

# I R A Q

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

*story by Sean Mercadante  
photos by U.S. Army*

Many believers have a unique testimony of how the Lord brought them into a relationship with Him. Some, like Elijah, hear a still, small voice. Others, like Paul, have been knocked to the ground by a bright light from heaven. For Jimmy Ide, it took an enemy rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) hurtling past his head.

*U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James H. Christopher III*



*Soldiers search fields to identify and capture terrorists in the village of Shakaria, Iraq, during Operation Falcon Sweep.*



*Staff Sgt. Carlswell of Bravo Company, greets a little Iraqi girl during a traffic control point operation at Bridge 1, Mosul, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

*U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin L. Moses, Sr.* That RPG was the culmination of God’s lengthy assault on Jimmy Ide’s heart. Jimmy, a staff sergeant in the United States Army, was raised in a military family.

He was serving in the army when terrorists attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. “Patriotism hit me hard and I focused on my nation’s needs. I transported terrorists from Afghanistan to Camp X-Ray, Cuba, and deployed to Iraq in March 2003.”

As for his spiritual state, Jimmy related, “I was a guy who thought I was going to heaven because I confessed that Jesus died for my sins and yet, today, looking back, I don’t think I believed it in my heart.”



*Staff Sgt. Jimmy Ide*

Then the incident with the RPG occurred. On November 25, 2003, Jimmy’s unit was escorting an Iraqi currency exchange (ICE) convoy. Convoy escort duty is particularly hazardous. “My soldiers and I were engaged by a rocket propelled grenade from the rear,” said Jimmy. “The RPG narrowly missed my head and hit a nearby building, and in the process severely limited visibility and our ability to return fire. By the time the smoke and dust cleared, no enemy personnel were anywhere to be seen.”

Though his unit didn’t sustain any casualties from that attack, the day’s events really got his attention since he came so close to death. “I began to think about my life and if I was going to heaven. I began to think about my daughter who was born a month after I got to Iraq, and I had never seen her. I began to think about my wife, wondering what she would do without me. I promised

the Lord, that if I made it out of Iraq alive, I would start learning more about Him.”

A week after his close call with the RPG, Jimmy's squad was assigned another ICE mission. Jimmy describes the events of that day: “My squad pulled up to the bank we were assigned to secure, and suddenly we were attacked by small arms fire. It escalated into a 45-minute firefight. A substantial enemy element attacked us. They attempted to flank my squad. Their attack consisted of simultaneous fire from mortars, RPGs and automatic rifles.”

His roommate was critically wounded. Jimmy said, “He was standing outside his vehicle door, listening to the radio and directing his gunner and driver to engage targets. His gunner says he saw something coming toward the vehicle and ducked down into the vehicle. I think it was an RPG. Some say it was a mortar. Whatever it was, it hit his rifle and destroyed it. It ripped his Kevlar helmet off his head, as well as his lower jaw and everything from



U.S. Army photo by Senior Airman Desiree N. Paldacio

**U.S. Army PFC William Ramirezsegarra checks an Iraqi boy's temperature, part of a medical program for local Iraqis in the village of Almeshabama, Iraq.**

his nose down to his jaw. They had to reconstruct his jaw and nose and graft skin to his face from the nose down.”

Jimmy arranged for his comrade, surviving severe facial wounds, to be evacuated and began to orchestrate his squad's exit strat-

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egy. “During the firefight,” recalled Jimmy, “I was certainly protected and felt the Lord's hand upon me. Not only was God protecting me then, but even today as I go to sleep, I don't have flashbacks or nightmares.”

After he returned to the United States, he remembered his promise to God and accompanied a friend to a non-denominational church. During his second visit, Jimmy gave his life to Christ. He says, “I can now say I am positive I will be with the Lord for eternity. I have a feeling in my heart that I never felt before. I tried to find answers in everything but the Bible and searched everywhere else but at church for the answers. God was patient and waited for the right time to pull me into the body of Christ.”

Later, one of Jimmy's co-workers invited him to another church, Calvary Fellowship of Killeen, Texas, pastored by John Newberry. Jimmy felt the church was down-to-earth



**U.S. Army 1st Lt. Andrew Brant and an interpreter speak with children during a dismounted patrol in Mosul, Iraq.**

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James H. Christopher III

and the Bible teachings right on track with the Word of God.

His time at Calvary Fellowship helped Jimmy and his family to begin putting their lives in order. “I learned to focus on Jesus and not on the problem, and things have been getting much better at home,” said Jimmy.

He enjoys the many ministry opportunities that present themselves: “Sometimes I get to teach someone about what God's word says, and sometimes I get to defend my faith. Every day is a good day with the Lord and I try to let the light of Jesus reflect off of me. I just don't know how I ever survived without a relationship with my Creator.”

The young sergeant recently returned from his second deployment to Iraq, this time as a born-again Christian. “As a new believer, I had a peace in my spirit,” confessed Jimmy. “I have nothing to fear. As God orders my footsteps and guides me through His plans

for my life, I can relax knowing that He is by my side every step of the way. It brings me a great joy now, knowing that I am doing something for more than just myself, or my country, or my family. I'm living my life for the Creator of the universe. ☺



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U.S. Army photo by Spec. Charles W. Gill



**The U.S. Army and the Iraqi army Special Troops Company conduct a clinical health outreach program in Subak Sur, Iraq.**