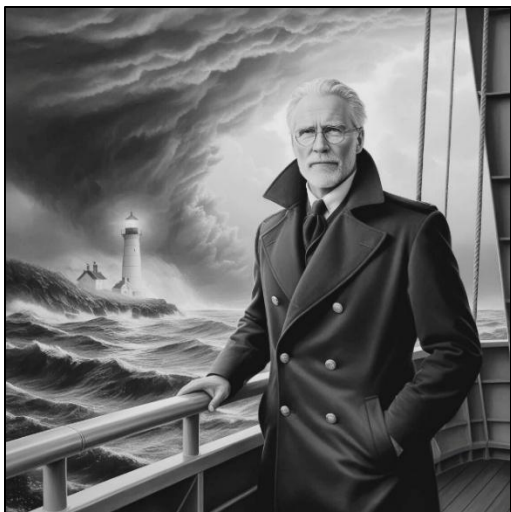


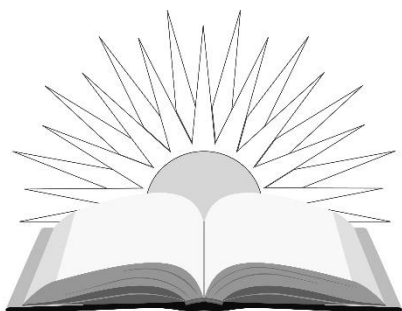
What I Learned



**“Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him, and he
will make your paths straight.”
(Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV)**

By

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The Warmth of The Gospel II

What I Learned

By Robert E. Jordan

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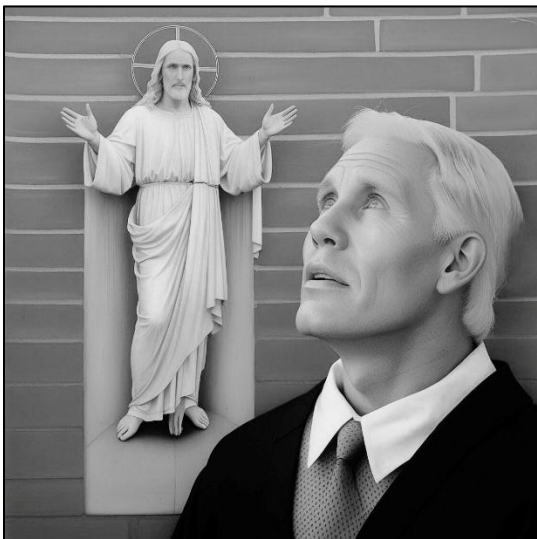
To my darling Apo and her children's children.

The author wishes to thank *The Spirit of Truth* and *The Guiding Light*, his wife, Milagros Jordan, for her support and devotion, and his granddaughter and darling Apo for their assistance and input. Their input enabled a vision to convert a concept into a completed work, turning an idea into this book. For this, I am incredibly grateful.

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The Warmth of The Gospel II



What I Learned

Preface...Joy In My Work

I chose to serve in the Navy to gain worldly maturity. I lacked a worldview because I was raised in a quaint upstate New York village. Wanting to serve publicly one day, I needed a broader view.

I was, at times, shocked by what I saw. Abject poverty, defilement, and debasement were haunting. The following story will be more of a biography than a story. I will write about what I learned from my travels. I was undoubtedly enlightened, and the Holy Spirit touched me. I could have strayed into debauchery, but I chose to extend humanity.

I have done things I am not proud of. I am a sinner by birth and trade. In the Navy, you swear, drink, go places, and do things you will never talk about, but you spend the rest of your life discussing those things you promised you wouldn't.

In the Navy, I was no better than any other, though I was often accused of being better than others, some showed outright disdain for me. But no matter how hard you

try, you can't control how others think about you.

Wherever I found myself and what distant port of call the ship docked, I did my best to maintain a modicum of decency and extend mercy and grace. I learned more from my years serving in the Navy than I could have from any book or course taught in university. No sociology class will teach you how a simple gesture can uplift one's heart and spirit and impact life. An offering of leftover food can evoke smiles and tears to a hungry, dirty, toothless child, or how a kind deed offered to a sex worker without the expected drudgery of performing produces a grateful sigh of relief, does change one's perspective on the world.

The following pages will show how the Holy Spirit worked through me while guiding me in places where it was truly needed. Yes, it extended to others; that is unmistakable. But importantly, the Holy Spirit worked within me to remake the man that I am today. I can write that the man I am

today is far different from the man I was those many years ago. How so? Well, older yes, gray hair, much less hair, carrying more than a few more pounds, but indeed as a living example of the doctrine of substitution found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I have been reborn through baptism, made new, refreshed, as His disciple, a pastor, a friend to many, a caregiver to fellow believers and those who are new to the faith, and importantly, a friend to those who have yet to come to know the love, mercy, and grace, of our beloved Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Chapter 1...Unimaginable Squalor

I was shocked at the diversity in the Southeast Asian areas I visited. I could see street children who were so dirty and poor, neglected, running through traffic and in traffic were Maserati automobiles. The children instinctively knew not to touch those vehicles, or they would be manhandled. I would see young girls, some perhaps pre-teens, selling themselves on the streets, and within the luxury automobiles, young women, smoking expensive cigarettes, numb to the plight of those outside the smoke opaqued glass, hoping to forget where they once came from or perhaps abducted from.

Young girls are already children on a hip begging for money or food, ready to sell themselves for survival. Children running in and out of traffic chased by police wielding batons. These children are like vermin and must be dealt with and stamped out.



It was shocking for me to see the injustice and the inhumane treatment—Go-Go bars with girls pulling men inside while others picked men's pockets.

Drunk men were thrown outside to vomit on the sidewalk. Other men led to upper-level apartments for short stays and

happy endings. Others like me mingle and observe the perversity all around.

Street vendors chop mystery meat and cook meals with unknown ingredients. The area is filthy, and the air conditioning is inadequate everywhere. The temperature in the streets is stifling. The smell of hot cooking oil and raw sewage upsets the stomach. Dead stray animals lay in the street. A pimp is beating a prostitute, and policemen watch without a care in the world.

I look in an alley behind a fish market, and there is a little wooden shed just “large” enough for a family of four to crawl inside. The smell from the fish market is overpowering, as are the remnants of the fish guts rot in the gutter. Two naked children, perhaps under the age of five, live in this squalor inside this shed, their parents sitting atop, eating wasted scraps of fish meat from the market.

I have had enough and decided to return to the ship, where it’s calm, dark, and

relatively quiet. As I walk along the street, I look, and the Shore Patrol is breaking up a fight involving Sailors, and just then, I step in what appears to be dog feces.

That's it! A night on the town just hit the low point, indeed. But then I realized I should not complain, for what I just stepped in can be wiped away. However, those who live in this mess are immersed in it, and because of this, I should pray for them, uplifting them and their needs.

This place has been serving Sailors for decades. I know because Sailors have been talking about this place for many years. The things that go on here are too obscene to write about here. It wasn't like this before we came here. Sadly, it's like this because we came here. These people are not a depraved group; they are this way to serve our wickedness. And for all of those sea stories, and all the belly laughs that go along with them, there is a depth of sadness that genuinely can't be comprehended.

Of note, I do not intend to indict anyone but myself in these pages. I observed these things, and they deeply affected me. However, I stood silent and did nothing. Now, decades later, I have found the courage to write about the injustice. Indeed, I suppose it is not brave, just a guilty conscience.

Chapter 2...The Fishbowl

I found myself in back alleys and unexpected posh rooms during my travels. The smell of stale tobacco and overturned alcohol onto dirty carpets with musty air conditioning, and members of my group. I was greeted by an overly friendly, attractive woman who gestured for us to sit. A curtain was pulled before us, and behind a large glass window were rows of beautiful women, dressed differently, some wearing nearly nothing, others wearing customs, all with a number attached to whatever they wore. Sighting the number worn by the women you fancy, one would tell the man of the bar, and that would be your companion to be escorted to upper rooms for favors.

The music was much too loud as I sat there and noticed something significant. Despite all the activity, the flashing lights, and the abundance of alcohol, the women behind the glass—the fishbowl—were not smiling. Though each woman was

beautifully young, they were desperately sad. Then I realized that this was their life: one of drunk men, musky, many older, overweight, needing a shower, grab-happy, having their way with #37, repeatedly for however many times during each day.

I had had enough, and as I went outside, I hired a taxi to return to my hotel room. I talked with the driver and asked him about the girls. He was surprised by my questions and wondered if I wanted one as a companion. What I wanted was to understand why young women would do such work. I indeed demonstrated my naiveté.

He told me the lights and costumes entice these young women, as do the handlers' promises. Many come from villages where they have very little income. They do this work and accept their plight to send money home. For the women, what they do is noble as it is a sacrifice, sacrificing themselves for family back in a village far away from the madness of the city.

Rather than look down on these women I did not know and did not hire for a short stay, I talked with two of them while they were serving drinks. I drank watered-down flat cola without ice; I remember they asked why I wasn't interested in women or if I was interested in something else. I told them that I was interested in a higher power. They smiled politely at me, not knowing this higher power concept.

"I believe in God, so I'd rather not partake of such things. I'm here to watch over others here."

"Like a guardian?" one of the women asked.

"Yes, they refer to me as Father Bob," I said, yelling over the thunderous music.

They didn't quite understand the notion of Father Bob either, but giggled at me. That won't be the last time someone would find the idea of Father Bob funny or evoke a remark less than complimentary. Nonetheless, I learned to pray for those who

didn't understand and those who degraded me.

These women didn't understand the "Father Bob" moniker either. They just smiled at me, offered me the two-fingered peace sign, and turned to tend to other patrons. Well, on a positive note, it wasn't the one-finger salute and being told to get out for being a killjoy.



Chapter 3...You're Not the Devil?



When serving in Afghanistan, I met numerous people to whom I remain close. The Afghan people are a mysterious group. They are not a unified alliance like we Americans are and always will be; they are tribal and clannish.

Our mistake in Afghanistan was a doomed nation-building attempt to instill our Western values of thousand-dollar-

branded democratic suites upon men who

honestly thought they looked a bit silly wearing what the West demanded of them portended the outcome. The Western government could not make them, nor would the Afghans bow down to the West. History showed this, but Americans are not good students of history.

I interacted with many Afghan men, some of whom were evil men, other maniacal men. Often, their thoughts about American men were stereotypical: drunkards, smokers, drug users, womanizers, child molesters, and deviants, not to be trusted.

Most Afghan men I met were hardworking, faithful men who followed their faith, loved their families, and followed society's prescribed values. They wanted better for themselves and their families, followed the tenets of their faith, and lived their lives. They were affected by radical fundamentalists who disrupted their tranquil lives with usurpation and violence.

Occasionally, I was asked questions I found somewhat branding, but the Afghans only knew the propaganda they were told. There is an important matter: Men in power will always be corruptible and share vices. The minority ruling class looks down on the agrarian or peasant class from a position of lofty heights. This way, they believe their deviance will not be detected. Even here in the US, the ruling class would have us believe they are a righteous lot, but of course, they are greedy, infected with corruption, yet shameless.

Being an American—a bearded American with supposed remarkable influence—because, in the Afghan eye, I wore no uniform, carried special weapons, and was accompanied by a unique Afghan interpreter—an amazing man, whom I owe my life to—they would ask for unique favors.

I could see it in their eyes when they were told “no” when asked if I drank alcohol, smoked cigarettes, preferred

marijuana or hashish, preferred women or boys, and so on and so on. Why? Because American men did, that was what they were told. And, wanting to be accommodated, my desires could be satisfied. Interesting, from what source? Smuggled goods, homegrown illicit drugs – not only marijuana and hashish, but also opium and heroin – and prostitution. All these vices were supposedly outlawed in a theocratic fundamentalist society cloaked in a democratic curtain.

My responses were, of course, “No” to all of these overtures.

The question would be, “Why Baba, I thought all American men liked such things?”

I would respond, “I choose not to because I am a man of God.”

The individual would then look at me with personal shame and newfound respect. Upon this introduction of my faith, I checkmate this individual because he had

revealed that, according to his faith, he was a wicked, fallen person.

No matter the individual, and unlike the training I had endured, I now admit that I considered the adversary a human being. I did not allow myself to become so jaded that the opponent became something less than a person. At the end of an interaction with the individual, some of these men were evil, I would say to them, "I will keep you and your loved ones close at heart, in my thoughts and prayers." I did not utter these words foolheartedly. I did so from the heart.

The look in their eyes was not of disbelief but of wonder. I was spreading the Good News of the Gospel to those I thought needed it the most. Unlike my opponent, whose doctrine is convert or die, a life in the Lord Jesus Christ is one of rebirth with the promise of an eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

During my career, I served the best I could. I could have served perhaps in ways superiors may have expected more from me,

but I answered to a higher authority than a uniform with stars on shoulder boards. I answer to the Creator of the universe.

After I left the military, I finally accepted that once you are gone, it is as if you were never there. I did what I did, and that was that. And now I am alright with that. I accept that some men remain in positions of power and influence who thought less of me while I was in uniform and haven't thought of me since my departure. They, too, served and will look back on their service one day, and in reflection, they will be without the prestige they once had. I prefer to ponder that they don't think about me, but I pray for them.

In retirement and pursuing and being pursued to take the lucrative overseas contractor positions, I wrestled with my conscience and finally left the Intelligence field altogether.

I relinquished the thought of being the master of my destiny and now know that as a disciple of the Lord, I will follow Jesus as

He guides me, spreading His Good Word around the world and to those in inhospitable places.

There are many more than I, one man can reach. Detractors will say, "Why do this? It's useless. You can't change the world."

Well, there is this metaphysical consequence referred to as the "Butterfly effect." If one life is changed by introducing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a person, a generational effect occurs, and lives are changed through the power of the Lord.

Please believe me. Looking back, if I had been told that I would be a pastor and a philanthropist, spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I would have told you flat out, "No!" Perhaps I was blind and had to have a Road to Damascus moment only to see what the Lord Jesus needed of me.

A haunting memory captured on film occurred during a visit to an Afghan refugee camp in 2004. I saw this dirty little girl with matted hair, wearing an oversized torn jacket, tattered sweatpants, and rubber boots

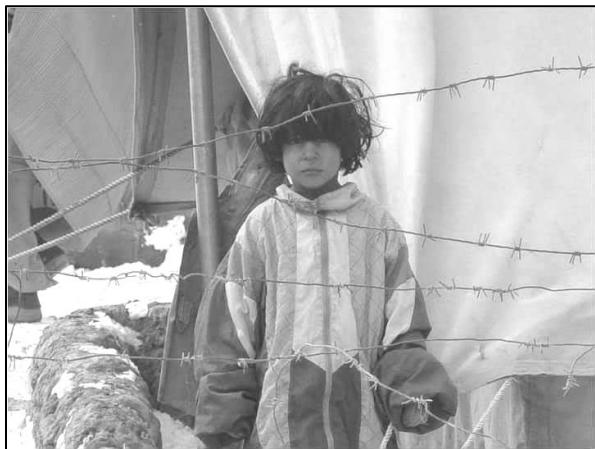
standing behind barbed wire. I photographed this little girl as she stared at me. I didn't personally interact with her but made eye contact with her throughout the humanitarian relief mission to the camp, where articles of clothing were distributed.

Unfortunately, there was not enough for everyone. As the distribution efforts ended and it became apparent to those who were not going to receive aid, those who were needful nearly rioted. Afghans were fighting over empty cardboard boxes that could be used for fuel. I watched in horror as children were trampled over cardboard boxes and trodden into the thick, frosted mud of a cold winter's morning in Kabul.

Luckily, a NATO convoy of Special Forces soldiers passed, observed the situation, and rendered aid, allowing our group to depart.

I often think about that little girl who, if alive, would be approximately thirty-eight years old. I pray for her; I pray for her children. This is the generational effect I

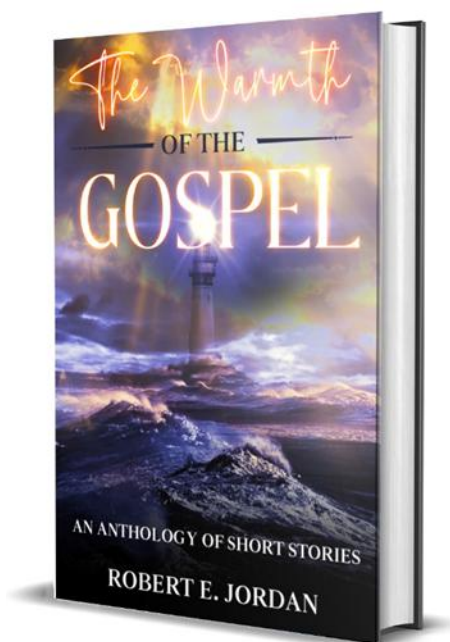
wrote of. As I serve those in Afghanistan today, I wonder, just perhaps, that as I serve people experiencing poverty, feeding those who hunger, maybe my efforts touch this little girl's heart today.



About The Author



Robert E. Jordan is a retired disabled veteran and author of the internationally renowned *Faith, Flag, and Family: A Purposeful Guide for Selfless Service*, the historical account *In Defense of The Home Front: The War Service of My Parents During World War II*, the philosophical and poetic *My View of What Others Perceive*, and the well-received *The Warmth Of The Gospel: An Anthology of Short Stories*. Robert also collaborated with his granddaughter to write two biblically based teen novellas and four children's books. Titles are available from jordanpublicationsllc.bigcartel.com. Titles are also available from Amazon.com.



Robert published *The Warmth Of The Gospel: An Anthology of Short Stories* in late 2024. For more information, please email Robert E. Jordan at Jordan.publications.llc@gmail.co



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