

Returning to the American South after the Vietnam War, Joseph Halz tries to pick up where his life left off, only to find that God had chosen a different path for him. An inspiring story of faith, love, redemption, and hope.

Ordered Steps

By Denley K. Woodies

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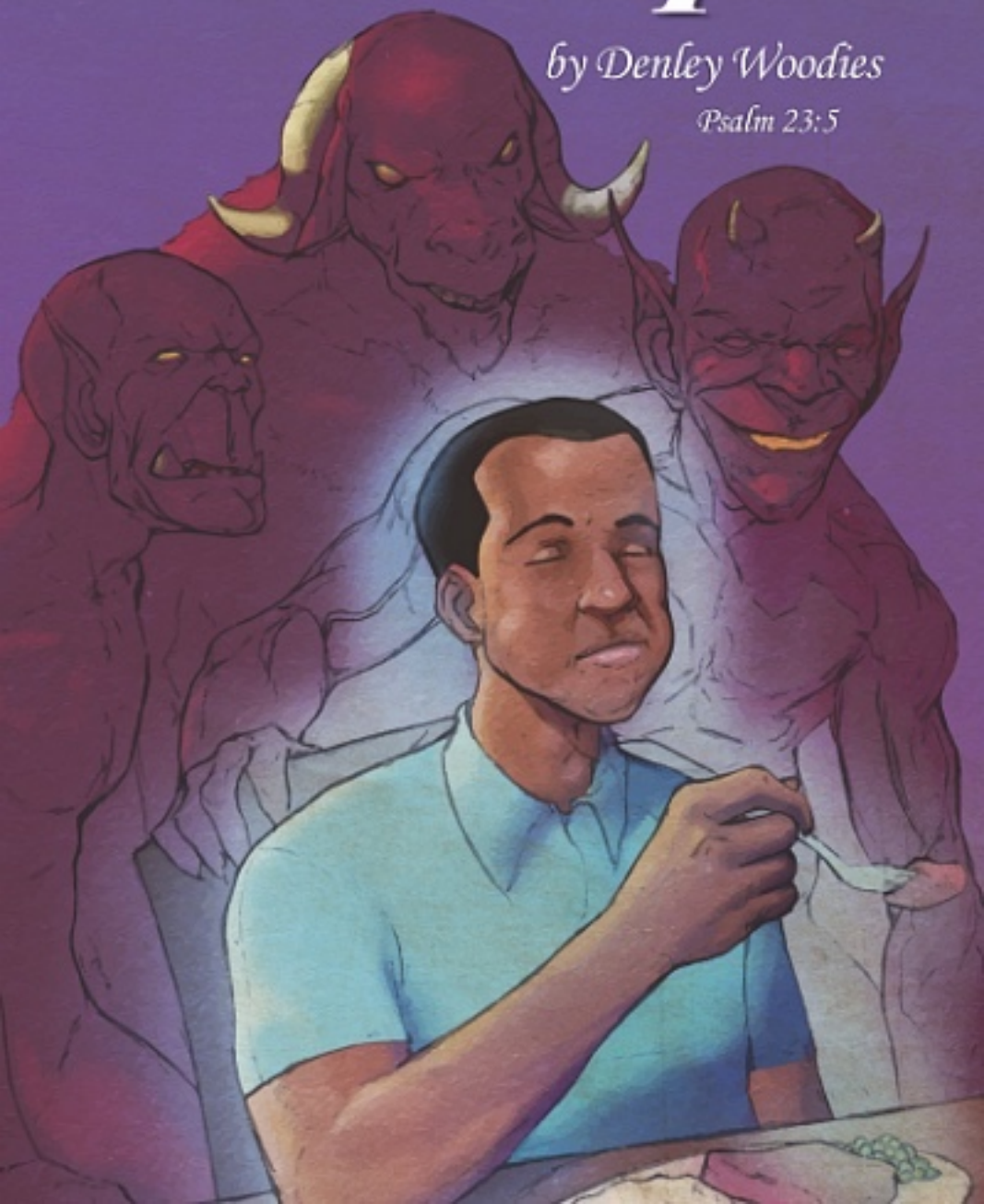
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Psalm 23:5



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A Note from the Author

Having experienced the ups and downs of life through sinful decisions, I have been abundantly blessed that Christ Jesus never stopped pursuing me. Imagine that, God the King pursuing me, a mere mortal, one dreadfully lost sheep, always allowing me to feel the emptiness of life without proper fellowship with Him. He kept me longing for the Living Water which is Christ Jesus.

Money, women, and material gain never even came close to fulfilling me. Frankly, at best they were all pleasure for a season. And might I add, a very short season. Although I needed more, God being perfect in wisdom--after all He is the Wisdom of the Ages--allowed me to sink into the darkness. I suffered great losses materially and broken relationships emotionally.

But Satan's trap became God's blessing. My lack of contentment and tremendous thirst for grace led me back to a relationship with the fountain of living water. It was a thirty-five year journey. Receiving Christ at the age of sixteen and diving into a life of faith and obedience was short-lived. Upon leaving for Virginia's Commonwealth University at

seventeen, the commitment to Christ Jesus took a back seat. I lived, or rather existed, from a backslid state for the next thirty-five years living in the depths of sin and on the outskirts of Christianity.

In 2017, Christ Jesus was no longer my savior only. I received Him as Lord. He got what he always required, not more Christian work or giving good service. He had received the greatest gift of all--my heart. Through the Holy Spirit, God alone had captivated my heart. Thank God that I did not die in my lukewarm, hot-for-sin-backslid state.

Dear Reader, you will find true living water, purpose, and contentment only through Jesus Christ. Living a life of continual sin, you will become a slave and a servant to sin. I implore you to turn to Christ Jesus by confessing Jesus as Lord, and believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. Repent of your sins, and live in the light of Jesus' Lordship. Then you will receive the Living Water (true contentment) which is only and exclusively found in the Savior of the world--Jesus Christ.

We have different paths of destiny in Christ Jesus, but we, with all our different creeds, colors, races, languages, cultures, and ethnicities must spur each

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other on to walk in the steps that God has laid before us as liberated sons and daughters living as God's servants.

For we are brought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.

I Corinthians 6:20

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Chapter 1:

Fu Fu

In 1972 America was in top eyelids deep. The Vietnam War had defined us as less than winners. The Tet offensive, at the time, was brutal. The list of lies could quite conceivably drown the Mississippi river. When studying history, approach it with the idea of divide and conquer; it will help you to believe less, and question more.

This is my story. It is not American history told in the eyes of some Hollywood Anglo-Saxon or some random Black. This is a story of hurting humanity and how things can change in an instant.

In 1972 I was seventeen and had just graduated from high school and was headed off to army boot camp. I left behind a full ride football scholarship to Delaware State, and a gorgeous girl who four months earlier, I had dropped off at Virginia State. Despite facing an unknowable amount of time apart, Rosa and I were determined to make a go of it. So she went off to college and I went off to war.

During basic I excelled, so I was approached with the idea of switching my MOS—that's army talk for Military Occupational Specialties. So I was going from an O2 Lima saxophone player to an 11-Bravo.

From band member to grunt. Two months later I was being pushed out of a perfectly good airplane and two months after that I was in deep. Top eyelids deep. Saigon, Laos--you name it--we were there. Our unit took heavy casualties. My best friend, Radio; my first sergeant, Rice; Corporal Zinea, and PFC Holde, a salesman from the Bronx—we shall go no further concerning his vocation. It was the first time I had seen death. So close, so real, so fresh, and so unforgiving. Many of my comrades had weeks ago left for Nam. They were junkies, merely there in body. Going out on patrol was easy for them--no fear of the dark, of Charlie, or even death. They were worlds away to the third power. Ironically, they were the very men that made it back to the so-called civilized world.

After two tours in Vietnam I was offered a chance in army ranger school. I grabbed it. I was young, strong, and indestructible. Ranger school taught me how to focus; it made me mentally strong and physically tough. I learned how to endure pain and hardship as a good soldier, but I never forgot Radio who took a Vietcong bayonet in my stead.

The military is full of unsung heroes—no medals, no fanfare, no soldier of the year awards, no *fu-fu* dinners for Congressional Medal of Honor

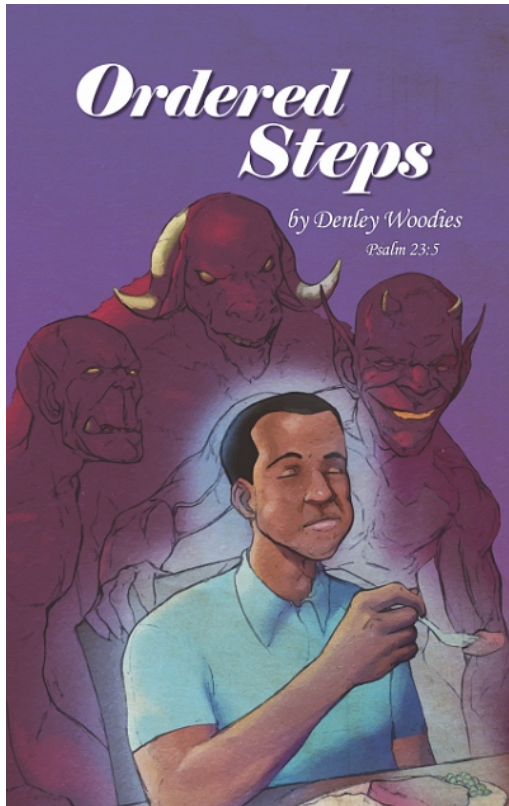
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recipients. Just plain, good soldiers. Plain like the cold of a Missouri hailstorm plain.

Well, having left the States at seventeen, I was now approaching twenty-one. I had finished basic training, airborne, combat, and ranger school, and the army was willing to set me free. I had grown greatly. I was now a trained killer, and very little wool could be pulled over my eyes. I saw things as they were, or so I thought. But little did I know how blind I was. Eighteen hours after leaving the DMZ—that's the demilitarized zone for you civilian types—I was about to enter the cruelest bondage of all.

About the Author

Denley K. Woodies lives in Newport News, Virginia. In his spare time he enjoys long walks during which he reflects on scripture and reverently critiques God's handiwork.



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