

ETHICS

MSG CALVIN J. COLER

L12

## Ethics

Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus defines ethics as "conduct, morality, mores, decency, integrity, moral conduct, social values, moral code, principles, right and wrong, natural law, honesty, goodness, honor, social laws, human nature and the Golden Rule". The United States Army has its own ethics. They are known as the Army seven values. The Army wants soldiers to live by these values. Those values spell the acronym LDRSHIP. The values are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. I will discuss them one at a time and give the dictionary definition and my own perception of the term Ethics.

The first value is loyalty. The definition of loyalty is "a feeling of faithfulness or allegiance". A leader has to be faithful and consistent with their soldiers by articulating a clear and consistent message. Leaders have to set understandable goals and faithfully reward those who help attain those goals. Loyalty is a two way street, we must be loyal to our soldiers so they can be loyal to us. When a leader is loyal he takes responsibility for the good and bad of his soldiers.

Duty is the next value. The definition of duty is "something that one is expected or required to do by moral or legal obligation". To me, duty is what holds all of the Army values together. Duty charges us to be morally strong and teach our subordinates to do the same. If nothing else motivates you to get up out of bed every morning at 0430 hrs and go to work to conduct physical training, your sense of duty should. Duty means being a soldier and living up to your commitments.

Respect is the next value. Respect is "the condition of being esteemed or honored". Respect is something that is given to people, institutions, positions, or even the uniform that you wear. Leaders must have respect for their subordinates, and subordinates for their leaders. We as

leaders must have respect for our subordinates because they are the sons and daughters of this country. Mothers and fathers across this nation have given us the awesome responsibility of leading their children, keeping them safe, and possibly taking them to fight war. They expect to get them back safe and more mature than when they gave them to us.

Selfless Service is giving all of yourself to your unit or country with little regard for your own interests. When a leader puts his men and mission first, it builds loyalty in his subordinates. They see that the leader is willing to sacrifice for them, and they will emulate the leader. A leader who serves selflessly makes sure he is available to his soldiers at all times. He shows his face in the barracks on the weekends to check on his soldiers. He counsels his soldiers during the duty day so the soldier doesn't have to stay late.

The definition of honor is "honesty, fairness, or integrity in one's beliefs and actions". Nothing is more important for a soldier to have than honor. Soldiers study and evaluate their leaders every day. They know when a leader isn't totally honest in giving reports. They see if you falsify the numbers just to make your unit look better than it really is for inspection. If you're not fair in issuing punishments and rewards, they see it. Soldiers talk amongst themselves, there is very little that gets by them. Leaders usually make the mistake of thinking that nobody's watching, but your soldiers are.

Integrity is "the uncompromising adherence to ethical principles". People can take away many things from you, but nobody can take away your integrity. Once you give away your integrity, it's almost impossible to get back. There are many opportunities every day to bend the rules, or to compromise your integrity. Good leaders will resist that temptation because eventually, the truth will come out. We also can't create the environment that soldiers think that they have to bend the rules, lie, cheat, or steal to please you. If we have a "zero defects"

mentality, we send that message to our subordinates. You cannot tolerate ethical mistakes. They have to know that while we strive to be perfect we know we never will be, and as long as they learn and grow from their mistakes we can accept them.

Personal Courage has two components, physical and moral. You may have the chance to demonstrate physical courage once in your lifetime, but you can display moral courage every day. I believe that a physically courageous act is easier to accomplish than a moral one. When you attempt a physical act of courage, your peers and subordinates are usually together with you strengthening you and providing guidance or encouragement. When you are attempting moral courage, however, most of the time you are standing alone.

The values that I have listed above are not the only ones that a leader must possess to be an ethical leader in the Army, but you can't be an ethical leader without them. Non-Commissioned Officers are said to be the "Backbone of the Army". They are also the moral backbone of the Army. Leader's values must be in line with the Army's values in order to be effective as a leader. Ethical leaders must have high self-esteem and self-confidence. They cannot feel the need to be popular because being right isn't always the popular choice.

Leaders are responsible for establishing the ethical climate in the unit. You must examine yourself and determine how well you reflect the Army values. If you attack what is wrong and uphold what is right and just, you have set an ethical climate in your unit. A leader must exercise good judgment at all times, knowing that soldiers are watching him. Leaders must set the example. Troops look to the leader as someone who has "made it", so whatever you do in that role is what many of them feel they must do in order to be successful. What your values are tells them what their values should be. If your personal values don't reflect the Army's values, then their values won't either.