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Sex and the Faithful Soldier

By JOHN LELAND

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ADD another item to the well-equipped soldier's duffel. An evangelical radio ministry has developed a book kit meant to help soldiers protect their sexual purity, and is raising money to send 6,000 kits to chaplains who have requested them.

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[Books in the Battle Kits](#)

The kits, from New Life Ministries, which broadcasts on 150 stations nationally, is intended to promote Bible-based abstinence from pornography, adultery, nonmarital sex and masturbation. "Your goal is sexual purity," the authors write. "You are sexually pure when no sexual gratification comes from anyone or anything but your wife."

The five-book "Every Soldier's Battle" kit, boxed in camouflage, arrives at a time of "increased underlying tension in military chaplaincy," as more chaplains come from evangelical Christian traditions, said David Segal, director of the Center for Research on Military Organization at the University of Maryland. These chaplains often bring a culture of proselytizing, Mr. Segal said, that is "not in consonance with the way the military defines chaplaincy."

"Every Soldier's Battle" began with a call earlier this year to New Life from Michael Music, a chaplain's assistant (official rank: religious program specialist first class), with a Navy unit then in [Iraq](#).

"There was a big problem as far as sexual incidents, harassment, some diseases and unplanned pregnancies," Mr. Music said, speaking from Millington, [Tenn.](#), where he is now stationed. His chaplain, Brian Keel, mentioned "Every Man's Battle," by the founder of New Life, Stephen Arterburn, and Fred Stoeker, which the ministry calls "a practical, detailed plan to help men find freedom from sexual temptation God's way." It has sold 701,000 copies, according to Mr. Arterburn's assistant. (There's a popular spinoff, "Every Woman's Battle.")

Mr. Music asked: Could they get copies to run a soldiers' group?

"You've got really good guys over there who are trying to keep their act together," said Mr. Arterburn, host of a daily radio program of Christian counseling. Mr. Arterburn said he was particularly concerned about pornography, which he said "has actually neutered men," because it has replaced real women with images.

The ministry assembled the kits as part of a study program, including either "Every Man's Battle" or "Every Woman's Battle," and asked for donations.

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So far it has raised \$69,645. The kits, which cost about \$50, have not been shipped yet, Mr. Arterburn said.

Sgt. First Class Daniel L. Roberts, a chaplain's assistant at Fort Jackson in [South Carolina](#), requested 200 kits for troops in basic combat training. "Overseas, they'll have to battle temptations," said Sergeant Roberts, who added that he approaches sexual matters from a "commitment standpoint" as well as a "biblical standpoint."

He said he thought the kits would be helpful, but added that he was dubious about treating masturbation as a sin. "When you're deployed, away from family, it happens," Sergeant Roberts said. "I don't think that equates to sexual impurity."

Mr. Segal of the University of Maryland said the war in Iraq had created unusually high sexual and marital tensions, because troops are deployed more often and for longer stints than in other recent wars, and because more soldiers are married. Divorce rates have risen, especially in the Army, where the number of divorces nearly doubled from 2001 to 2004, to 4 percent of all married personnel.

Sgt. Rowe Stayton, a former Air Force pilot who served in Iraq in the National Guard, said about a quarter of the soldiers in his platoon ended their marriages while in Iraq. At the same time, he said, troops in Iraq "indulge in sexual fantasies more than they ever would in the U.S.," because there was so little to do most of the time.

Mr. Music said that 100 soldiers participated in his groups using "Every Man's Battle," openly discussing their temptations and lapses. "Us as men, we need to be accountable," he said.

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