

THE POWER OF FAITH:

Battlefield Tour Teaches Leadership and Faith Lessons

“I came on this trip to better understand the power of faith and the effect it has on people, and to help me in my future career in the military,” wrote a military cadet after participating in ACCTS’ Waterloo to World War II. “But to my delight I found my own faith and have come to some realizations about humanity and how we need faith to explain the things we do and decisions we make.”

Two US Military Academy cadets and two British cadets joined ACCTS’ director Phil Exner on the annual Waterloo to World War II trip in March. Visiting over 30 historic sites in Belgium and France, they explored battlefields, trenches, tunnels, cemeteries, and towns where they discussed the military, political, physical, and spiritual facets of what happened at each place. They reviewed strategic, operational, and tactical lessons, and talked about Just War theory, but also explored the deeper human and spiritual aspects of warfare and leadership through stories of those who made a difference at each site.

As Phil explains, “When you look at the whole picture of a battle or campaign from a Christian perspective, you can readily see how God can use anyone -- from a lowly private to the most senior commander -- to change the destiny of countries and empires and work out His plan for history. We looked at stories of individuals whose initiative or inaction, courage or cowardice, diligence or laziness, trust or doubt, faithfulness, fear or obedience, turned the tide at a critical moment and literally won or lost wars and kingdoms. We also talked about the imperative of good character and challenged each cadet to consider which qualities they saw in different leaders that they wanted to emulate as they develop their own leadership substance and style.”

Although it was only 130 years from the Battle of Waterloo to World War II, the group actually visited sites spanning over 1200 years of history. More than half of the stops were tied to British history, so it was an added blessing to have the British cadets along. They added a perspective and personal interest that injected energy and relevance to the places the group stopped, and their interaction with the US cadets resulted in a lot of laughs as the group discovered different and often-humorous ways to express the same idea. “This was a great group of cadets who quickly bonded together, and we were extremely thankful that the UK cadets were able to join us, thanks to a connection with MMI, our UK ministry partner,” Phil states.

The terrible carnage, personal loss, and waste of war hit hard at several places. This gave the group a perfect setting to talk about biblical views of war and its ultimate cause -- sin. The trip was an occasion for deep

reflection on the necessity of faith in the transcendent Truth of a loving, purposeful God in order to make sense of the chaos of history and strengthen our hope in Christ.

“These four young cadets are at a stage in their lives when they will make many decisions that will determine the direction of the rest of their lives. They will also soon be leading young men and women who will be trusting in their leadership and character. It is my hope that all Waterloo to World War II participants will recognize the importance of integrating their faith into their careers as military leaders,” Phil concludes. “They saw how human nature exhibited itself, but also how they can make a significant difference, especially as they follow Christ’s example as the perfect leader.”