

PROPHECY— Semper-Fi Stigma of Shame

By Jim Golden — Chapter Seven

Shame is a very illusive yet crippling affliction affecting many Americans of all ethnic groups, ages and genders. It is the cause of much of the dysfunction in our society today. When I was 17 years old I was a senior in high-school. It was the height of the Viet-Nam War and the patriotic spirit that gripped the hearts of many came over me. So I dropped out of school and enlisted in the U.S.M.C. I wanted to be in the best military service I could be in and to me that was the Corps. It was 1966 and I thought I was a man.

I had come from an extremely dysfunctional family background having never known my real father and at the time of my enlistment I was on my fourth step-father, who was a former Marine. I made it through boot camp at Parris Island, SC, Infantry Training Regiment (ITR) at Camp LeJune, NC and had just completed my MOS training as a heavy equipment operator when my life was about to change forever.

This was probably the first time that my living situation would reveal the bitterness, resentment and anger for male authority figures that flowed like a tsunami in my life. I use the word tsunami because on the service a tsunami is barely noticeable at sea, but it is a raging unstoppable force in the ocean depths. This tsunami deep within my soul was about to come ashore in my life. I am not trying to excuse the choices that I made which resulted in a Bad Conduct Discharge (BCD) from the Marines, but to reveal what I have come to believe were the motivating factors that drove me like a slave-master. It is my hope that my testimony might spare some young man from taking a similar course of action in their lives.

It has taken me thirty plus years to come to grips with the choices that I made as teenager, choices that affect my life to this day. I didn't realize the destructive power of shame. After I was discharged in 1969 I tried to destroy my life through drug and alcohol abuse. I had all but lost any positive self-worth or image. Yet God had other plans for me and in 1972 He revealed His love for me. For the last 30 plus years I have tried to be faithful. Yet, still deep down inside I haven't been able to escape or be fully healed of the shame of my actions when I was in the Marine Corps.

Recently I felt as though the Lord was trying to get to the root of this so that I could finally experience His love as my heavenly Father. There has always seemed to be something holding me back from experiencing the joy that the Bible claims is one of the foundations of the Christian faith. I have lived in denial for over thirty years trying to shift the blame onto the Corps or just sweep it under the rug. God is relentless even though He is patient. He will not allow shame to exist in our lives forever because it keeps His sacrifice from being fully effective. It steals from those held in its crippling grip what Jesus suffered and died to give us, true FREEDOM!

For me the first step was to stop making excuses for my actions and admit to myself they were my fault and take responsibility. The second step will be to try and stop

beating myself up and to forgive myself. That is harder than it sounds. I have even thought of writing the Commandant of the Marine Corps and asking for his forgiveness, but I am not sure how that would go over. Perhaps he would be more understanding than I think, but regardless we need to swear to our own hurt. I violated my covenant with the Corps and that is not something to take lightly. Our God is a covenant God.

I have needed to forgive my father's for the abandonment I experienced by them and to ask for God's grace to help me through this deep wounding of my soul that my bitterness and disappointment would no longer defile those around me. I hold the Marine Corps in my prayers before God and pray that they would be protected in their efforts to defend our freedoms, freedoms that we so often take for granted. AMEN!