

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks.]

Katie Axelson: Welcome to Have Hope; Will Travel. I'm your host Katie Axelson. Today I'm here with a new friend Brittany Simmons. Brittany and I met through a group we're both a part of, called Called Creatives. She's a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel and a West Point graduate. She was deployed to Iraq and led a platoon of thirty-two police military soldiers. Her soldiers were the first responders to the 2009 mass shooting in Fort Hood Texas. She's also taught American Politics at West Point. She's a wife, a mother, and a leadership coach, and I'm super excited to hear a little bit more about her perspective. So Brittany, welcome to the show!

Brittany Simmons: Thanks for having me Katie, I'm really excited to be here today.

KA: I am as well! I'm excited to get to learn from you. So let's go ahead and jump right in: what made you decide to join the army?

BS: Oh well that is a long story in and of itself, but let's just say that Little Brittany as a five year old, the only thing she wanted for Christmas that year was camouflage clothes.

KA: Wow!

BS: I know, interesting for a five year old little girl. But I was definitely your, you know I guess "tomboy" is the phrase that they would use, going around playing. I just enjoyed that type of stuff. And I did get those camouflage clothes!

KA: Oh good!

BS: And my mom did have to hide them on a regular basis, otherwise I probably would have worn them every day. And so I just had a natural bent towards that. And then, it was the summer between my seventh and eighth grade, I happened to catch a show that was talking about a Christian woman Cadet at West Point. And it just - it just wrapped my heart, because it was everything that I wanted to do. I was already thinking the Army and I already knew West Point from a historical perspective because I loved history. But I had no idea that it still existed, much less that women could go to it because this was the mid-90s. And the first class to graduate with women was actually 1980. So it's not like women had been there super long, but seeing that - it was just like, God put that whole thing on my heart and I did everything I could in high school to go that route. And yeah, I ended up going to West Point and then spending a career as an army officer. I don't know that I would have spent a career as an Army officer. But yeah. It was that. And the big piece with that is that I really - I enjoyed the idea of what the Army did and I enjoyed the the physical nature of things, the working with other people, but as I got older it really was about the leadership piece and West Point itself calls it itself the nation, and really the world's, premier leadership lab. And that's what they're working to do, is to grow leaders. And they didn't fail me. And that was what I loved about it, amongst other things.

KA: That's awesome, I'm glad that it worked out too.

BS: Yeah, me too!

KA: Were there a lot of women at West Point?

BS: So it's changed drastically since I was there. When I was there it was about one in every ten cadets were women so it was a pretty small percentage. Now it's really about one in every four.

KA: Oh wow.

BS: So yeah, it's drastically changed since then. And so like, when I was teaching I had a whole lot more cadets, women cadets in my classes, than I would have ever had when I was a cadet. So it was an interesting environment.

KA: Yeah. Were there a lot of Christians there?

BS: So there's actually quite a few Christians I would say, and there's a few different ways you can get involved with Christian organizations there. They have several clubs. The one that I was involved with was called Officers Christian Fellowship. And so, I think it was Tuesday nights, basically we would have meetings where we would get together and we would have big group worship, and then we would go into smaller groups and some of the people from that OCF are still some of my closest friends ever. In fact my best friend is a Naval Academy graduate, and she did an exchange at West Point she was in OCF, Officers Christian Fellowship, at Navy and when she came up, she joined it there. She and I became friends and we, you know, she's my closest friend ever and it was because of being involved in OCF.

KA: That's awesome. What was it like being a Christian and serving the military?

BS: So I think, I guess I would say "difficult thing" is learning how to be a witness without just evangelizing everybody, right? Especially - I grew up in a Christian home, so in more of an Evangelical tradition, so talking about that. So what does it look like when you're not just like, openly sharing your faith in everything that you do. It's not a hostile place, I don't think, to Christians. In fact one of the great things about it is that it helped me grow as a Christian was the exposure to so many different people, from so many different backgrounds, with a wide variety of beliefs that it really made me look at myself and try to figure out, "Alright, how do I show this?" And a lot of how my character reflects. Like, why do I do the things the way that I do them? How do I treat everybody? Am I showing favorites? How do I talk? How do I interact? Am I an example of a good leader to these people? And elements of your character will stand out, and especially there's always going to be something that's going to be a hard time to test you. And when that comes, what comes out?

KA: Yeah. Was it easy to make friends? I know you talked about your friend from the Navy Academy, being a woman in a male dominated field and then I'm sure a Christian made you an outlier in a different way. How was building friendships?

BS: So in the first place I would say, building friends as an officer is a little bit more difficult because there's less of you versus the enlisted. And there's really - I mean there's a fraternization thing and all of it not supposed to happen so that makes it a little more difficult. I will say I got fortunate, and had several you know friends around, some that were Christians some that weren't. And I think that was just part of figuring out you know, who are your close ones. There were some really rough times that I had where I did not have, necessarily, that support network around. My second time that I was deployed to Iraq was probably one of the

lowest kind of times that I hit, especially early on. I just didn't have those close friendships. And I really needed somebody and I was really praying, "God send me a friend," and this goes to just one of the crazy ways that God does things, is that same friend of mine who's in the Navy – mind you she's in the Navy – after I'm praying for this, she gets deployed on an individual job that sends her literally to the exact same place I am, living one trailer apart. And I said I promised her I did not pray for her by name! [Katie and Brittany laugh.] God chose her to answer my prayer, not me praying for her by name.

KA: Yeah.

BS: And so for six months we were able to do that together and that just was phenomenal and with that she actually introduced me to two other Navy women, Navy officers, and the group of the four of us are just the closest friends now, and we read the Bible and different pieces together and hold each other accountable - even though we're in separate places and have been in separate places since then. That was back in 2007.

KA: Wow.

BS: But we use technology and just interact that way. So God has provided. I mean, there's been ups and there's been downs but He has definitely provided through that. So I'm not the personality that needs tons of friends. And so I need that close circle, so as long as I have that close circle I'm good, and He always seemed to provide that. But then two, there was other things where I was involved and didn't necessarily have friends that were just necessarily Christian friends. But I was involved in triathlons for a while and there's quite a good community with that, that's running or swimming or doing that type of stuff together. And then just finding, in some places, in some places I didn't have it, churches to be involved with.

KA: That's great you were able to find people and I love how the Lord provided literally, your best friend. When you were just like, "Any friend will do" and He's like, "Here, I'll give you the best one."

BS: Yep.

KA: What advice would you have for women in male dominated fields?

BS: I think is not to try to become the men, right? Like I think I've seen a lot of people like, try to become the men or try to be hyper-feminine. Like to distance themselves. Instead of just being the leader that God has made them to be. I do think we have to pay attention to, that there's some tendencies that we tend to fall into as women that are a little bit different than men, that are just not helpful to our leadership. And I think that's just part of our personal growth as leaders. You have to find the right stuff to study out there. It's not a Christian book, it's a secular book, but it's called How Women Rise by Sally Helgesen and it's good because it just points out some of the stumbling blocks, some of the things that we can do. Like we can say "Sorry," all the time for things we're not sorry for. "Oh I'm sorry I didn't get-" and that actually doesn't help you in your engagement with men in those type of environments, to do those type of things. And so it's learning to overcome some of those natural habits. We also - and again some of this is generalization but some studies show is we will tend to wait until we're really good at something until we try for the next thing, and so sometimes that holds us back whereas a lot of men,

especially in those male dominated workplaces where there's a lot of ambition, like they'll be forty to fifty percent ready and they're like, "Yep pick me." And so I think sometimes we just don't have enough confidence in the skills that we have to be able to say, "Okay I can do this." And that's one of the things I've learned is that sometimes we'll have that little bubble of "I should try this," and I'm like, "Well I'm not really ready," but everything - I don't think anybody's ever actually ready.

KA: Right.

BS: You learn while you're in the job that when you go for those things you feel called to do and that you want to try to do, and you step into them, like - you're going to learn it and you're going to do well. You're always going to come out better on the other end. Like I can't promise that people be successful but you're going to learn things that are going to grow you. And so I definitely, that was one of the things I learned at West Point was those things that gave me just a little bit of pause, but I really knew that I wanted to do but didn't necessarily feel ready to do - that when I stepped into those, that's exactly where I was supposed to be.

KA: I love the leadership coaching I'm already getting! I had a situation this week where I literally took it to one of my friends who was a man and I was like, "Okay I need to make sure, because I know women are less likely to go for this, and I need to make sure I'm not selling myself short here. What are your thoughts?" And he was like, "No, you're doing a great job," so that was encouraging and then the things that were - he was able to provide me some coaching on how to get more out of it the way - not "the way that a man would" - but the way that a woman would miss.

BS: Yeah that's awesome, and that's great that you had somebody to talk to. A lot of times that's difficult to have.

KA: Yeah. Do you have advice on how to develop people that you can use as resources like that?

BS: Oh goodness, I wish I could say I have - I mean, I've got a lot of, I would say male leaders that were really good leaders, that just from a leadership perspective we had that interaction. I don't know that we ever had the - in fact, I know we've never had that talk about the differences between male and female, and just you know, going "What does it go forward to look like a good leader," so I had those as good mentors. But - and my friend Blythe, she's the one that's the Navy officer, and she's still actually serving in the Navy and doing fantastic things. So we talk, we actually talk about this stuff all the time, is that the generation right before us had to break all of the glass ceilings. And then just had to claw their way up and they didn't have - I don't think any fault of their own in the military - they really didn't have a lot of time and ability to reach down and mentor us as much as I think my generation would have wanted because they were having to do all the hard work to still rise in those ranks. They hadn't hit the upper ranks yet at that time frame. And then there's a few others where I think they feel like, "Well I clawed my way through, so you can too." Like we've gotten a little bit of that. But there's a lot out there now that is reached more senior ranks in the military and just even looking at some of the other landscapes out there involved, whether it's in churches or volunteer, is that "Okay, yeah had to go through some hard stuff. But that doesn't mean it was necessarily right, and I'm not gonna -

I'm not going to spend a lot of time like bemoaning that because it actually did make me a better person, it forced me to be excellent, because excellent is what was required to be good. So okay, there's a real positive from that - but you know what, you should not have to necessarily go through that same thing. How can I help you be excellent but not have to go through some of those same types of things?" And so I think some of that is my generation and some of the other folks that are coming up just you know, a few years behind me of reaching out. Because it can be really hard sometimes to find - everybody says you're supposed to ask somebody to be your mentor, I think sometimes mentors need to be able to reach down and say "I am here to help you." And I don't know that enough women are making themselves available in that manner, and so I guess that would be my recommendation first is to you know, those of us in our mid-to-upper thirties and forties and fifties. Let's let's reach down and wrap our arms around some of these ladies because they don't know to ask, or they're too intimidated to ask. Because we have gone through a lot of things. And then those that are younger, like actually we want to be asked. We're not as intimidating as we may come across or as tough of an exterior as we are. So ask some of us and we'd probably love to be able to pour into you, so I think it's really that both ways of, we just got to set aside, "What happens if they say no?" If they say no, find somebody else. But I think it's a willingness on both sides to reach out to help develop those relationships and be open to it.

KA: For sure. I think we also tend to formalize mentorship a little bit more than it needs to be.

BS: Oh absolutely! Yes!

KA: I think we think it needs to be this like, "You're my mentor, I'm your mentee. We meet for coffee every week. We're reading this book together." Like that's counseling - minus the coffee part.

BS: Yep.

KA: Really, you're just looking for someone who's a little bit ahead of you in life that you can learn from and gather for coffee with periodically. It doesn't even have to be anything formal. And then look for someone who's a little bit behind you in life, like where you were maybe three years ago and be investing in them as well and helping them navigate. It can be super simple, like I've got people that - yeah it's a mentor relationship, but we would just use the word friend.

BS: Right! And I think sometimes too the folks who are more older and experienced one - it's actually both ways especially with how fast technology's going and things like that. Like, there's stuff that I just don't know as well as some of these younger ladies that are out there, that they're just going to be naturally more adept at. And so, in what's going on in the you know, different world - just having those friendship conversations, I'm going to learn those something too. It's definitely not a one-way learning relationship, and I think sometimes people think that's what mentorship is, is that one way learning relationship. It's like, no I really think these days it is two way, and it should be two way.

KA: No, that's so true! Because there are different things that we know and different ways we can invest in one another.

BS: Absolutely.

KA: What advice would you have for a woman who's just starting her career and wants to be a leader?

BS: Well so it actually takes like, learning to be a good leader. And there's a lot of different ways you can do it, there's people like me that are ready to invest in you, but from an actual formal coaching perspective. But there's also, I mean just a plethora of podcasts and books and things like that, but you're not going to - you're going to grow as a leader by doing your job, on the job training. I mean, I've done a lot of that. But there's also just some basic principles and some skills and techniques that you need to learn, and so if nobody's teaching them to you, if there's no formal training inside your organization to do that you need to seek that out on your own. Because otherwise you're going to start hitting your head against the wall because you're going to be frustrated that things aren't going the way you want them to go, and your subordinates are going to be frustrated because, you know, you're not doing what they expect you to do. So having a real understanding of some of those basic skills and a lot of those - a lot of it's communication. How to communicate to others, how to value others, how to cultivate what's best in them, a lot of it has to do with emotional intelligence so if you've never kinda dug into that - not just the self-awareness piece, like that's super important but also the others awareness, and then how does that interact? - and being willing to just go into that. Like you just have to do some training on it and that's where, the reader reason I'm doing Leadership Coaching is I've literally had a life and a career where there's been formal leadership training, and that I've got to put all of that to the test in leadership experiences with it. And so sometimes I have to remind myself that things that are natural to me aren't natural to everybody and that's great in having discussion with people sometimes, is because some of it's become so second nature to me because of all the training and actual implementation that I've been able to do. So you have to invest your time and your effort into growing some of those leadership skills. They call them "soft skills" but they're almost the harder ones to learn because they're not as concrete as, you know, your math skills, or your technical skills or how to do an Excel sheet. It's just not as concrete as that and it requires you to often - I don't want to say "change your personality" but definitely grow your personality and grow your ability to interact with others.

KA: Well and you were leading in pretty intense moments when you were deployed too.

BS: Yeah, I mean deployed and then - I'll tell you, it's probably the hardest job I ever had was the last one where I was in the Army where I was in charge of Army Recruiting centers across Indiana and Illinois during Covid.

KA: Ohh.

BS: So not deployed but if you had to tell me "Do that again or go to combat again," I would go to combat again. Part of it was I had a bad boss but it was just such a, such a difficult situation going through just with no end insight, and no successes along the way. Whereas when we were deployed, you know, we were working together as a team every day, it was exactly fulfilling the purpose, you know, everything that I had been trained to be and do, and I had a great team and it was just kind of a constant sort of success-type environment that we were in. And so even though it was hard, it was everything I was trained to be, whereas the Covid situation really -

between – again – bad bosses and just stuff completely out of our control, it really tested my soul. [Brittany laughs.]

KA: Yeah. No one really had training for how to survive a pandemic.

BS: No, right?! [Katie laughs.]

KA: We're all trying to figure it out, right?

BS: Yep.

KA: So how do you care for yourself in such intense experiences?

BS: So you know, I will tell you in the deployed environment caring for myself definitely had a lot to do with maintaining a personal relationship with Jesus, that's part of my background of faith. So staying plugged into that as much as possible, going to services when my work schedule allowed me to go to services – because they did have some of those services there. I was fortunate that one of the other officers nearby was also a Christian that I'd gone to West Point with, so we were able to talk on some of those things, and then maintaining communication with just with other friends and family back home I think was probably - and I would also say when we had a chance was doing proper working out, and then proper eating. While there as much as possible. Just things like staying hydrated was part of it. When you're deployed and actually in combat, it's a little more difficult I would say to do some of the self-care things but some of it too was just making sure you get a good night sleep and those types of things. I think in the rest of it for me was making sure. And a lot of people when they retire from the military or they get out of the military, they really hit a "oh my gosh what is my purpose going to be?" Because they've allowed the military – and I'm sure it happens in other organizations too – but when you allow your work to become your full identity and then you separate out from it, a lot of people have a real hard time with it. So I have, after my first deployment – this is something my first taught me – and I had that happen right as soon as I had graduated West Point and gone in. It was pretty close thereafter, so it's not like I had a lot of time to mess up here. But I learned from here I need to have time and energy to spend outside of work that is not all work. So pretty soon not to burnout, and that's how I got in triathlons and that's how I got into some of the other organizations and making sure that I was volunteering in churches when I could, because I needed an outside of workplace to be able to invest myself, to have fun, and to be who I was. And that was, I think, probably the best self-care it could be. I know everybody often hears about self-care, thinks it's going to the spa and things like that. For me it was always very active. I needed to have something I was doing active, whether it was physically active or volunteer active to be able to take care of myself and have an identity outside. And so when I got married and we had kids, that provided me a huge identity outside of the military and so in the first year after retirement, I love my time that I was in. I don't want to say that I miss it because it was the right time for us to transition. But I have not hit that purpose-wall that a lot of people hit.

KA: That's awesome. And I'm sure getting involved in a lot of things is why you've not hit that wall.

BS: Absolutely. It's also understanding my whole identity wasn't wrapped up in, like "where is my identity?" It's not even in these other things I do but it's in you know, who God made me to

be, and the skills and talents and where I am I going to apply those skills and talents. And the Army just happened to be where I applied those skills and talents for several years.

KA: Absolutely. And in a lot of those skills and talents have been transferable. So let's talk a little bit about how being in the Army has made you a better wife and a better mother.

BS: Yeah, I tell you I'm glad I had ten years in the active duty Army before I became a mom. So the wife part I don't know, I think that's a piece we're still trying to figure out. Our first child was our first anniversary present by just shy of four days.

KA: Oh wow!

BS: So it wasn't intentional. Surprised us. Wouldn't change it for the world, but we jumped right into parenthood.

KA: Right into parenthood!

BS: Yeah, right off the bat. But really the communication piece is the biggest thing. And so he was active Air Force, he's in Air Force Reserve now, he went in the Air Force Reserve. So that shared language has helped us out, and then we've worked on communication. And we both value growth, and I think the military helps teach you that, is to value growth. So that is something where he and I have been able to work together because we both have the same value of growth and progression, and move forward in life. So I guess as a wife, that's helped there, as we both have similar training and background in that even though we're very different personalities. But then just being a mom I think it is the idea of being able to understand that all these people are different. And that my kids are different. My two kids from each other, and they're different from me, and understanding that me as the leader, I don't expect them to transform or conform to who I am, rather I have to meet them where they're at. And I had to do that with soldiers. I've had to learn how to - I specifically remember in Iraq, I have three what's called Squad Leaders, and I had to communicate a task to them each differently. One I just had to say, "Go do." And that's all they wanted: just give me the directions and they've got it. The other one needed some details of why they were going to go do it. And then the other one simply needed me to add a "please" to it. Now that wasn't required, a lot of people would be like, "You're in the Army, you shouldn't have to do a please" " but if that's what helps them understand and receive what I need them to do, then great. It's the same thing with my kids. They're very different, and how do I work with them? And then I think the other piece that I've found - growing up, I think I very much learned that fairness was treating everybody the same, you know? And that was very much the mindset I grew up hearing. Well my definition of fairness now is not giving everybody the same thing, but everybody what they need. And that's going to look different. And I really learned that in the Army, and now I use that with my kids, and my oldest kid can even give you that definition because when they say "Well that's not fair!" I'll be like, "What's the definition of fair? Fair is giving everybody what they need. Do you need the same thing as your six year old brother? No, because you're ten."

KA: Right.

BS: So we have those discussions but I think - learning to balance a lot of different priorities and things that are ongoing. The military just gives you a really great appreciation for how to juggle



all those things at once, and figure out what's a rubber ball that you can let bounce, and what's a glass ball that you can't?

KA: Yeah, that's so valid. What have I not asked you that you want to tell us about?

BS: So I think one thing in today's day, and especially thinking about the self-care area and things like that, I think one thing that people overlook is the value of doing hard things. Like voluntarily doing hard things and knowing that when you can voluntarily do hard things, or things again that maybe push you outside of your comfort zone, that builds your resilience for when you face unknown hard things. So for me, it was going into Endurance Sports. I don't do that anymore 'cause once I had kids it just wasn't time for it. But I still workout, and do those you know, and challenge myself in those areas or I volunteer to do different things that I haven't done before. But doing all of that and doing that stuff in the Army where we're training and we knew what the scenarios were a little bit better, and all of that type of stuff, we could go in and do that hard thing and that hard thing trained us for the unknown. Because we were gonna face other hard things that wouldn't be exactly like what was scripted for us. But we can create a little bit of our own training ground, and I think sometimes we're way surprised when things from life hit us, and we're always going to be, but the question is "How resilient and are you prepared for the unknown?" And if you never push yourself outside of your comfort zone, if you never do something that's – especially voluntary! – then your resilience is only built because of hitting the unknown. Why don't we preempt that?

KA: Sure.

BS: You know? So maybe for some people it's going and running a 5k because they've never done that before and they're going to train their bodies to do that and be self-disciplined. Well that self-discipline is going to translate into other things. Or maybe it is, maybe it's volunteering for something at church where you're like "I'd really like to do that but I'm not qualified." Like we talked about earlier, you'll learn as you go. So step into it and learn, and then in the future when you face something else that's a little bit unknown, you're like "That's all right, I've built the muscles. I know how to face the unknown." I think one of the greatest things as I've looked back across my career that has been developed in me is I'm pretty flexible. And that helps me be – I don't want to say unflappable, there's been things that have gotten to me. But not to the same extent that I've seen them take down, if you will, other people. I just think I have a resilience that through Army and then through me personally pursuing some hard things has built up a resilience. And it's not a resilience again, because of the things that I can't control. It's a resilience because of the things that I could control, helps me face the things that I can't control better.

KA: That's true. I think about last year, I was trying to go with Uganda and I ended up with a visa that expired before it was issued. So they wouldn't let me on the plane. So we didn't know this was going to be the end of the story until the rest of my team is on the plane and I'm still standing there at ticketing and check-in, and they're like, "No, you can't get on this plane." So here I am, stuck in New York City by myself, and like, thankfully I've traveled enough that as soon as someone was like, "What do you need?" I was like, "A hotel. Get me a hotel. I'll figure out how to get myself there. And a lawyer who can help me with my visa." And like, I was like,

“That’s all I need. The rest of it I can figure out,” and they're like, “Those the easy things. Done.” So having travel experience and having had travel experiences go backwards, had me so prepared for that that they were like, “Oh my gosh you handle that so well,” and I was like, “Don't give me too much credit. There were tears.” But I knew that I could handle it because I had handled things like that before.

BS: Yeah, absolutely. That's exactly it.

KA: And I made it to Uganda eventually! [Katie laughs.]

BS: That's awesome, I'm glad you did!

KA: Just got to end the story there. [Brittany laughs.] Yeah. So that's awesome, Brittany. I have loved all these things that you've shared with us, I like I've learned so many things already and I'm like, “Oh I can put that into practice, I can put that into practice. That looks a little different than I've seen it in my life before, what would it look like to change that in that way?” So thank you so much.

BS: You're welcome, thank you for the opportunity!

KA: For sure. If we want to continue to learn from you, where can we find you online?

BS: Yeah so I have a website it's BrittanyESimmons.com. Make sure you put the e in there and you'll find it. But BrittanyESimmon.com is my website and again, I'm just less than a year off of the Army so I'm building up a lot of those things, I'm really starting to work on writing some longer form content. Some of that stuff, but taking these ideas and putting it written down there. And then also you'll find me on Instagram at @BrittESimmons, not “Brittany” but at BrittESimmons. And if you're to look up Brittany Simmons, it should pop up in there as well. You'll find me there. And then also on Facebook I'm at Brittney Simmons Leadership Coaching. And they can find me there and there's links to all of that on my blog as well. Oh, not my blog but my website. The website can link to all my socials and I'm on LinkedIn as well. But even if people just want to start a conversation, I would love to start a conversation and provide some insight – no strings attached – I would love to talk to anybody that's interested.

KA: Very cool. We will link to your various sites on our show notes as well.

BS: Okay, thank you.

KA: Would you be willing to pray for us?

BS: Absolutely, thank you.

KA: Yeah.

BS: Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for the people that are listening to this podcast today. And thank you for the skills and talents and callings that You have given to them, and I pray that You would give them Your confidence and help them to understand Your identity in them, so that they can step out into the things that You would have them step out into. I pray that You would help them find friends or mentors to help them as they walk through this life, and go through this life, to get through this life. And I pray that most of all, they would be grounded in You so that when the rain does fall, and the flood rise up, Lord, that You would be their rock and foundation,

so they can lean and trust in You, and that in that, that others would see You and You continue to grow them and give them an opportunities that they need to help influence their world, and using the gifts and talents that You have given them. We thank You for this time, I pray that you would bless everybody as they go on with their day. In Your name we pray, amen.

KA: Amen. Awesome, thank you. I have one final question for you.

BS: Okay!

KA: Part of Have Hope; Will Travel is that we are always learning something, hearing a new perspective, understanding something different. So I would love to learn, what is something you have learned recently?

BS: I think honestly one of the things that I've learned recently as I've stepped into this world of being creative, whether it's like you know - and that's why i'm in the Called Creatives Group with you and am getting into the writing is, just the importance of getting words on paper and then truly running them through other people. And you know, getting them to help you refine them. A lot of times the things I've had to do in the Army is just you kind of just go "you're making the decisions," and everybody goes with it. There's not tons of people to run stuff by, especially if you're the top person. So I have enjoyed being able to run some of these things and ideas by and actually then maybe take on the title, understand that I'm doing some creative work. Because I never would have put any of this stuff in the creative space beforehand. So I've always enjoyed writing, but learning to write in a little bit of a different style. I'm learning a lot in that space right now, and refining what that looks like to make sure it's still my voice and who I am, but in a way that makes sense for people to be able to consume it appropriately.

KA: That's awesome and I look forward to seeing that longer form writing when it's ready to be released.

BS: Thank you!

KA: Awesome. Brittany, thank you so much for your time today. Thank you for sharing with us, thank you for teaching us, and coaching us, and mentoring us a little bit on the show today. And thank you also for your time in the military, thank you for protecting and serving our country and giving the sacrifice that many of the the rest of us can't or have chosen not to give. So thank you so much for being there for us.

BS: Well it's been my pleasure to be on here and the thing that I always tell everyone is it's a all volunteer force - it's exactly where God would have me if He had me pick, you know today go back and do the military again or do a kindergarten classroom, I would pick the military deployments and all again, 'cause God's gifted us differently. You know, I have a kindergartener and I can't imagine being his teacher [Katie laughs.] so I am so thankful for people like that. And I'm so glad God gives us all different skills, talents and abilities.

KA: That's such a good word, thank you.

[Katie stops speaking and the theme music: upbeat electronica ends.]