

Consequences is the True Meaning of Ethics

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Consequences are not strong enough to guide soldiers with ethical dilemmas. Ethics is a value of moral principles, rules, or standards that guides life-making decisions. What makes us decide to do one action over the other? A common thought is that we obtain our ethics from our parents or from religious beliefs. <sup>-3-7</sup> ~~I do~~ <sup>for parents</sup> not believe it is our internal ethics or values are from our parents or religious beliefs. Our ethical decision making process contemplates the fear of being caught or the consequences behind the actions.

What if you could do something without anyone knowing? You would not be accountable for any civil or criminal law infraction and no one would ever know. This situation could be anything from cheating on your spouse to punching out that rude or obnoxious person that you work with. Many of us at one time or another has thought about doing something that is unethical. I can think of several situations that are very unethical and against most laws in the United States that I would love to do. What keeps me from acting out these “fantasies” is the fact that they are not worth the price of embarrassment or trouble. In our minds, there is a line between things that we are willing to do <sup>USARMC -3-7</sup> ~~do~~ with out regard to the cost and the things that we are not willing to do. Most unethical situations would not be worth the embarrassment to my family or the risk of going to jail. However, what if no one would know and I could not be caught. Yes, I would do several things that are unethical. However, does that make me an unethical person?

We test our ethics during our everyday activities. While I was driving to work this morning, approaching the intersection, I saw the traffic light turn yellow. As a licensed driver, knowing that the yellow traffic light means that I should slow my vehicle and prepare to stop for the red traffic light. While coming to a stop at the intersection for the red light, the vehicle in the lane to my left increased their speed and ran the traffic light. The driver of this vehicle was wearing an Army battle dress uniform (BDU). All of us agree that “running the red traffic light”

is against the law and an unethical action. This situation of increasing your <sup>-3.7</sup> speed on the yellow traffic light is very common and acceptable behavior. The chances of receiving a ticket from the police or anyone to find out are low. Although the leading killer of soldiers are traffic collisions, <sup>pride</sup> this soldier made the wrong decision. He took a chance at the intersection to get to his destination about 10 minutes earlier.

Many times, we hear people say, "treat people how we would like to be treated." This is an ethical thing to do and a principle that most of us live up too. Given this ethical principle, observe how we act towards one another in the East Auditorium. We all know that that we must be in our seats in the East Auditorium 10 minutes before the start of the presentation. Most of us abide by this rule but about 20-30 people that will come in through the front entrance after the doors are closed. Even a larger number of people will continue to talk and ignore the Master Sergeant Pete Ladd attempting to talk to the student body. Is it because he is a Master Sergeant in a sea of Sergeant Majors? I thought all of us are on the same level as students. With this in mind, Master Sergeant Ladd should be given the same consideration as the rest of the students. All of us know what the ethical thing to do but the chances of any punishment is low or none. Therefore, we will continue to treat the student command with little or no respect. Even though this is a small and minor detail as soldiers, we should show each other professional respect.

How would the United States Army be without morals or ethics? The Army needs to have a set of standards or rules to hold everyone accountable. We do this by Army Regulations and/or the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It is common practice to violate Army Regulations for the better of the Army. For example, if a soldier fails to maintain progress on the Weight Control Program it will end their career. All of us have seen examples of how a great soldier is given more latitude for the better of the Army. If this soldier were a below or average soldier,

the out come would be very different. If we did not have these rules and relied on our ethics and/or values, in theory, the Army would not survive.

Religion is a large part of any many soldiers' lives. This aids the health and welfare of the soldier. Pick any religion, at the very core is the set of rules that the believers must follow. Certain things may happen in this lifetime or in the afterlife if the rules are broken. What keeps the believers in line are the fact that their god will be watching at all times. This supports my theory of people modifying their behavior because of the chances being caught is great.

The environment that we live in controls our decision-making process regarding ethical type issues. Environment or actions are controlled by amount of acceptance a community will tolerate or what is at risk. For example, the looting that occurred in New Orleans. The news *reporter* report stated that people were looting stores and showed pictures of African-Americans taking things from stores ranging from food to blue jeans. The public cried out for law enforcement to stop this behavior. A few days later the news showed several Caucasian people doing the same act as the African-Americans and the reporter described it as securing provisions. The message that I understood it as the community allowed the Caucasian people but not the African-Americans to loot.

All us believe that stealing is unethical. We have civil criminal laws against it and the Uniform Code of Military Justice covers this issue. I ask this question, "How many times have you taken a pen, paper, chem.-lights or batteries from your unit or office for home use?" I have and I know that most of the people around you have too. This is stealing from the United States of America. Most people will consider this type of activity as normal and acceptable behavior. The chances that anyone would consider this stealing and the fear of any reprisals are low. This is why I believe that we do not see this as an ethical dilemma.

I just completed the United State Army Sergeants Major Academy's (USASMA) 100% urinalysis test. I have an ethical dilemma. As I was finishing the final process of this test, my observer walked away. I was instructed that the <sup>SARMA</sup> observe must stay with me until my urine sample is accepted by the person controlling the test. I do not know the <sup>SARMA</sup> observe by name or by face. I remembered that he was an African-American male and held a rank of Sergeant Major. When it was discovered <sup>by</sup> the controller he asked were my observer was. I told him that I do not know and I did not know what his name was. I left my urine sample with the controller and looked for my observer. After a few seconds of looking with negative results, I returned to the controller. Another observer stated that my observer was Sergeant Major Ortiz. After about 10-15 minute wait Sergeant Major Ortiz was located and about to sign the observer section of the sign in roster. I informed the controller that Sergeant Major Ortiz did not observe me and it was an African-American Sergeant Major. After about another 2-3 minutes an African-American Sergeant Major said that he thinks that he was my observer and signed the paper. This is my dilemma. I do not remember what my observer looked like nor did I ask what his name was. I cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that the person that signed as my observer was the person who observed the urine test. The observer and I did not have constant observation of my sample during the entire time. With these two rules broken my dilemma is whether to say anything and have the test thrown out or just keep my mouth shut. I do not have any worries regarding the urine test results. Two other Sergeant Majors are part of United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) staff that knows of the problem. I know that they are not willing to say anything or do anything about to correct the situation. The controller that is in charge knew that he made a mistake but chose not to do anything about it. Therefore, why should I say anything? The dilemma is whether I should say anything and possibly make several people look bad or just

keep my mouth shut and everyone looks good. Again, what are the chances of me being caught for not saying anything? Low to none and by the time anyone reads this the urine analysis test will be just a memory. I am going to keep my mouth shut.

These are just a few common examples of how our ethics are tested. If the consequences for disobeying a red light was severe or technology would make it, <sup>pure</sup> impossible to go undetected drivers would change their behavior. At USASMA, the students are not graded on how they display respect to other. If this were a part of their grade, behavior would change in the East Auditorium. All the rules that govern our lives, Army Regulations, UCMJ, civil laws or religious beliefs, are just guidelines. These guidelines are modified to conform acceptable norms that the group is willing to tolerate. This level of acceptance is measured by the chances of being judged and the consequences.

We live day to day by making <sup>is</sup> decision based on "cause and effect." We ponder the decision to do one thing over another based on what is won or loss. I do not believe that ethics guide our live but our lives are guided by the fear of the consequences. Although these different situations maybe minor in severity, they are still wrong and should be against our ethical way of life. We need to have stronger consequences to deter these types of behaviors. With stronger consequences, soldiers will be less likely to make the wrong decision.