Marine Leadership Perspective

Marlantes states, “I felt responsible for the lives and deaths of my companions. I was struggling with a situation approaching the sacred in its terror and contact with the infinite...I needed help with the existential terror of my own death and responsibility for the death of others, enemies, and friends.” This quote expresses the feeling many Marines have experienced at the conclusion of a combat tour. As Marines work through the questions, the struggles, the shifts between pride, fear, and nightmares of their time in the “Temple of Mars,” upon reading through this book they will gain an understanding that their post combat feelings and thoughts are now validated. To realize that no one Marine is truly alone in experiencing the memories of their thoughts and actions during combat is a great relief. The difficulty many Marines face is knowing where, with who, and how to, talk about those experiences. With this book, warriors gain the capacity to put words to their own experiences and feel more prepared to have in-depth, meaningful conversations with fellow Marines. This book is a profound addition to the Commandants reading list that will enhance the ability of every leader, NCO and above, to process their own combat experiences, and engage with their Marines in this process.

Marine Leader Small Group Discussion Questions

1) “We lie because we find ourselves in positions where it appears the truth will hurt us” (p.132). How does lying intersect with the tenants of honor, courage, and commitment?
2) How would you describe the “warrior” within you? What roles does that “warrior” play at work, at home, and with your friends?
3) "Behavior sets standards, not ideals" (p. 113). What behaviors form the standards of the USMC? Of our unit? Of your family?
4) In the heat of the moment, whether in combat or in a field exercise, how do you determine whether to rely on logic or emotion? How does your training guide you in that moment?
5) In preparing to return home following combat, what would have assisted in your transition home? How would you like your family to respond and receive you? How can we help those in the future? If you have not been in combat, what would be helpful for others to share with you?
6) Karl Marlantes states that “You can’t be a good person until you observe how bad you are.” Do you believe this to be a true statement?
7) How does character, your character, impact your actions both on and off the field of battle?
8) How should a Marine spiritually prepare for combat?
9) What types of ceremonies or rituals would be helpful for preparing for combat and returning home?
10) "Individuality must not be suppressed even though individual action is subordinated” (p.141). What makes you unique as an individual and how does what you bring make us a stronger unit?
11) "Behavior sets standards, not ideals" (p. 113). What behaviors form the standards of the USMC? Of our unit? Of your family?