

Fit For Duty Devotional--Week 2: Basic Training

Sunday, September 20, 2009

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* NIV

A United States Marine takes the following oath of office upon accepting his commission: *"I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God."*

We "enlist" in God's army by accepting His offer of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. In effect we take an oath to honor, serve and obey Him and to bear true allegiance to Him. We are never compelled to accept Jesus Christ - we do so of our own free will - but as a Marine commits to the responsibilities of his office, so we commit to our obligations as Christians: "freely, without any mental reservation" and promise our obedience - "that we will bear true faith and allegiance" and will "well and faithfully" do as God has commanded.

The "oath" of a Christian is not complicated or difficult. When anyone has confessed and repented of his sins, Scripture says:

Romans 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.* NIV

Prayer: Lord I have enlisted in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ by confessing that I am a sinner, and asking Him into my heart and life. Help me to honorably and faithfully discharge the responsibilities You have given me. Amen.

Monday, September 21, 2009

John 5:24 *(Jesus said,) "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."* NIV

A promise is only as good as the person who makes it. When the Army recruiter tells you that you will be given an assignment in Army Intelligence after your basic and advanced training, you believe it because you trust in his honesty and integrity. Even an Army recruiter has been known to stretch the truth on occasion to get someone to enlist, but it is God's nature to be totally reliable and tell only the truth and His promises can be trusted beyond the shadow of a doubt.

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.* NIV

Hebrews 10:23 *Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.* NIV

As Christians we have absolute confidence in our eternal salvation. It will never be taken away from us. Neither any man, nor demon, nor Satan himself has, or ever will have, the power or authority to undermine or destroy or take away what has been promised by God.

Prayer: *Lord God, thank you for the salvation you have provided for me, and for the blessed assurance that "nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 8:39) Amen.*

Tuesday, September 22, 2009

Romans 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.* NIV

When a new recruit enters into basic training, he is immediately introduced to an entirely new way of life. He is no longer a "civilian." He is shorn and issued a uniform, taught to salute, to say "Sir" to officers, and to march in formation. In short, he is transformed from a slovenly, lazy civilian (at least in the eyes of his Drill Instructor) into a sharp, well trained soldier.

Galatians 5:24-25 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* NIV

"Keep in step" is a military term that means to march in ordered ranks. Part of the requirement for military personnel is to have the ability to move large groups of men from place to place quickly and in an orderly manner. God has a plan for all of us, and if we are to fulfill it, those who are part of His church have to be able to "march in step." Paul urges the church to "stay in synch" in terms of basic beliefs and practices. We call the basic teachings that bind us together and equip us for service "Doctrine," and we learn "doctrine" from the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* NIV

Prayer: *Lord, help me to remember that I am not in this Christ-life all alone! Help me to depend on and walk in step with fellow believers. Help me to be firm and well established in the truths of Scripture that I might serve you faithfully and well. Amen.*

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

Matthew 10:32-33 *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."* NIV

Every newly minted Marine wants to come home on his first leave to proudly show everyone his brand new uniform. The uniform proclaims: "This is a United States Marine, one of the few and the proud." When we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and entered into that new life with Him, we want to proclaim that, and show off for everyone to see our new "uniform." Scripture likens it to having taken off and discarded our old, "civilian" clothes, and put on the uniform of righteousness that proclaims, "This is a Christian, and proud to represent the Lord Jesus Christ."

Eph 4:22-24 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* NIV

New Christians don't get sharp uniforms with blue trousers and red stripes to declare "I'm a Born Again Christian. The Bible has, however, provided a way for us to publicly proclaim our

faith: it's called Believers' Baptism, and being baptized says to the world, "I have set aside my old way of life and enlisted in God's army." Being baptized is one of the first "General Orders" of the Church—it is a way for the new believer to say, "I am ready to march in formation and be obedient to the Lord's commands." If you are a new believer and have not yet been baptized, consider praying this prayer, and then acting on your faith in obedience.

Prayer: Lord, I am proud of the new faith in which I am clothed, and I want to share it with everyone and let all see that I have entered into a newness of life. I understand that baptism is a priority for the new Christian and I am ready to be baptized. Amen.

Thursday, September 24, 2009

Matthew 28:19-20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." NIV

Jesus commanded that we be baptized. In the service we would say, "That's an order, Private!" or "That's an order, sailor!" And the only proper response to an order is "Yes, sir!" or "Aye, aye, sir!" If we would choose not to be baptized, we are disobeying a direct order. If we know we need to be baptized and simply ignore it, we would be in effect going AWOL. Jesus Himself, who had committed no sin of which He would have needed to repent, nevertheless chose to be baptized as an example to us.

Matthew 3:13-15 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. NIV

Our obedience to the command to be baptized is in effect a test of our commitment. Will we live up to the oath we have taken to be obedient, to honor, serve and obey our Lord Jesus Christ?

Prayer: Lord, may I in all things serve honorably and faithfully, being obedient to the light I have been given from the Word. Fill me with your Spirit that I may see clearly the attitudes, words and actions that you call upon me to do, and give me a heart to be a "doer of the word, and not a hearer only." Amen.

Friday, September 19, 2009

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures NIV

Part of every soldier's basic education comes by way of "training films" that show him what will be the outcome of his training. Training films show the new soldier how the men who have come before him do the jobs that must be done. They are "pictures" of what he or she must become as a member of the armed forces of the United States.

Baptism is a picture also. It illustrates in dramatic terms what Jesus Christ did for us when He died on the cross and was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit having taken our sins away in the process. But it also is a picture of what we

are to become as Christians. We have "died" to our old way of life, symbolized by immersion into the water; and we have been "raised" to a new way of life, symbolized by our being lifted out of the water.

Romans 6:3-4 *Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* NIV

Prayer: *Father God, I am a new person, raised from the "death" of sin and disobedience into a new life. Let me think often of my own baptism and the truth that it represents, that I am no longer "alive" simply in biological terms, but have a new and higher calling, a mission and responsibility to You. Teach me to fulfill my assignment faithfully and with integrity that in all things I will cause You to have the honor. Amen.*

Saturday, September 26, 2009

Romans 3:23 *...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 10:9 *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Romans 10:13 *"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

Romans 2:4 *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

Romans 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel ... it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.* NIV

Taken together these eight verses from the Book of Romans are referred to by some as "The Roman Road." If there were to be a "Soldier's Handbook" for Christians who were to serve as "Recruiters," these eight verses could serve as an outline for everything they need to know and say to the unsaved to point the way to faith and salvation.

The first three verses describe the deplorable condition of one who is unsaved, and define the desperate need to make a decision for Christ. The next three verses urge the unbeliever to take the step of obedience and confess Christ as Savior and Lord, assuring him that the promise of God is sure, and warning that he should not show contempt for that which is offered. The final two verses proclaim the benefits to the believer and urge him to be prepared to serve in calling yet others into the Lord's service.

Prayer: *Lord, help me to train my heart and my mouth to speak to those who have need of you, to fulfill Your "Great Commission" to reach the lost and hurting people of this world. Show me the right words and give me a heart of compassion for the lost. Lord, I have walked the "Roman Road"—now let me guide others there as well. Amen.*