

Translating Ethical Foundations into Daily Ethical Practices

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- ACCTS Staff since 2012 (Cadets/ Ethics)
- 40+ years in various US government roles
 - Military – 26 years (cadet/ parachutist/ fighter navigator/ commander/ servant leader)
 - Defense contractor – 6 years
 - Government civilian – 8 years
- Believer since 1980 – served:
 - Local churches
 - Military chapels
 - Officers Christian Fellowship (OCF)
Bible studies (cadets and officers)



What is Ethics/ Why Do We Need It?

- Different philosophical views, but basically...
 - Study right/wrong **conduct** (“What should be”)
 - Differs from **morality** (“What society accepts”)
 - **Biblical Military Ethics:**
 - Biblically-based
 - Objective standard
 - Military/police culture
 - Based in own society
- **Why Need?**
 - Fallen world – failures in politics/military/Church
 - MCFs globally – pressured to compromise ethics
 - Non-biblical worldviews (“Do right in own eyes”)



What Influences Our Conduct?

- Personal Values
- Instinct
- Conscience
- Thinking



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International
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Evangelical
Chaplains

• *Some Content shared by Maj Gen Bryan Watson, US Army (ret) & Intl. Assoc. of Evangelical Chaplains (IAEC)

Personal Values

- What we, as individuals, consider to be:
 - True and false (beliefs)
 - Right and Wrong (conduct)
 - Important and Trivial (significance)
- What you **grow up** believing about these:
 - Fundamentally impacts decisions throughout life
 - Can change later, but might be harder



Instinct

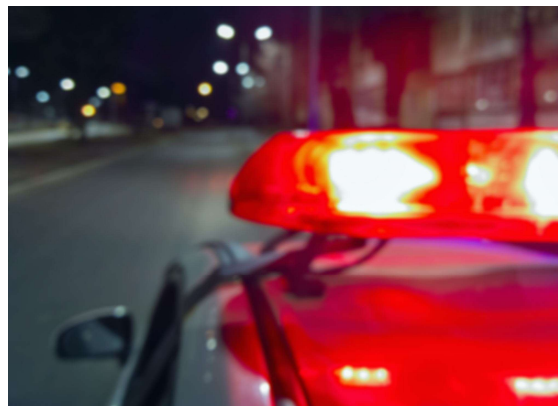
Instinct is a God-given, built-in, drive to:

- Create life
- Sustain life



Conscience

- Conscience: God-given **moral compass**
 - Deep-seated sense of right/wrong
 - Insanity: “Inability to...discern between right and wrong; inability to adhere to the right”
- Conscience provides **restraint** on instinct
 - Sex in marriage-**yes**; Rape-**no**
 - Protect self/family-**yes**; Murder someone- **no**



Thinking

- **Thinking** (studying) influence and alter:
 - Personal Values
 - Instinct
 - Conscience
- “I will meditate on your precepts...I will not forget your word.” (Psalm 119:15-16)



Biblical Ethics

- **Ethics:** study of right and wrong conduct
- **Biblical ethics:** study of what **Bible** teaches is right and wrong conduct

For Christians, the Word of God is the standard – the plumb line – for discerning right and wrong conduct



Biblical Military Ethics

- **Military/Police: unique sub-cultures of society**

- Serve/defend the country's people/institutions
- Demanding ethical standards
- Give up certain rights to serve
- Significant sacrifices



- **Biblical Military Ethics Goals:**

- Culturally-/Biblically-based Professional Military Ethic
- View your role as God's calling – apply Gospel daily
- Biblical leadership (Jesus -> Servant Leader)



Mountain Driving

- **I grew up/learned to drive in the mountains of Virginia/W. Virginia**
 - Very windy/dangerous roads
 - We joked that the taillights we saw were from our own car



- **Two things we needed:**
 - Guard rails (stay on the road)
 - Ambulance/Doctor (if went off)



Two Helps in Our Ethical Journey

- **Preventative Preparation**

- Some ethical pitfalls are predictable – we can practice some specific steps to defend against them
- Other pitfalls are less clear – prepare with broader defensive tools

- **Redemptive Restoration**

- When we crash off the mountain into ethical failures (big or small), we can heal/be restored



Conclusion

- **Biblical Military Ethical Foundation**
 - What Bible teaches is right/wrong conduct in military subculture
 - Word of God sets His **Foundation** for our actions
 - Our ethics become basis for sharing the Gospel
 - Set the standard for our **Daily Ethical Practices**



“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To **act justly** and to **love mercy** and to **walk humbly** with your God.” Micah 6:8 (NIV)

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Foundations for Biblical Military Ethics

1) Obedience to our Lord

- **Our Father's Commandments** (Mt22:36-40)
- **The Command of our Lord Jesus Christ** (Jn 13:34-35)
- **The Work of Our Lord** (Hebrews 12:1-3)
- **The fruits of the Holy Spirit** (Galatians 5:22-25).

2) The Integration of Moral Orientation and Behavior:

- **Pray:** (Ps 5:1-3)
- **Read:** (Is 55:11)
- **Memorize:** (Ps 119:11)
- **Fellowship:** (Proverbs 27:17)
- **Worship:.** (Hebrews 10:25-26)



Bibles Studies Focused on Biblical Military Ethics

- **Begin Bible Study based upon the New Testament**
- Texts about Roman soldiers Interacting with John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, and Paul
- ACCTS' website: <https://accts.org/ethics.html>
- **Use an Inductive Bible Study Method**
 - Interpret God's meaning directly from section of Scripture
 - Simple format – based on 3 questions:
 - Observation - What do the verses say?
 - Interpretation - What do they mean?
 - Correlation - What do they mean?
 - Application - How do we practice what we learn?





Bible Study 1

What Does God Require of Us?

John the Baptizer and the Roman Soldiers (Luke 3:1-17)

- This study focuses on values associated with **uses of violent force, integrity, honesty, self-discipline, and endurance under stress.**
- Roman soldiers ask John the Baptist a question.
- John uses three key words to answer the Roman Soldiers' question.
 - The first word literally means, “use of violence or terror” for robbery
 - The second word literally means to accuse falsely
 - The third word means to “have unfailing strength”



Bible Study 2

For I Myself Am Under Authority

Jesus and a Centurion (Luke 7:1-10)

- This study focuses on the values associated **with authority, obedience, loyalty, and care.**
- A Roman Centurion (Company Commander) asks Jesus to heal a sick servant
 - The commander was motivated by his concern for a subordinate.
 - He was respected by the people
 - He treated others with respect.
 - He reached out to Jesus (A foreign religious figure).
 - His response amazed Jesus
 - Jesus used his actions to about faith.
 - What can we learn from this?



Bible Study 3

“Surely this Man Was Righteous.”

The Centurion at the Cross and Jesus (Luke 23:44-49)

- This study focuses on values of **candor, allegiance, self-awareness, and reconciliation.**
- The Centurion at that cross was responsible for killing Jesus.
 - He was in command. Following orders.
 - He said Jesus was innocent.
 - Were his actions right?
 - What role do faith and conscience have in military service?

Moral injuries happen to warfighters when **our actions compromise our identity.**

- As Christians, we can experience these struggles.
- .These struggles require some type of reconciliation.
- How does Jesus reveal and heal our struggles?



Bible Study 4

“We Are Gathered in the Presence of God to Listen.”

Peter and Cornelius on a Difficult Mission (Acts 10:1-48)

- In this lesson, we study values of **culture, faith, family, community, and church.**
- A Pious Roman Centurion named Cornelius invited the Apostle Peter into his home.
 - Cornelius gathered his family, friends, and community to hear about Jesus.
 - Peter was reluctant to visit and preach to foreigners.
- Everyone gathered, they believed and they were baptized.
 - This event changed world evangelism.
 - What can we learn about our relationship with God, families, and others?



Bible Study 5

“Everyone Reached Land Safely.”

Paul and Julius on the Road to Rome (Acts 27)

- In this lesson we study values of **acceptance of risk, purpose, and mission success.**
- Julius and Paul accept different levels of mission risk.
 - How did they respond?
 - How are these responses different than the responses of other soldiers in this text?
- How were Julius’ responses shaped by his identity as a soldier, and how did God use them?
 - How does this risk apply to the other Centurion texts we studied?
 - What does this teach us about our identity as a soldier/policeman and a Christian?



Conclusion

As Christians we do not have the option of

1. Separating our personal faith from the work we do. (James 2:17).
2. Separating our relationship with God based on the grace of our Lord Jesus instead of our works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Remember, the temptations and trials of ancient soldiers are not totally different from the struggles we face today.

1. There will be times when we are tempted and distressed, and our character as members of the military seems contrary to our character as Christians.
2. It may even seem impossible to act with integrity. Yet, “with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

Let these contacts between Roman soldiers with Jesus, John, Peter, and Paul be guides for us, as God draws us close to us in our military service and as you serve with grace and honor. May the peace of Christ go with you