

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *The Dark Side* these sermon outlines will use different Scripture passages related to the small group study theme, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Introduction: In the early 1960's, President John F. Kennedy initiated the formation of an elite military team known as the SEALs. They were called this because of their ability to operate on Sea, Air and Land. Among the best-known SEAL successes of recent years was the rescue of Captain Richard Phillips, master of the merchant ship MV Maersk Alabama, after four Somali pirates took him hostage in April 2009. Three of the pirates fled the ship in a small lifeboat with Phillips and headed for the Somali coast, with U.S. Navy ships in pursuit. During the standoff that followed, a contingent of Navy SEALs parachuted into the area and boarded the destroyer USS Bainbridge. On Easter Sunday, April 12, when it looked as if the pirates were about to shoot Phillips, the crisis came to a dramatic end. Three SEAL snipers on the fantail of the Bainbridge aimed and squeezed their triggers simultaneously, killing all three pirates in the bobbing lifeboat some 90 feet away. Details of the hostage rescue were eventually made public, and the events would later be depicted on the big screen in the hit movie "Captain Phillips," starring Tom Hanks.

What would it be like to be a Navy SEAL? Do they get scared? What was it like to go out for the first time? Jesus had his own elite squad. They were called disciples. And the very first recorded mission that they went on required that they be willing to stare down disease, death, Satan and all his forces. Let's take a look at the parameters of the mission that they were given. Pay careful attention. Your life could depend on it. Their mission is a lot like yours.

1. **Jesus sent out His disciples to do battle with spiritual forces.** (Matt. 10:1-8)
 - A. They were chosen. "*his twelve disciples*" (v. 2-4) – What would the SEALs have thought of Jesus' choice of military combatants? A tax collector, some fishermen and a traitor. It reminds of the scene from the movie Armageddon where Air Force astronauts are sizing up the drilling crew that's going up to the asteroid. Their reaction: "This is about the sorriest bunch of men I've ever seen. The fate of the planet is in the hands of a bunch of retards I wouldn't trust with a potato gun." But these are the ones Jesus chose.
 - B. They were commissioned. "*go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (v. 5-7) – He was specific in who they were supposed to go to. They knew their mission clearly. Israel was lost, and they were the ones that were going to lead her home.
 - C. They were empowered. "*power against unclean spirits*" (v. 1, 8) – You don't send a team into enemy territory without giving them the resources that they need to be able to accomplish the mission. That would be tying their hands

and guaranteeing their failure. So Jesus gave them special abilities. Can you imagine the speed of their heartbeat the first time they tried to cast out a demon or raise someone from the dead? They were fighting spiritual forces. For that, they needed spiritual weaponry.

2. Jesus told them that the battle would not be easy. (Matt. 10:9-38)

- A. They would have to rely on uncertain sources of provision. *“provide neither gold nor silver”* (v. 9-15) – Flexibility, traveling light and being able to live off the land are key skills for a team’s survival. Jesus promised that they would be provided for, but they were going to have to live moment by moment, and day by day (Matt. 6:11) always depending on Him.
- B. They would have to defend against unlikely sources of persecution. *“sheep in the midst of wolves”* (v. 10-23) – On June 28, 2005, a four-man SEAL patrol on a mission to capture a high-ranking Taliban leader in Afghanistan’s Kunar Province crossed paths with several local goat herders. After determining they were not enemy combatants, the SEALs let them go according to the rules of engagement. All too soon, however, Taliban fighters attacked the patrol. Who they thought were “friendlies” actually turned out to be the enemy. Three of the four SEALs were killed, while the fourth, Petty Officer Marcus Luttrell, was left unconscious and seriously wounded. (Luttrell was later rescued, and would write about the mission in his best-selling memoir “Lone Survivor.”) Lieutenant Michael Murphy, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his actions trying to save his team, and the two other SEALs killed in the firefight weren’t the only casualties of the day: Eight SEALs and eight members of the Army’s 160th Special Forces Operations Regiment (SOAR) deployed to rescue Murphy’s team also died when the enemy shot down their Chinook helicopter.
- C. They would have to be courageous around unseen sources of power. *“Beelzebub...not able to kill the soul”* (v. 24-31) – When the redcoats marched in the colonies, it was easy to know who your enemy was and to be able to see him coming. They were hard to miss especially since they announced their arrival. War is different today. Ever since Vietnam, the enemy is much harder to spot. He could even be standing right beside you waiting to attack.
- D. They would have to accept some unheard of sources of pain. *“daughter against her mother...his cross”* (v. 32-38) – A willingness to die, to sever all ties with earthly relationships, to let nothing hold you back – that’s what it takes to achieve this mission. The costs are high, but the rewards are greater.

3. Jesus promised them that their faithfulness in battle would be rewarded. (Matt. 10:39-42; Luke 10:17-20)

- A. The reward will be what we were searching for all along. *“shall find it”* (Matt. 10:39) – In order to find the best, you have to let go of the good. It’s hard, but Jesus promised, and He always keeps His promises.
- B. The reward will be greater than the service done. *“cup of cold water”* (Matt. 10:42) – Every person on the team has a part to play. No part is insignificant. And when you play your part, the reward is based on the fact that you served, not what it is that you accomplished. When you help someone else fulfill their

mission, even in the smallest way, you gain a part in the reward that the fulfillment of their mission brings.

- C. The reward will be joy over seeing Satan lose territory he once controlled. *“Satan...fall from heaven”* (Luke 10:18) – The 10-year manhunt for the mastermind of the 9/11 terrorist attacks concluded on May 2, 2011, when helicopters from the Army’s SOAR (Airborne) deposited some two dozen SEALs, along with a Pashto translator and a Belgian Malinois combat dog, at the compound of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan. After methodically clearing the first and second floors of the compound, the SEALs advanced to the third floor, where they found the Al Qaeda leader and killed him. People rejoiced not because he was dead, but because he would no longer be able to inflict pain on anyone ever again, and justice had now been served for the pain that he had already caused.
- D. The reward will be the recognition that Satan no longer controls us. *“your names are written in heaven”* (Luke 10:20)

Conclusion: After the loss of more than 3,000 Marines in the Battle of Tarawa in November 1943, the U.S. military turned to the Navy’s special operations forces to gather intelligence and navigate the islands of the South Pacific ahead of Allied invasions. Before the invasion of Okinawa on April 1, 1945, the crucial last step in the Allies’ island-hopping campaign toward mainland Japan, nearly 1,000 members of the U.S. Navy’s Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs), one of the predecessors of the SEALs, performed reconnaissance, surveyed and cleared the beaches for the landing of some 450,000 U.S. Army and Marine forces. In all, some 3,500 UDT “frogmen” served during World War II, taking part in almost every major amphibious operation in the Pacific; a total of 83 were killed. The UDTs were one of the most heavily decorated combat units in the war, earning 750 Bronze Stars, 150 Silver Stars, one Navy Cross and several Presidential Unit Citations.

Why were these men rewarded? Because they fought for their country, because they were willing to give their lives, because they followed orders whatever the cost, because they finished their mission. One day, you will be rewarded too if you refuse to give in to fear and complete your mission. It won’t be with a medal but a crown. And it won’t be placed around your neck by the President, but by the King.

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