

GO SL

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R-14

"ETHICS"

SGM Lucero / -2

Nov 16, 2005

## “ETHICS”

My assignment was to write this thought paper on an ethical dilemma facing today's Army. Although, I didn't really need to do any additional research, I couldn't come up with a particular ethical dilemma, so I chose to talk about “ETHICS” as a whole.

First I want to ask what is Ethics?, as an analogy we can look at the old saying “If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” now we can change that to “If we do the right thing and no one is around will anyone know?”. That is what Ethics is all about; if no one is around will we do the right thing.

This thought paper will provide me the opportunity to discuss some of personal as well as professional ethical dilemmas that I have faced. My grandparents, my teachers, people in my neighborhood and the military have played an essential role in the development of acceptable ethics within me.

I was reared by my grandparents in a very small rural town where every body knew everybody, where the concept that “it takes a village to raise a child” was actually enforced. Where if you did something wrong, it was corrected by whoever saw you doing it, and then still dealt with by your parents. I was taught at an early age to be respectful, to treat people the way I wanted to be treated, not to steal, lie or cheat. And to do a honest days work, for a honest days pay.

I remember when I was around five or six years old, I stole a candy bar from a store, when I went home, my grandmother saw me with it and asked me, where did I get it? Because she knew

I didn't have any money. I told her that I took from the store; she then took me back to the lady who owned the store, made me tell her what I had done and apologize.

What made such an impact on me was the lady told me that I could have just asked her for the candy and she would have given it to me. She still gave it to me, and I didn't even eat it then. Even though my grandmother had taught me right from wrong, it was not until I had first hand experience that I it had an impact on me. Experience is a valuable teacher but the lessons we learned must be "taken to heart" and used in a constructive manner for development.

This upbringing and nurturing that I received from my grandparents established the foundation for my norms, values and ethics today. Doing what is morally and legally right is the way of life for the professional Soldier. The Abu Ghraib incident comes to mind when I talk about doing what is morally and legally right. The Soldiers said they weren't trained, that wasn't their job, no one told them what to do. I will venture to say, maybe they weren't properly trained, but I will also venture to say that they also weren't trained in the ways of torture, humiliation or having sex either. One thing I was told when I first joined the military, is that it is your right to disobey an order when it is illegal and immoral. All this goes back to their ethics and their values. The "Golden Rule", treat someone as you want to be treated.

Most leaders have encountered some type of ethical dilemma while serving in the military. All ethical dilemmas normally have a hard right choice and an easy wrong choice. The one you make is the test of your values and your ethics. My grandparents always told me to never make a decision to please someone else, if it would be me suffering the repercussions of that decision. A good example of this is when I was at Ft. Benning, as a Parachute Packer Supervisor, as riggers we worked on a quota system. At the beginning of the day we were assigned a quota of

600 to 650 parachutes to pack. Normally we had 18 packers, which equated to about 36 parachutes per packer. At the end of the day we would sometime come up short, which meant we had to continue, now I could have taken a short cut and pencil packed some parachutes or changed the dates on some that had been packed previously and gotten our quota. But would that be the "right" thing to do. Sure, I would probably had been popular for that day, but ultimately my soldiers would have lost respect for me and probably emulate that type of short cut technique with their soldiers when they became leaders.

FM 22-100 hits the nail on the head when it talks about the military leader's three ethical responsibilities: to be a role model, to develop your subordinates ethically and avoid creating ethical dilemmas for your subordinates. If you act as a positive role model for your soldiers, they will emulate you. Also, if you act as a negative role model, some of them will emulate you too. By developing your subordinates ethically, to do the right thing, at all times, in the absence of orders, you and your soldiers will reap the benefits.

Leaders sometime create ethical dilemmas for their soldiers when they give them unclear guidance and leave them guessing, what they should do? Or telling them, I don't care how you do it, just get it done. As a leader, never put your soldiers in an ethical dilemma.

Another old saying goes, "what you put in is what you will get out." For the future of America, it is on our shoulders to instill those values in the Soldiers we lead. But first we must look within ourselves and determine if we meet that standard. Then judge ourselves to that standard. If we do not feel that we are up to it, then it is up to us to change.

As defenders of the greatest nation on earth, we are obligated to elevate ourselves to a higher standard and accept nothing less. As the morals, values and ethics of our society erode before our eyes, we are the last line of defense. We must instill those values, ethics and morals into those we lead.

The ethical decisions we make daily, are our message. Our society has come to a bend in the road and appears to have traveled around the curve, but we do not have to follow. Someone once said that “a man who stands for nothing, will fall for anything”, meaning you have to stand up for what is right, no matter the circumstances. If you always use the “Golden Rule” and ask yourself is this the right thing, then you will never be placed in the position of having an ethical dilemma.