

Fit For Duty Devotional--Week 3: Deployment ≡

Sunday, September 27, 2009

2 Timothy 2:15-16 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* NKJV

Anyone who has spent time in the military will remember the much feared barracks inspections. Your uniform, your personal area, your footlocker would be inspected by an officer or sergeant with a pair of white gloves, and would be held up to the standard established for each area. Those who spent the time to clean, polish, tighten, measure, check and double-check did not need to be ashamed, and would usually pass the inspection with a minimum of "gigs" for things not up to standard.

God has standards, too, and they are there for a reason. When we are "rightly dividing the word of truth," we know what God's standards are for our attitudes, our words and our actions, and we are properly applying them. When it comes time for the "Big Inspection" those who are living up to the standard will hear, "Well done!" from the Lord Jesus when he returns.

Now a really observant drill sergeant or officer could always find something that was not quite where it should be, or not shined to quite a high enough polish, maybe a bed cover that he couldn't bounce a quarter on or something out of place in a footlocker. Nobody except Jesus Christ could ever completely live up to God's standards. Even the Apostle Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, realized that on his own, he could never pass the "Great Inspection."

Romans 7:22-25 *I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.* NLT

Prayer: *Lord lead and guide me by your Holy Spirit that I may live my life in a way worthy of God, into whose service I have enlisted and desire to remain all my life. Let me always be ready to "present myself approved," confessing my sin and accepting your forgiveness and grace. Amen*

Monday, September 28, 2009

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* NKJV

Did you ever watch one of those old war movies? You remember! They are the ones where the raw scared Marine Corps recruits are loaded off a bus and an immaculately uniformed DI (Drill Instructor) immediately begins screaming at them and pointing out in embarrassing detail their faults, deficiencies and personal insignificance. Within a few hours they all feel lower than dirt and regret that they were ever convinced by their recruiter to sign on.

But there is a reason for the tough training, the focus on meeting what at first seem to be impossible standards. The new recruits need to be made to forget the old habits that they have developed as civilians and start thinking, acting and looking like United States Marines.

One of the Bible's purposes is to tell us when and how we are off course, not being and doing what God established as the standards by which we are to live as Christians. That's what the Bible calls "reproof." And at the same time, it gives us practical advice on how we are supposed to live, advice that with the help of the Holy Spirit will eventually have us looking acting and sounding like Christians.

Hebrews 12:11 *Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* NKJV

Prayer: *Lord, help me to lose the sloppy habits and worldly thinking that I carried with me into this new life. I know that however long I have been a Christian, there are still areas of my life in which I have not yet fully surrendered to You. Help me to accept the discipline and correction of the Word. Amen.*

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

Isaiah 55:10-11 *"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."* NKJV

During Basic Training we were asked to do things that seemed odd to us, and to do them in specific ways, and in a particular order. Later, when we had learned the basic tasks, we began to see how they all worked together to achieve larger tasks "in an efficient and military manner." The training manuals by which we were taught what we needed to do and how we needed to do it were written for a purpose, to convert civilians with their "do it my way" attitudes and habits into parts of an organized machine able to do things "in step" and in proper order.

The Bible tells us that in our Christian walk, we also need to do things in an orderly fashion, in step with one another. The word translated "keep in step" in the following verse is a Greek word that referred to soldiers marching together in line, in an orderly manner, "in step" with one another.

Galatians 5:25 *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.* NIV

The purpose of the Bible is to bring men to salvation in Christ, and to grow and mature them together in Christian fellowship in the church. To do that we need to all follow the same handbook, learn the same basic truths, and understand God's principles in the same way. Only as we do so will we be deemed "Fit for Duty."

Prayer: *Lord I choose today to accept the lessons of the Word, the Scriptures, as the authoritative guide for my personal beliefs and behaviors. I make the commitment to walk in step with my fellow Christians to be prepared to do the works to which you have assigned me. Amen.*

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

Mark 1:35 *Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.* NKJV

It was Robert E. Lee's regular practice to rise early in the morning and pray. He often prayed the Psalms, and a favorite was Psalms 144:1: **Blessed be the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle** NKJV

In August of 1863, some weeks after the disastrous Battle of Gettysburg, Lee wrote the following prayer and distributed it to his entire army:

Soldiers! We have sinned against Almighty God. We have forgotten his signal mercies, and have cultivated a revengeful, haughty, and boastful spirit. We have not remembered that the defenders of a just cause should be pure in His eyes; that "our times are in His Hands," and we have relied too much on our own arms for the achievement of our independence. God is our only refuge and our strength. Let us humble ourselves before Him. Let us confess our many sins, and beseech Him to give us a higher courage, a purer patriotism, and more determined will; that He will convert the hearts of our enemies; that He will hasten the time when war, with its sorrows and sufferings, shall cease, and that He will give us a name and a place among the nations of the earth.

-- R.E. Lee, General, August 1863

2 Chronicles 7:14 *If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways,*

then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. NKJV

Prayer: Lord, I confess that I pray too often for things I want and outcomes that will make me feel better, and I ask for a heart of humility and personal confession that will empower my prayers and focus them on the achievement of your will in my life, my church and my nation. Amen.

Thursday, October 1, 2009

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing, NKJV

John MacArthur says: "Without ceasing" means "constant" and defines prayer not as some perpetual activity of kneeling and interceding, but rather as a way of life marked by a continual attitude of prayer.

We will only pray effectively if we trust God and believe that He can and will both hear our prayers, and answer them. The beginning of prayer is trust:

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. NKJV

In the military we learn to trust one another, and to trust that the decisions of our superiors are to be obeyed. Trust is an essential of military service, and it is an essential if we are to learn to serve God in prayer.

Prayer is a humble confession that we need God. Prayer is a petition that the plan and purpose of God for us and for the world will be fulfilled. When we pray, "Thy will be done," it means we are asking God to do it His way, not our way. We need to trust God for the meeting of our basic needs. "Give us this day..." only speaks of what we need for right now, and it's not a request that God give us a big storehouse full of stuff "just in case." We need forgiveness every day, and must trust God to forgive and forget our sins. And we need to trust God in prayer for protection from the spiritual warfare that is going on all around us. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication—all the elements of prayer are based on an abiding faith and trust in a good and generous God.

Prayer: Lord teach me to trust. Show me that you will answer my prayers if I will seek in prayer to be your servant and do your will. Teach me to pray, "Thy will, not mine, be done." Amen.

Friday, October 2, 2009

Romans 12:6-8 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. NKJV

The Church is the venue in which we are called to serve God. Just as an army has "specialists" in the many areas in which it must have expertise—weapons, logistics, intelligence, planning. Personnel and a thousand subcategories each with its own special training and requirements, so the church is made up of a variety of people, each of whom God calls to his or her own particular niche.

While the Army as a whole has an overriding mission; in wartime, to win the war, and in peacetime to project power and prevent potential enemies from harming the nation; nevertheless its mission is fulfilled by thousands of individuals each of whom has his own specific role to play. The church, too has a mission:

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." NKJV

Each of us is important to God and to the mission of the church. There is no unimportant person and no unimportant job. Remember the old poem:

*For lack of a nail, the shoe was lost;
for lack of a shoe, the horse was lost;
for lack of a horse, the rider was lost;
for lack of a rider, the message was lost;
for lack of a message, the battle was lost;
for lack of a battle, the war was lost;
for lack of a war, the kingdom was lost.*

The church gives each of us the opportunity to serve, and our individual service contributes in an important way to the fulfillment of the mission God has given to His church. Whether I am the nail or the shoe or the rider, none can fulfill its task without the other.

Prayer: *Lord, show me what it is that you would have me to do as a part of this fellowship that we call the Church. Lead me and guide me into that service, whatever it might be, that will most perfectly use me toward meeting Your ends. Amen.*

Saturday, October 3, 2009

Malachi 3:10 *"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. NKJV*

During our military training we are constantly told that there is a right way to do things. If we do them the right way, things will run smoothly and our effort will be more effective. If we squeeze the trigger rather than jerk it, we will hit the target more accurately and more often.

God also tells us that there are right ways of doing things, and promises that if we will do things His way, he will bless us. Tithing is one of those things that many people try to do their own way—"jerking" the financial trigger so to speak. We don't know why God commanded us to give him back 10% of what He gives us. He might have asked for 8% or for 90% but He didn't. He asks for 10%. It's a command, and when a Christian decides to disobey God in the area of tithing, why not also in the area of not committing adultery, or not coveting, or not stealing? As a matter of fact God says failing to tithe is stealing.

Malachi 3:8-9 *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me..." NKJV*

For many who have made the decision to tithe, God has done a financial miracle. With not a penny more coming in, after giving the tithe at the beginning of the month, all the bills are paid, there is food on the table, and there is enough left over for other things, and even for other charitable giving. Try God in this, if you never have, and see if he won't perform a financial miracle in your life as well.

Prayer: *Lord, I confess that handling my money is one of the areas in my life that I have been most reluctant to give to you to manage. I ask you to lead me to a place where I am tithing—and more—and in which I will know the blessings of financial security as well as the spiritual reward of generosity. Amen.*