

ACCTS' Ethical Development Program for Military and Police Leaders

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Don M. Snider, PhD

Theme: As a Military or Police Leader, the Christian has a Potential “Leg-Up” on his/her Peers

Introduction - This may sound like an assertion, but it is really a heartfelt conclusion from my own experiences over the decades. Some background, so you know who is speaking:

- A Christian since youth, but only nominally so until after first combat tour, 1965
- 28 years of active military service starting in Army, Infantry, three combat tours RVN
- Final decade of service as war planner/strategist – Europe, Pentagon, White House NSC
- 26 years as Scholar, author—faculty at West Point and Army War College, Carlisle, PA
- My wife and I have ministered to military families, youth at every post during our 56 years of marriage.

Let me develop this idea of a potential “Leg -Up” with three supporting arguments each focusing on a different aspect of your leadership potential. First, I will address your personal callings to faith and to service. Second, I will address the very compatible nature of the two ethics (Christian and professional) which you are following. Lastly, I will look at the Christian style of leadership that flows naturally and effectively at doing what the military and police professions need most right now – the creation of cultures of trust that grow cohesive teams for unit effectiveness.

First, your personal, dual callings: - To God, and To Service for your Country

- With dual callings on our lives the challenge is to live Christianly by right integration of those callings; a balanced fulfillment of personal and professional obligations under each calling....faith, family, profession... with NO compartmentalization of roles. Not an option for the Christian; “*And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*” (Col 3:17)

Our First Calling – from God to salvation and discipleship in Christ’s Church, by faith through grace (pardon + power)...

- To obey Him, to become like Him (sanctification), to abide with Him now and eternally, and thus to avoid compartmentalization of our lives into fragmented roles (Oz Guinness, *The Call*, Word Publishing, 1998)
- Including, where ever we serve in whatever professional role, to also make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20); one imperative “make disciples,” three participations “go, baptize, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Our Second Calling – to vocation(s); and, for those under oath to a military or police profession:

- To serve Him in vocation, our work is sacred and far more important than self!!; thus providing the logic and motivate for personal and family sacrifice when necessary for mission accomplishment. Note the vast difference here when compared to a life of not vocational calling, just having a joe to take home a check each month. In my experience, this motivational “leg-up” is a major factor in the success of Christian leaders within the military and police professions. –
- Navigating the challenge of divided loyalties, to God and to Country, to Church and to State: “*Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.*” (Matthew 22:21, a very enigmatic statement).

Second, I want to focus on the very compatible nature of the two Ethics you are following.

- One way to think about leading authentically: the leader of character requires consistency between three aspects of daily life: the leader's actions (the "walk"); the profession's Ethic, doctrine (the "talk"); and one's personal beliefs (our human essence, Christian spirituality, concept of truth and right, world view).

The Christian's Ethic, Our Understanding of Moral Truth

- Generally, the Christian's ethic is the revealed will of God (which always reflects His perfect moral character), and particularly as revealed in Scripture; it is an absolute and prescriptive (vice descriptive) ethic, binding on all Christians in all circumstances and times; it is more deontological, or duty-centered, than teleological or end-centered, e.g. 10 Commandments.
 - o Thus, the rule is the basis of the action; the rule is good regardless of the perceived consequences (Romans 8:28), e.g., Abraham with Isaac...
- Service doctrines generally agree that a Leader's actions do accurately reflect his/her moral character - "Doing" flows naturally from "Being and Knowing," from the content of one's moral character, which is developed in consonance with what both the individual and institution believe to be ethical.ⁱ
- Paul's Epistles discuss the framework in which Christians are to develop their moral character and live their lives:ⁱⁱ
 - o Salvation is the basis of moral life, restoring the *Shalom* of before the Fall
 - o Christ-likeness is the goal of the moral life (again, our first "calling")
 - o Spiritual conflict is the context of the moral life
 - o Love is the manner of the moral life
 - o Self-abnegation, yielding to the Holy Spirit, is the means to the moral life
 - o The Holy Spirit is the agent of the moral life.
- We, as Christians, also have the "norms" of the Kingdom as our guide for living the moral life of a Christian, e.g., the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, The Great Commandment, Micah 6:8, whole duty of man, etc.ⁱⁱⁱ
- So, in what ways is this Christian Ethic compatible, indeed reinforcing of your profession's ethic? Let's start with just the common concepts of self-abnegating service, authority, moral community, and servant leadership.
 - o Is there any incompatibility with the Christian Leader at the same time following, for an example of professional ethics, the "US Army's Seven Values" (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Service, Honor, Integrity, Personal Courage)?
 - o Does not, in fact, the commonality and mutual reinforcement of the two Ethics provide a "Leg-Up as the Leader "walks" his or her "talk"? Simply stated, closely compatible and reinforcing ethics produce far fewer conflicting loyalties... a clear leg-up for the Christian leader.

Lastly, I want to briefly address the well-established fact that a Christian's approach to leadership, based as it is on the leader's obvious desire to "serve" those led (Jesus on service and sacrifice, Matt 20:28), is simply far more effective where risk abounds in military and police organizations than authoritarian or autocratic styles. This quickly provides a leg-up in most all leadership contexts, and increasingly so with the Generation Z and younger followers. Why?

- A central challenge within the military and police professions right now is to have leaders who can build "cultures of trust" that produce "cohesive teams" for mission effectiveness....no culture of trust, no cohesive teams
- But to build cultures of trust requires leaders who are themselves capable of leading by transactional, inspirational techniques rather than the more transactional, autocratic methods of the past. The humility, empathy, and developmental bent of the transformational, servant leader far more quickly inspires the follower to become a trusted team member fulfilling also, in most cases, their own aspirations.

Conclusion, I believe Christian Officers have three aspects of their Being, who they are in Christ, that gives them, potentially, a leg-up in Doing their duties: (1) following a calling with one's life (rather than just having a job), (2) living by two very compatible ethics which minimize divided loyalties, and (3) leading as a servant will provide for the transformational leadership so needed today for the military and police professions to have cultures of trust and cohesive teams for mission accomplishments.

ⁱ For a developmental model of the leader's spirituality or personal character, see chapter 2 of Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews (eds.) *Forging the Warriors Character...* 2d Edition, (McGraw-Hill, 2008).

ⁱⁱ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics* (Inter Varsity Press, 1997): 117-129.

ⁱⁱⁱ See chapters 1-3 of Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics* (Inter Varsity Press, 2003).