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What Makes a True Christian Soldier?

2 Timothy 2:3: (NASB) *Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

Special Guest: Tim, Rick's Son There are many analogies that depict the life of a Christian - growing as wheat, being sheep, being fishers of men, being a member of a body, growing from a baby to adulthood, brotherhood and being a soldier. Now, how is it that we who are followers of the Lamb of God can possibly be depicted as soldiers - fighting a war - with weapons - and vanquishing our enemy? Stay with us as we look at what it takes to be a true soldier - a true soldier of Christ!



WHY? THE DEFINING MOMENTS AND THE DECISION TO SERVE

Matthew 4:18-22: (KJV) ¹⁸And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. ¹⁹And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ²⁰And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. ²¹And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. ²²And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

These were mere fishermen who were offered to be a part of a much bigger life.

Rick's son Tim has served in the Coast Guard over six years. *I decided I wanted to try the law enforcement field and applied to a bunch of police departments in the area...I had no experience...they hire a lot of military and people who understand the job. I wanted to try something that would give me a little more experience and the Coast Guard was a viable option.*

At that time the Coast Guard was very restrictive about tattoos and Tim had a tattoo visible above the neckline. Rick and Tim had a discussion about it. *Half of me thought I would not move forward because I would have had to get a plastic surgeon or get laser removal and is it really worth it? The question came up, "What's stopping you?" No answer. Finally over a lot of prodding, I realized there was no valid excuse not to follow a desire to serve if it is something as small as a minor surgery. So we made that leap and never looked back from there.*

I remember having the conversation with Tim about what he wanted to do with his life. He wanted to serve by being in the Coast Guard.

There is always a cost to any call that is worthwhile: **Luke 9:23-26:** The bigger the call, the less that can be held back.

Know what your call is about: **Romans 12:1-2:** For the earthly soldier, there are a lot of physical and emotional demands. Spiritually we renew our minds to be transformed. The earthly soldier must transform from being a civilian to the military.

BOOT CAMP-BREAK DOWN, BUILD UP-DO YOU SURVIVE IT OR ARE YOU TRANSFORMED BY IT?

1 Peter 4:12-17

Boot camp is meant to be a shock to the system. You can play sports on a team and think you had structure, and even though boot camp is a little different for each branch of service, the goal is the same: To break down the individual and teach them to be something bigger than they are. You learn what your mission is. It is a time to be tested over and over again to see if you have what it takes to serve your fellow man. For me it was more the mental testing, even though there was a lot of physical work. I didn't really like taking orders. It is a whole new ballgame when all of a sudden you can't do something unless you are told. And when you are told to do something, it must be done in a specific way. Everything is micromanaged to break you of habits. You are no longer an individual, but you are a soldier and that is supposed to mean something. You become one of many. You are part of a giant organization that protects our homeland.

Boot camp is the introduction of a continuous proving of who you are and what you are made of. The training gets more difficult as you go further.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: To be a soldier of Christ, your goal in life is to put your own will aside and take on the will of God through Christ without exception. It takes the same kind of focus and discipline as being developed as an earthly soldier.

THE UNIFORM - WHO DO YOU BECOME WHILE IN UNIFORM?

First, we put on Christ - that's what baptism is all about: Galatians 3:26-29

The uniform for all services means you represent something larger than yourself. If you really believe in what you are doing, the uniform should signify what you stand for.

It is the same for the Christian: Colossians 3:12-15: We put on the characteristics of Christ - that's what life after baptism is all about. Once we put that uniform on, we never take it off. We represent everyone with whom we serve.

Teamwork is the most important thing. You are nothing without your team. One individual cannot complete the mission. You have to trust that others will do their jobs so that you all come back together.

With Christianity, it ought to be that we are focused on accomplishing our mission. But it is not about "me," but the brotherhood of Christ doing it together.

MENTAL FOCUS - WHERE DOES YOUR MIND GO TO KEEP FROM BREAKING OR DISTRACTION?

For the Christian, the mind should go to True North! Hebrews 12:2-3: We are to fix our eyes on Jesus as both our long-term and short-term focus, meditating on his experiences.

How does the earthly soldier work through pain? In a training session, I rolled my ankle pretty bad the second day. I found out several weeks later I tore two ligaments and had a microfracture on my ankle bone. I wasn't the only one who had to deal with those types of injuries while doing this training. It is more important to fight through the pain because your team members need to know that if the mission comes and something happens, you are going to fight no matter what is going on.

What a great illustration for the Christian soldier, fighting through whatever is in front of him or her for the sake of Christ!

Find prayer, thanksgiving and that which is excellent! Philippians 4:6-8 2 Timothy 2:1-4

PHYSICAL FOCUS - MUSCLE MEMORY

Muscle memory is extremely important. When you get into the heat of a battle and everything is on the line, part of your brain shuts down and you just react on instinct and training. If you have good muscle memory, your body is going to do what it needs to do to take the appropriate action without thinking about it. It comes from training over and over again; the same thing, the same way.

Think about the importance of our training as a soldier of Christ, by studying the word and being strong in fellowship.

Physical and mental focus is necessarily interwoven: 2 Timothy 2:8-13: The Apostle Paul did suffer physically for his Christianity. Would we be willing and able to suffer as he did? We must dedicate ourselves to the cause and become selfless.

ARMOR - PURPOSE AND FAMILIARITY

Ephesians 6:10-13: Twice the Apostle tells us to put on the *full* armor of God. The enemy we are fighting is bigger and stronger, but we can overcome the enemy if properly armed.

We have a specific "kit" with body armor and other pieces of gear we are required to wear for each mission or training evolution. Your kit weighs about 60 pounds. Part of your conditioning is being able to carry that extra weight. It never gets any lighter!

Ephesians 6:14-17: Part of being armed is being part of your unit. *You'll need your team to protect you and you will do the same for them.*

WEAPONS - PURPOSE AND FAMILIARITY

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Going into a room alone means you have one weapon but there may be more than one threat. One against many never works out. We try not to fight fair, (meaning, one on one) which is why we try to go in as teams. Unfortunately, there are those who would do us harm and we need to protect ourselves.

The value of the Christian fight is the same. Satan is our enemy and is trying to destroy us and get a greater hold on the world. Our job is to not let him have victory. We have to be ready to fight defensively to protect ourselves as well as offensively. We are much stronger in numbers than we are by ourselves. That is why Jesus sent his disciples out two by two. That is why the Apostle Paul always took others with him as he spread the Gospel call. You need to have backup and support.

A Christian is armed when he knows his purpose, is willing to stand for it through any experience, and is willing to use all of the judgment that comes his way for ultimate good!

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

THE HEAT OF BATTLE/PURSUIT

The heat of conflict includes the battles "within" as well as "without:" 1 Timothy 6:11-12: We are to pursue the goodness of Christianity but must "fight the good fight." We have to stand up for something and fight hard against evil. We are fighting alongside of Christ and it is from him whom we take our orders.

An average mission is about 18+ hours and usually in the middle of the night. We have a job to do. I joined the service to do a mission and will do it to the best of my ability. It is part of the job. You become trained to deal with hardship because if you don't keep your focus, you could have detainees who are just waiting for you to make mistakes. They are not necessarily the nicest people. You don't want to give them a chance to harm you or get away. If you are not on your game, it could have dire consequences.

The battle never ends and the battle field is everywhere! Know your enemy! 1 Peter 5:8-9: The enemy is waiting for you to make a mistake, lose your focus, or for that one little opening to tip the scale to his advantage. Military training is so intense so that your focus in battle stays where it needs to be. **Focus and example - lead by doing:** 2 Timothy 2:14-19: This tells us to stop arguing about little things and focus on the bigger picture! **Know your job... do your job!** 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Even the smallest, seemingly least important job is an important part of the overall team.

The Christian's job is to be ready all the time. Do what you are called upon to do. This is bigger than you are so fight the fight!

2 Corinthians 4:8-10: For the Christian soldier, this exemplifies the core of what drives us. A lot of things go wrong, but Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf and on that of the whole world is our centerpiece and is why we fight the fight. Our strength comes directly from God through Jesus so that we can move forward. The Christian enemy is more than just the devil. We also battle the world and our own weak flesh. That is why it is so important to fight the battle alongside of others. Fellowship is important in Christianity.

DEFEAT

Just because we are chosen of God does not mean we are beyond our own faults: Psalms 51:1-4: This is after David's big sin with Bathsheba. His defeat is put before God, and he has the courage to get up and fight on.

Defeat is not really an option. You can falter or fail at one point, but there is no such thing as defeat, meaning you have lost and there is nothing you can do about it. You just have to figure out another way to solve the problem. You adapt to the situation and overcome.

Fortunately, our "defeats" do not have to be solitary experiences: Galatians 6:1-5

VICTORY

Victory is not simply a final outcome - it is also achieved daily through a continuous fight for right: Philippians 3:12-14: That is the mission of the Christian soldier. We are to be faithful footstep followers of Jesus for the purpose of blessing the entire world.

How do you embrace victory? When things go well, you congratulate your team but go back to the drawing board to see how things could have gone better. There is nothing finite about victory because there is always going to be another threat, another foe, and if you don't keep moving forward then you lose your edge. Victory is what works but what can make you better?

Victory is a stepping stone towards another step. In sports there is an end of the season and everyone goes home. That is not the same in military service, nor if you are a true follower of Christ. You never take the uniform off and are focused on accomplishing the will of God through Christ.

Then there is the victory of a life well lived: 2 Timothy 4:6-8: The Apostle Paul had reached the end of his life and was finally able to look back at his years of service and proclaim that he finished his course.

Final thoughts on your service: The cause is greater than you and the guys next to you are more important. If everyone has that mentality and you strive for greatness every day through mental pain and physical anguish and you work together, you can accomplish things you never could have imagined.

The Christian is a small part of a larger machine. If everyone plays their part, they can be a part of the ultimate victory. We can all contribute.

Finally, there is the victory of the fulfilled promises of God: Isaiah 40:28-31:

*So, what makes a true Christian soldier?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*