

# TENDER WARRIOR

EVERY MAN'S PURPOSE  
EVERY WOMAN'S DREAM  
EVERY CHILD'S HOPE

STU WEBER



TENDER  
WARRIOR



S T U   W E B E R

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To  
Byron C. Weber,  
my father, my hero...Dad.  
And to my three tender warriors:

Kent Byron Weber,  
my first-born son  
and night owl buddy  
who bears his grandfather's name.

Blake Nathan Weber,  
my "middle arrow"  
and ministry partner  
who bears, like the prophet of old,  
his own strong name.

Ryan Stuart Weber,  
my perspective-yielding friend  
whose "bear hugs are the best"  
and who bears his father's name.

No man could ask for a finer quiver full.

May you impact on target.

And to Linda,  
my wife, their mother, and the lady  
who made us all more tender.

You are the most determined human  
being I've ever met.

Thanks, dear! You're an incredible woman.

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# FOREWORD

Let me shoot straight with you. You are holding in your hands a great book. *Tender Warrior* is a great book because it is written by a great leader. Wherever Stu Weber has gone over the last twenty-five years, he has been a superb leader of men. He has led on the football field, behind enemy lines in Vietnam as a member of the Special Forces, in a growing and dynamic church in the Pacific Northwest, and most importantly, he has led his family. It doesn't take much time watching his three sons to realize that these young men were raised by a unique leader.

*Tender Warrior* is a title that describes the author. You could drop Stu in the middle of a jungle without any tools, weapons, or provisions, and he would be just fine. That's toughness. But you can also put Stu into a group of people and it won't take him long to identify the one with a broken heart or a broken dream. That's tenderness. The bottom line is this: Stu is a great leader of men because he is a superb follower of Christ. That's why I like to hang around Stu. I always come away with a little more balance.

In a day like ours when books written to men roll off the presses like cheeseburgers coming through a drive-through window, *Tender Warrior* is a piece of aged and tender New York steak, seared to perfection and sizzling with juices that confirm just the right splash of seasoning.

Many men will read this book. Even more will study this book. But most men will devour this book.

Believe me. It's that good.

Steve Farrar

Dallas, Texas

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**D**on Jacobson, publisher and friend, who *insisted* this book happen. Thanks, Don, for your belief in me over the years. May your tribe, “partners,” and impact increase!

Larry Libby, editor and artist, who *made* this book happen. Thanks, Larry, for your humble spirit and incredible giftedness. They only told me half the story. You are one of a kind...and a friend!

The ministry management team at Good Shepherd Church—truly “a few good men”:

Alan Hlavka, pastor of “see-that-it-gets-done.” (Who needs a Franklin planner when you have a Hlavka?)

Steve Keels, ministry developer, best student ministry pastor in the Northwest, and “staff entertainer” par excellence.

Bob Maddox, team trainer and faithful servant, master of the transferable, and the only water polo player I’ve ever known.

Steve Tucker, administrator of integrity and heart, lifesaver and friend, whose eye for detail makes us all look good. To put it in your own words, “Thank you.”

Joan Petersen, my secretary, who keeps me “on the right page” in this crazy, soul-growing calendar called “life in the ministry.”

The encouraging people of Good Shepherd Community Church and my fellow elders, who lead such a “happening” in Oregon’s countryside:



Arden Meyer  
Byron Weber  
Tom Poole  
Norm Norquist  
Jim Spinks  
Mel Erickson  
Denny Deveney  
Alan Hlavka

You lead the flock so well. We all love you for it.



TENDER  
WARRIOR

CHAPTER ONE

WAKE-UP CALL  
*A Man Faces Himself*



*The present time is of the highest importance—  
it is time to wake up to reality...*

*The night is nearly over, the day has almost dawned....*

*Let us arm ourselves for the fight of the day!*

ROMANS 13:11-12, PHILLIPS

How many times can a man hear a wake-up call without waking up? Some men, I suppose, never do. This man almost didn't.

I've had two major wake-up calls at two crossroads in my life. Neither was much like the gentle ring of an alarm clock. Both were more akin to the crack of a two-by-four across the back of my skull. But I guess you could say I hit the snooze button twice before coming fully awake.

The first call came in the heat and terror of Vietnam. I was serving in the Fifth Special Forces Group. The last guy who had held my job had just been court-martialed along with five other Green Beret officers who had allegedly crossed a few lines of their own—such as murdering a triple agent. I was the Group Intelligence Operations Officer. In many ways it was a great

job. The Berets' AO (area of operation) was essentially the entire country. I was responsible for briefing "the old man," Col. "Iron Mike" Healy, on the enemy situation around our A-Team camps from the Delta in the south to the DMZ in the north. Very few young captains had access to the entire country as I did. Very few could grab aircraft when needed. It was heady stuff for a twenty-five-year-old from Yakima, Washington.

One of our functions was associated with flying the SLAR ships—Huey helicopters equipped with Side-Looking Airborne Radar. Used to locate enemy troop movement, they flew almost daily. Several of us officers took turns flying with them. On one of the days I was not flying, the ship went down, and one of my fellow officers was killed. When the news was confirmed at headquarters, a thick silence descended.

We were all angry. Sick. Frustrated. Sorry it was him. Glad it wasn't us.

Somehow it fell to me to collect his personal effects and prepare them for shipping home to his wife. Such a task makes a guy reflect a bit. As I was cleaning out his locker, it dawned on me that he would never see his wife again. He would never be able to tell her, "I'm sorry." For a moment, an uncomfortable thought pricked me—like the tip of a knife blade, just breaking the skin. I knew that I had been living by a "second-chance philosophy" of life. I had always figured, *Hey, if I hurt Linda today, there's always tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll do better.*

Now, for my friend, there was no tomorrow.

One little message came scrolling across the screen of my mind: *Okay, Stu. It could have been you. What if it had been you?*

I shook it off. That kind of stuff happened to other people. Other people's choppers went down. Other people died. Not me. What I was actually doing was postponing my wake-up call, pushing it away. The alarm was ringing, but I didn't want to hear it. I punched the snooze button and blocked it from my mind.

Some time later, however, the alarm rang again.

Louder. Much louder.

It started when I was in midair.

I had just jumped out of an airplane with an officer from II Corps. Ranking soldiers often jump as "wind dummies" so the pilot can observe

where they land and adjust to the winds and the DZ (drop zone). That way, the rest of the “stick” (other jumpers) can land where they’re supposed to.

As I left the right side of the plane, my partner went out the left. In a freak turn of events we came together under the plane—chest to chest. Instinctively reacting to our training, we pushed away from one another, like marionettes dancing at the end of strings. We cleared, but his chute dropped below me, and I ended up on top of his canopy. Now fully deployed, his canopy was creating a vacuum that was not allowing my chute to open. As trained, I ran across his canopy and jumped, trying to clear it.

It didn’t work.

I tried it again. Still, it didn’t work.

He landed with me on top of his canopy. It folded around me rendering my landing blind. I crashed hard but the flowing adrenaline covered the pain, and we managed to remove the chutes, hide them in the bushes, and wait for the rest of the guys. I was “fine,” but something felt peculiar. Something inside my chest wasn’t right.

For the next several weeks I was moved from the field to the dispensary to the next dispensary and finally to the hospital facilities at Cam Ranh Bay. The doctors searched for an explanation as to the damage. There had to be some kind of weakness to allow the sternum to separate as it did. The most likely reason for that weakness? A malignancy.

*What? Saved from a botched parachute jump to die of cancer? How could that be? How could that happen?*

Sitting there in the hospital at Cam Ranh, lonely, scared, and homesick, I was forced once again to think about death. My death. In my mind’s eye, it was closer than ever before.

As it turned out, there was no malignancy. Only one slightly damaged and very shaken trooper. I healed up and, as before, pushed away any thoughts of my own mortality and went back to duty.

One more punch on the snooze button.

I’d had two chances to respond to the wake-up call. Two chances more than I deserved. Two chances more than a lot of my friends had been given. But God, in His grace, gave me yet one more.

It was in the spring. On a hillside. We were at Dak Pek, at the northern

end of the Dak Poko Valley in the central highlands. My face was pushed into the muddy banks of a small trench at the perimeter of a Special Forces A-Camp.

Something was out there. Something big. And we knew it. All the indicators were there. We'd been picking them up for days—more frequent “hostile” contact with our patrols, increased radio traffic (only “big boys” had such radios in the North Vietnamese Army), and a real upsurge in other tactical intelligence in the area. Even the informant “agent nets” began to pick up abnormal numbers of clues.

They were out there all right. And we were their target. Overrunning a Special Forces A-Camp was a prime trophy for any NVA big shot.

The wait was not pleasant. In some ways, it was almost as bad as being under attack. Just knowing that there were several companies of crack North Vietnamese regulars out there on the perimeter—waiting for the right moment to come screaming out of the forest—turned life into a waking nightmare. There in that muddy ditch, reeling from the fears and threats of imminent combat, I finally heard the wake-up call. I finally faced the real possibility that I would never go home. I finally faced up to the fact that I might not beat the odds. My life might indeed end in that faraway place. It might not be “someone else” leaving that valley in a body bag. It might not be “someone else” flying home in a silver, flag-draped coffin.

I could actually die. Within hours. Minutes. Seconds. As I grappled with those thoughts, a question burned its way to the surface of my mind. After smoldering in my soul for months, the question now burst into hot flame.

*What matters? What really matters?*

If a young captain by the name of Stuart K. Weber died in the Dak Poko Valley, what would he have accomplished during his quarter century on earth? What was life all about, anyway?

Called back to Nha Trang, I caught a helicopter out of Dak Pek and missed the worst of the battle. Our little camp was virtually blasted from the face of the planet. Eventually, the siege lifted and the NVA crawled away to lick their wounds. Our guys loaded up the wounded, collected the dead, and began to build the camp all over again. Somehow, for some reason, I'd been handed yet one more chance to wake up and open my eyes.

And this time, I did. I began rethinking my life.

Again, I went back to duty, but I was never the same. The spiritual roots of my childhood, long abandoned during the social and intellectual turmoil of the sixties, began to take hold in my heart. The faith of my father and grandfather had sent pilings deep into my soul. I realized that Jesus Christ was exactly who He said He was. He became very real to me. And life changed from that day.

### ANOTHER KIND OF WAKE-UP CALL

Some fifteen years into my marriage with Linda, I experienced my second life-changing wake-up call. It wasn't much less shocking than the first. Another two-by-four. This one didn't come out of the sky like a mortar shell, but it did come out of the blue. Actually, it flashed out of Linda's eyes. For the first time in all our years together, I saw anger there. Deep anger. Hot anger. It was not like Linda. That made it unmistakable.

It was absolutely clear—there would be some changes in our relationship, or our relationship would change. Things were never going to be the same.

Linda and I had met as kids. She was playing third base on an eighth grade girls' softball team. My sophomore cronies and I were watching the proceedings intently, and not solely out of a burning interest in baseball. During the course of the contest, a hot grounder went to third. Linda scooped it up and in one fluid motion pegged it to first. I was stunned. She didn't "throw like a girl." There was no arch in that peg. It carried across the infield in one flat trajectory. *Whoa!* I was impressed. I wanted to know a girl who could compete like that.

A couple of days later I saw her in a print skirt, femininity personified. Now I really wanted to get to know her.

Three years of high school, four years of college, three sons, and twenty-five years of marriage later, we are still together. And in a fun kind of way, I suppose we are still competing.

Linda and I believe that if we can have a meaningful marriage, anyone can. We are both first-borns. We are both aggressive in personality and competitive in nature. She grew up in an abusive home and subconsciously determined never to be dominated by another male. In my early years I was unsettled in my relationship with my mother and subconsciously decided I would never be manipulated by another female. Today we are growing beyond these things. But in the early days of our marriage we were unwittingly speeding toward a washed-out bridge.

At the fifteen-year mark, when I looked into my wife's angry, flashing eyes, I began to realize some things. Seems I had been taking our relationship for granted. Looking back, I realized I had been treating her more like a trophy—conquered and on the shelf—than a companion. More like a contractual partner than a friend with whom to share my insides. The signals had been there, but I hadn't seen them. Typical guy. But this time that "second chance" philosophy was finished. Linda and I began to rediscover one another. We still are.

But how did we come to that morass? Why did marriage shape up in those early years more like combat than companionship? It had a lot to do with my manliness—or the lack of it. Understanding how the living God put me together as a man has helped us to grow as a couple.

And manliness is what this book is about. Manliness—real, God-made, down-in-the-bedrock masculinity—is something men in our culture are scrambling to understand. Tough? Tender? Strong? Sensitive? Fierce? Friendly? Which is it? We're frustrated. Often confused. Sometimes irritable. But determined. Determined to discover our manhood and live it to the hilt.

To do that, we first need to look our culture's confusion straight in the eye. We need to look at ourselves and face up to a few things. We need to sort through what really matters in life and go fifteen rounds with some tough issues.

Maybe you've already experienced a couple of wake-up calls in the course of your life.

Lying in a hospital bed with a searing pain in your chest, getting tangled in your buddy's parachute, listening to the whistle of incoming mortar shells,



or looking into the furious eyes of the only woman you've ever loved can certainly open a fellow's eyes.

Chances are, you won't need the kind of alarm bells it took to pry me out of slumber. As a matter of fact, our gracious God might even choose to use a book like this to accomplish the same thing in your life, without all that trauma and shock and sheer terror.

So let's consider this your first wake-up call. We have a great day ahead of us, lots of ground to cover, and a mother lode of encouragement just waiting to be mined.

Up and at 'em, Tender Warrior.



# Let the Truth Hit Home

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## A MAN FACES HIMSELF

1. Take about thirty minutes to sit down with paper and pen. Divide your life into your major areas of responsibility—husband, father, church, job, friends, etc. As honestly as you can, ask yourself if you need a wake-up call in any of these areas. Jot down any problem areas and note one or two things you could do about them next week.
2. For the stout hearted: Ask your wife to read chapter 1 of *Tender Warrior* and then ask her, “Hon, if you could name just one area where you think I could use a wake-up call, what would it be?”

## A MAN MEETS WITH HIS FRIENDS

1. Just what is a “wake-up call”? Are the wake-up calls described in this chapter common problems with many men? Why, or why not?
2. Have you ever received a similar wake-up call? How did you react? What did you do?



3. At the heart of a major wake-up call is the question, “What really matters?” What really matters to *you*? In what ways do you demonstrate how critical it is to you?
4. What do you want to accomplish with your life? When your tombstone is carved, what words do you hope appear on it? What are you doing *now* to ensure that those words might, in fact, appear there?
5. Do you think you need a wake-up call? If so, in what area(s)? If your answer is no, would your wife agree?
6. How would your closest friends describe “manliness”? How would your co-workers? Your boss? Your pastor?
7. Agree or disagree: “It’s harder today for a man to be a real man than it is for a woman to be a real woman.” Why?
8. Before you read the rest of *Tender Warrior*, describe what you believe it means to be “a man’s man.”



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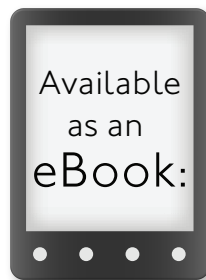
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