rang true with me, because I felt that I had failed as I both did poorly in college as well as I identified with some of these philosophers.

I spent about 12 years in total studying major world belief systems, but still only practiced Christianity. I never seriously considered giving up my faith or converting. My goal was to be able to honestly say to non-Christians that the Christian faith was the one true religion. I learned a lot through this process about myself and ideas that helped me deal with life and my mental and physical health conditions.

I ended up putting together Christian Existentialism and Philosophical Taoism as a coherent system, that at least made sense to me. These were ideas I already had long before studying them, but I thought it might be useful in explaining my ideas to others. Around this time, I moved from church to church, but I have for a long time found it easier to understand and be understood by unbelievers.

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The paranoia and anti-intellectualism we now see in the Church goes back much farther than many realize. It is considered wrong, by many Christians, to study other religions or philosophies. It is often thought that, if people are exposed to other ideas, they will lose their faith. One of the major reasons why there are so many different versions of Christianity is because purity in doctrine was from early on valued much higher than unity.

People are not as rational as they think and for good reason. Many people in the Church are confused as to why not everyone thinks the same as they do, after reading the same parts of the Bible. Many are afraid that people will take ideas from other belief systems and combine them, which might cause a lack of purity in doctrine.

What they do not realize, because they have not studied much outside the Bible and Western Civilization in religion or history, is that Christianity was synchronized with Neo-Platonism in the first few hundred years of Christian history and by about 1,000 years they synchronized Christian teaching with Aristotle's ideas.

Belief systems and politics have been tied together, for all of recorded history and cultures, because if you cannot agree on your philosophical and religious views, you are going to have a hard time keeping united. You will not agree on laws, foreign policy, education, economics, and other key aspects of culture.

One of the things many Christians and non-Christians both misunderstand is that many Protestant ideas were developed and were successful for political, religious, economic and related reasons. This is why many people have such a hard time separating politics from religion. These things generally are related for obvious and good reasons.

So many in the church say all they read is the Bible. They therefore say that all their ideas are objective and correct and anyone who disagrees is not following God. The reality is that we

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are influenced by our culture and if we do not study these things, we just accept the ideas of our ethnic, social, and economic groups we were born into.

I believe that the Bible is objective truth. On the other hand, the moment someone interprets it at all that is their opinion. I only hold myself to my understanding of Scripture. I base my faith on my intuitive understanding of who God is. It has always matched what the Bible says.

There are though many, maybe the majority, of verses I cannot explain. But every belief system requires faith, because we can never be perfect and have all the information we think might be ideal. The definition of faith is belief, without being able to fully explain why.

I am a skeptic, even though I have certainty in my mind about God and the reality of what is in the Bible. What I am skeptical of is everything else, literally. I have working theories, but no absolutes. I would not suffer any more for my country and so do not consider that to be part of any of my beliefs.

I believe I have proved my loyalty to my country by my actions and am working on doing so for my faith.

Hard Limits

Many people are depressed in the world today. I was for a few years as well. This was during the heart of the 2008 economic crisis. I was convinced the world would end soon.

But then I accepted that the world could end as we know it at anytime. I decided that I may not even decide to carry on because of the state it would be in. I decided to stop watching the news (outside of the technology world).

Things starting getting better emotionally for me from there. During the 2020 pandemic, I got a lot done. I was surprised by how mild the crisis was. I was expecting something like HIV or Ebola becoming airborne.

Most of us in America live in a bubble. We are basically the world's royalty. We see celebrities as living in ridiculous wealth that they squander. We appear the same way to the majority of the world. Our problems actually mirror those of the royalty at any other time in history.

We should not be surprised by suffering. We should be happy when nothing particularly bad is happening to us. Boredom is actually a great sign of wealth and happiness.

I have not traveled much since I was in the military. This is a deliberate choice. I have a good idea of how cruel the world is. Ironically we treat animals worse in the United States.

We have stopped growing economically. We foolishly allowed the richest individuals to save money by using technology and becoming more efficient without compensating us. We let others do our dirty manufacturing work and even literally sent our garbage there.

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But these nations in Asia, just like those in Europe, were not going to be happy making our toys, for much less than what we consider the poverty level in our country. This could have lasted longer, if we were not so obsessed with economic efficiency and at the cost of social resilience and stability in crisis.

Even when we do decide to care about the majority of the world we are too superficial, simplistic, and lazy to get a very detailed understanding of other cultures. When we start to treat people as individuals, then we will begin to turn things around in America. It should not discourage us to save only a few people, even in our entire lifetimes.

People are not an assembly line and do not respond well to another quick sales pitch. If you use the same techniques to win someone over for Christ that you do for selling technology, then you have lost most potential believers. This is even before they consider God's offer of salvation.

We are really bad representatives of Christ. He could do all of this better than us. Which leads me to believe that winning people over is less about proving we are right and more about us demonstrating kindness.

The unique thing about Christ is not about His responses to the Pharisees. It is more about what He didn't say. We rush into everything too quick.

We need to form relationships with unbelievers and be patient with them. God will give us enough time for them to be saved before they die. As followers of Christ, we do not get to set the rules.

We do not serve theology. Sometimes we spend so much time analyzing the Bible that we forget we are talking about real

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people. So soon we forget our own evil nature and when we were not saved either.

We lost a lot when we decided to throw away all the things about the traditional Church when Northern Europe and America became Protestant, independent, and wealthy. Individuality is worth pursuing, if we use it to inspire ourselves to be better people. Using it as an excuse, to put in less effort, or to give up is not helpful.

Maybe we can focus our efforts on what we consider the little things, in our own lives. We need not worry about politics or the state of the world. We need to find encouragement, when small things go right. Once we accept our limitations, we can find the joys God brings to our lives.

This century our world will learn humility one way or another. No matter how smart we think we are, we cannot out engineer the consequences of sin. Just because we lived in great comfort, early in our history, does not mean the same conditions are owed to us forever.

Just Give Up Already

One of the things that we fight to the bitter end for is our sanity and our independence. We want to be correct and in control. We measure our worth in terms of money, power, or other things that can be counted in numbers.

This is what dying to the world and taking up your cross means in the New Testament. Being born again requires dying and living the life of Christ. In America, like it has been in Europe for some time, the popular conception of being Christian is basically the same as being mentally ill.

But we do not need to fight this. We should embrace it. Failure is the beginning of success, at least in my life anyway. When I first started writing about God and faith 25 years ago, I had failed out in college and did not serve my full enlistment in the military.

The ideas that launched my writings were from philosophy courses I took in college. I embraced the freedom from trying to win the game of life. I found other motivations and other ways to succeed.

I changed my priorities. Being unimportant means being safe. Most of us are already living like royalty, as we are American citizens. When I left the military, I was really careful with not taking on unneeded risks. I was willing to live a boring life, in exchange for this.

I had originally planned on being an international businessman, leading distribution and logistics, but I hated business courses and was not good at them. I realized I had problems and at first thought I was a Goth. Later I tried doing journalism, but then I found out I was mentally ill.

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At that time, going to college and studying journalism sounded like a great idea. Now it is irrelevant to me. Furthermore, writing is being automated almost entirely, by what is popularly called artificial intelligence.

The one thing that mattered is that I managed to get a honorable discharge, upon leaving the military. This meant I was eligible for veterans benefits. I attribute this to how my parents raised me. I obeyed orders instantly without hesitation and always gave 150%. Drill Sergeants in both basic and advanced training told me this directly.

One of the Drill Sergeants in advanced training gave me her coin she got, when she trained in Drill Sergeant school, which is a prestigious award. This was because I missed getting a 95% coin award in advanced training, by less than one percent.

The Drill Sergeant in basic training told me, in front of the entire platoon, that she would have promoted me, as the one person she was able to promote. The reason why she didn't was that I was already at the rank she could promote me to, because I was an Eagle Scout.

Some of the things that helped me deal with realizing I was mentally ill were: being able to know I needed help, having a certain degree of doubt about myself, and understanding of how lucky I was to not have worse problems.

I was talking to a VA psychiatrist recently and she said people with Schizophrenia either stay at the same level of independence or get worse. They are questioning that I have Schizophrenia, because I keep improving in many ways. They don't debate as to whether I am mentally ill or not, but that I could be Schizoaffective instead (which has some attributes of Schizophrenia and some attributes of Bipolar Disorder).

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Part of the problem with this is she only sees me a very small part of the time, my mind still works very quickly, and she had not seen me before I had developed Schizophrenia. I am not the typical anything. Some also might doubt my patriotism or my faith because I approach them very differently.

I have recently gone from diabetic, to not diabetic, in 6 months. I am actually using fear to my advantage, in this case. I am excited that I have the discipline and awareness, to be able to reduce my blood sugar and lose weight. These are things I never thought I would be able to do.

So many things, although not perfect, are improving in my life. This I take great comfort in. One of the hardest things in life is knowing what things you can change and what things you cannot change.

This is simple. We can change ourselves, but not other people. Most people give up too easily today. If you can overcome this, many things can be possible, that most people would never try. The most important things for us to master are not our wealth or social status but our thoughts.

Quaker Roots

It might surprise some people, since I served in the military, but I am actually a special kind of Quaker (they call themselves Friends, as Jesus calls us in the Gospels, because we know more of His plans than in the Old Testament). I still have a copy of my dog tags, which are labelled "Protestant - Other" as there are few Quakers in the military.

Ironically, I won a national peace essay contest for my state, in high school, not long before I signed up for the military. There are actually a large minority of Quakers who are not pacifists. Personally, I think the well being of animals is more important than that of people. After all, God created them too and they behave much better than we do.

Some of the ideas of Quakers would be very refreshing to many non-believers today but frustrating to many believers. Quakers are very minimalistic and they avoid rituals to the point that they often do not put crosses on their churches. They have a silent time instead of communion and do not do physical baptism.

Anyone can be a registered minister. People are encouraged to stand up during the quiet time and say something they believe God communicated to them. They also believe strongly in getting involved in social causes.

Part of the tradition, that is not spelled out exactly, is that Quakers value humility. I don't remember anyone saying that directly, but I know I was obsessed with it for many years. This church was where I think I got the idea.

This particular brand of Quakers were what many people call evangelical. This meant to them that they believed in the fundamentals of the faith. These include the Bible being literally true, including the supernatural elements.

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So there were people there from many different backgrounds and many different ideas about what it means to be a Christian. Our family started there originally because they had a very good youth program.

This is also where I first understood the concept of paradox and this was reinforced by what I experienced in the military, as well. I was not happy with the attitude of what I saw much of the American church, especially politically. I sought a different way to be Christian.

There is a long tradition in Christianity to emulate the early Church. There has been a long held belief that we lost our understanding of the Bible along the way and we became morally corrupt. There is also a strong emphasis on studying the culture of the Middle East during ancient times. This helps us understand the context of what was said and what was assumed people understood.

One of the big differences is like most traditional cultures, the ancient Middle East valued community and continuity of values more than we now do. We, on the other hand, keep trying to adopt the latest gadgets and try to all start our own trends. There are advantages and disadvantages to both individuality and communally focused cultures. It is just that Americans tend to take things to extremes.

One extreme on the individuality spectrum in Protestant Christianity is the Quaker faith. Ultimately they give the believer a huge amount of freedom in how they want to interpret Scripture. This is the exact opposite approach of the traditional regional churches in Asia, Africa, and Europe, one of which is the Roman Catholic Church.

There were a lot of cultural and political issues that brought about the success of what we commonly refer to as the Protestant Reformation in Continental Europe and Britain. Some of these

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ideas include more regional government, having elected officials both in the Church and government, radical changes in worship like using the local languages, and having every believer be their own theologian. As a side effect, some of these changes helped build the foundations of America, the British and Dutch Empires, and modern Germany.

This all pushed us into the modern world, the ideas of which go back to the European Reformation and Enlightenment. This happened long before most the technologies of the modern world were developed. A lot of this has to do with technologies of ocean navigation technologies, small changes in weather patterns and the climate, the speed at which all this happened, and the ease at which Europe and America could get people to work very hard and buy more things.

Basically, the Europeans managed to leverage their navies and the Americas to disrupt the trade routes dominated by the wealthy and powerful Muslim (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal) dynasties across South Asia and Eastern Europe.

The turning point was the second siege of Vienna, at about 1700 AD, when guns became reliable enough to be useful in combat. What we call discipline in the military was invented and then perfected by the Prussia (later became modern Germany). This discipline was what made European armies more effective with gun based combat than the Muslim empires.

If you haven't noticed, I am not a fan of unrestricted capitalism. This is also known as the modern world system, which I consider to be Mystery Babylon (the evil end times empire run by the devil). I believe we should take a cue from the Amish and revert to an earlier level of technology.

This decision will save us from descending into another stone age. We would also need to restrict the usage or development of technology. This is a concept called Agrarianism which was

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adopted by the variation of Confucianism that Chinese government officially adopted later in Imperial Chinese history.

Lifestyle Paradox

One of my earlier writings is a book I wrote about psychology. I realized then that not only are there people with opposite problems, but also that they have poor self knowledge specifically with regard to this. Specifically that some people's problem is that they work too much and for others they are too lazy.

The key to dealing with this is realizing that we do not have the perspective to diagnose ourselves. The busy think they should be busier and those who don't care think they care too much. You will get a more useful direction from people close to you.

So keep that in mind when talking about getting burned out and how to avoid it. Some of the things I advise may be the exact opposite of what some people need to do. I am writing for the workaholic type A personality.

I spent about 12 years independently studying Asian and European philosophy and religion. I was attempting to find a way to make Christianity more authentic. I attempted to do this by seeing religion from an Asian and African perspective.

One of the big surprises to me, late in my studies, was that Christianity has always been a world religion. Early Christianity was actually centered (population wise) in what is now Iraq. This church was sometimes referred to as the Church in Babylon. This church literally was headquartered there as it was the capitol of the Persian Empire. This lasted for the entire first millennium of church history.

One of the authors I read on this topic found this out by measuring how many church leaders there were and knowing how many people this would make in their congregations. Then he derived the total population of Christians based on this

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formulaic way they divided up the members of the Church of the East (East Syriac).

Another thing I found out in my studies early on is that Philosophical Taoism (the Zen in Zen Buddhism) and Christian Existentialism were at the heart of the Gospel. This was also in a way that was compatible with a literal understanding of the fundamentals of the Bible.

The main idea of Philosophical Taoism as it evolved over time in Chinese history was its yin and yang relationship with Confucianism. When the Jesuit Catholic Priests first brought the Gospel to China on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, they quickly synchronized this with Confucianism, but did not do so with Taoism.

Part of this is a confusion made by cultural misunderstandings and the fact that there are two entirely different forms of Taoism. Originally, Philosophical Taoism came from the ideas of the I Ching, with the religious elements removed. Later, Religious Taoism evolved into a form of elaborate traditional Chinese folk religion or a form of animism (shamanism).

There was in China, like in many countries, state belief systems and there were also folk traditions of the general population of peasants. When you study Traditional Chinese Philosophy, you usually study pure philosophy without any religious elements. But most people, who were not in the leadership, practiced the Traditional Chinese Religion.

So the main reason for my interest in Chinese philosophy is that I am, in ancient Chinese terms, a Confucian by temperament, in that I am a type A workaholic personality. Philosophical Taoism evolved into a private and non political way of expressing feelings and creating artwork and literature for the ruling class. Confucianism never dealt with anything outside of public ceremonies and manners.

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The traditional Chinese emperor controlled all land and assets in China and selected the officials who would administrate it on their behalf. They did this by a way of an imperial examination in which they wrote poetry to promote Confucian ideals.

So when some scholars scored low or failed their imperial exam, they often retreated into the rural areas to live like monks. They then adopted Taoism as a kind of counter culture movement, but they were never political about it.

Some of the main ideas of Philosophical Taoism are: being unimportant in social status, avoiding politics or hierarchy of any kind, skepticism, a belief of evil coming from culture rather than nature, and a very vague understanding of their being supernatural aspects to life. Basically Taoism was for those burned out Confucian scholar officials.

Tai Chi, Acupuncture, Kung Fu, tea ceremonies, meditation, calligraphy, and poetry are all applications of Philosophical Taoism. If you practice any of these, you are using the concept of Qi, which is the basis for any of these traditional Chinese practices and philosophies. Qi is the fundamental building block of both matter and spirit. It is what joins together the body and mind. Its relationship to religion is like science is in our modern culture.

Unpacking

A lot of events happened while I was in the military in a very short time frame. I have been reflecting on them for the last 25 plus years. First of all, the military has its own culture like any country or large organization.

When you come to Basic Training, you are exposed to stress to test your ability to survive in combat. The idea is that everyone comes from their own subculture. To build unity there needs to be an entirely different culture that everyone has to learn from scratch.

Your life basically starts over, as you experience cultural shock. They simulate the shock of being in combat, by shouting and intense physical training, at first. Later, they have the gas chamber, throwing a live grenade, and the final test in Field Training Exercises.

You learn that things happen for no reason and you must follow orders no matter what. There are no other options and there is no time to think. The military uses peer pressure, repetition, and fear to motivate you.

The military trains the enlisted soldiers very similarly to almost any other military. The difference for us is we have more money for longer and more thorough training. As much as our military screws things up (which you never get punished for), we are still the world leaders in logistics. America is the Apple Inc. of the world's militaries.

The point of basic training from a practical skills level is to teach you what are called combat survival skills. You have to learn how to shoot a rifle, which is designed to be used carefully, so that you only use one bullet per kill. You have to know how to respond to chemical weapons and protect and decontaminate yourself. You

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learn to stay low and crawl on your belly and how to march, so you know how to move in combat, as safely as possible.

The military made a decision a relatively long time ago that every soldier in the Army is first and foremost an infantry or foot soldier. This means everyone must be trained this way and so this is the purpose of Basic Training. One of the reasons why we win wars so easily is that we have the best technology because we have a virtually unlimited budget.

We also use this money to invest in supporting each foot or infantry soldier on the front lines. This decision means that the difference between a medic and a foot soldier is the medic carries an additional bag of supplies. This applies to every job. There are no desk jobs in the Army.

In the military, they say war is 80% boredom and 20% terror. There is nothing in between. It is like your entire life is Bipolar. You wait in line for hours for everything and they can and do random things unexpectedly, especially with tear gas and to scare you.

You learn to act like everyone else and you aren't able to express yourself in any way during training. You also are made to feel you only exist because they need a warm body to put into their fancy vehicles. This makes me think of how a kid puts toys soldiers into miniature replicas of combat vehicles.

You are disposable government property and they use a term for that that I will not repeat. Call a Drill Sergeant sir or ma'am and they will say they are not an officer and that they work for a living. This did little for my self esteem, which wasn't the highest before then anyway. I experienced a deep depression I had never felt before that.

After going through my complete Army training successfully, I have no desire to lead anyone or serve in any leadership. I have

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no desire to be rich or famous. And I understand and respect the labor movement. I felt very different about these particular things beforehand.

The Army is really serious about these kinds of training. They teach you these skills over and over again, in your free time. You get to go to the gas chamber, prove you can shoot well enough, and get tested to see if you are in good enough physical shape every year. As enlisted, you actually get promoted most by getting college credit.

When I left the military, after a little over a year, I was stationed in Hawaii. Everyone else in my unit asked to leave as well. People who sign up for a second enlistment are very rare and often get paid large bonuses. You basically only get to be a Sergeant if you sign up for another tour.

The Army is the biggest organization that has to be equal opportunity and affirmative action compliant. But the military has a disproportionate representation of people of color as NCOs, and not enough as officers. These laws actually effectively help more white people get promoted to Sergeant.