

Running head: Ethics Thought Paper

The “Ethical Leader”

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The Ethical Leader

“A competent leader can get efficient service from poor troops; an incapable leader can demoralize the best of troops.” (John J. Pershing, Army general 1860-1948) We have all been there and seen it a Noncommissioned Officer who attempts to lead his/her team, squad, platoon, or company by fear or abuse to cover up their incompetents. There are leaders that feel they should not have to get their hands dirty, they feel Soldiers are there to serve them; we should provide our Soldiers the best leadership possible, because we are expected to lead by example showing them what right looks like, and this leadership should be a “do as I do” not a “do as I say”. Our society over the years has gotten further and further away from God. We have become a self-serving throw away society. We feel that we need to climb our way to the top of the mountain and in doing so we step on anything or any one in our path. We place more emphases on our jobs and who we are than we do on our families. Some would argue how you could say that, I can say it because when you look at the divorce rate more than fifty percent of first time marriages end with a divorce. The number is even larger when you look at second time marriages more than seventy percent of them fail. The number one reason this happens is a spouse being unfaithful to the other. The Army too has recognized the trend that we as a society have become less moral, that families are no longer instilling what we once considered to basic ethics and values in their children. From the poorest family in southern Alabama to the riches and most affluent family in Arkansas, all are failing at this task. None of us will ever forget that most famous quote “I did NOT have sex with that lady” (William J. Clinton Forty-Second President of the United States). With roles models like this and the ever-decaying family unit and a country who continues to turn its back on God it is no wonder why our children are not learning what basic values are.

FM 6-22 is the Army's keystone manual on leadership. It establishes leadership doctrine and fundamental principles for all officers, noncommissioned officers, and Army civilians across all components. "Competent leaders of character are necessary for the Army to meet the challenges in the dangerous and complex security environment we face" (Peter J. Schoomaker, General, United States Army Chief of Staff). Leaders at the highest-level are so concerned about our value system in society bleeding into the Army that they felt it was important to have a standard of values to educate all recruits, so that there was a baseline of values for Soldiers to adhere to. The moment that a new Soldier enters into the training base, he/she is submerged into the Army's values. There are Seven Army Values that are taught and reinforced through a Soldier's time in the Army.

The first value is Loyalty. The definition of Loyalty is "Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers" (Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership, October 2006). The Army wants young Soldiers to buy into being part of something larger than themselves, to think of others, to be part of a larger extended family. Leaders earn loyalty from their subordinates. Sharing hardships in training and in combat help mold and shape units into being loyal to one another. If a subordinate sees that a leader is doing and enduring the same hardships they are, they will have more respect and loyalty to him or her than if that leader was using their position to get out of that situation. That is why leaders need to have boots on the ground whenever possible in all situations. This is one way you gain credibility with your Soldiers.

Duty is the second Army value taught to Soldiers. The definition of Duty is "Fulfill your obligations" (Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership, October 2006). Duty goes far beyond what you are told to do, if a Soldier is walking across the motor pool and observes a piece of trash on

the ground no one has told him or her to pick it up but he or she does. This is the Soldiers duty, because he or she has Loyalty to their unit and understands that their thankless act will contribute to the collective being seen by outsiders in a better light. Soldiers understand this better than any person in society does. The average person will barely make it to work on time or sometimes not at all. In contrast, a Soldier will work weekends, holidays, and a Soldier will deploy to a far away country not seeing their family for months on end. Why? Simple, because it is their duty.

Respect is the third value taught to Soldiers. The definition of Respect is “Treat people as they should be treated” (Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership, October 2006). A nation can be judged by its’ Army as a unit can be judge by its Soldiers. The Army is the melting pot of our society, everyone who enters the Army comes with his or her own prejudices and way of thinking. That is what makes us so strong; however, there is a basic standard that everyone should adhere to. Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect, it creates a common understanding of the Army’s Values and expected standard of conduct. Leaders earn their Soldiers respect. Subordinates will normally respect the rank but they do not always respect the person wearing it. Respect is a two way street Soldiers may not always like you however if you are a good leader they will respect you.

Selfless Service is the fourth value taught. The definition of Selfless Services is “Put the welfare of the Nation, the Army, and subordinates before your own” (Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership, October 2006). This value in my opinion is already in every Soldier who joined the Army after September 11 and everyone who stayed past their enlistment after September 11. The Army is looking to refine this value in its Soldiers. Less than one percent of our society has ever served its nation in the military. Most do not know what it means to put something or someone above himself or herself. As leaders your Soldiers must be the focus; that means you will be in

before them and leave after them. If this is done for your Soldiers, there is nothing that they will not do for you.

Honor is the fifth value taught to our Soldiers. The definition of Honor is “Live up to all the Army Values” (Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership, October 2006). As a leader you must demonstrate what is right, honor is what holds the values together. This is done in your professional life as well as in your private life. I associate honor with another word character, and both of these assimilate the essences of a leader. George Washington said, “War must be carried on systematically, and to do it you must have men of character activated by principles of honor” (George Washington Commander, Continental Army (1775-81) and President of the United States (1789-97). This value I think is the most important and is apart of every value we teach our Soldiers and leaders.

Integrity is the sixth value taught, the definition of Integrity is to “do what’s right legally and morally” (Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership, October 2006). Integrity takes on many meanings, as we stated previously every person has a different set of values. Some of these are cultural, some are religious, and some our socially based, everyone has a different moral compass that they use to navigate life and this can make things interesting when everyone has a weapon. This is why I think the Army has developed the Army Values and push them so hard; it is an attempt to get everyone on the same base line.

Personal Courage is the seventh value taught; the definition of Personal Courage is “Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical and moral)” (Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership, October 2006). Physical courage requires overcoming fears of bodily harm. Every leader must posses this type of courage. A leader must be willing to walk that combat patrol with his or her Soldiers. Although a Soldier knows that, you have walked a patrol at one time in your career the one you

walk with them is by far the most important. It shows that you are not asking them to do something you would not do yourself, and that you have concern for what they are going through. Moral Courage is the willingness to stand firm on values and principles. This value I think is lacking in many leaders today and people in general. When something goes wrong and you are the one who is responsible many people try to make it “someone else fault” rather than accepting responsibility. As it states in FM 7-8 you are responsible for everything that happens or fails to happen in you organization. You also must understand as a leader once you make a stand or a decision you must be ready to accept the consequences of your decision, because other may not see things the same way you do. At the end of the day you will have to live with what ever decision you make and one day you will have to answer to God for what you have done or failed to do.

In conclusion, we have talked about the state of our society and the lack of ethics and values being taught to our children. We have discussed that our Army is a product of society, and that our senior leaders felt a need to introduce a value-based program in the Army. This program was put into place to set a base line that all Soldiers and leaders are expected to adhere to. We have talked about leaders serving their subordinates and giving them the proper role model on and off duty. As Army leaders, we must know more than the Army’s values. We must know how to apply the values to the ever-increasing challenges we face. Despite the rising demands on troops and the Global War on Terrorism, we will face many more challenges that require leaders at all levels to make serious decisions that affect our Soldiers futures. The principle values that guide us in everyday dilemmas are our beliefs and norms that we gain through life experiences. I am a firm believer that we must produce an ethical based organization. Setting the example of the Army values is paramount with future leaders. Regardless of the enormous pressures a

noncommissioned officer feels throughout their tenure as a leader they must make the right ethical and moral decisions for their Soldiers and prepare them to face difficult and challenging dilemmas throughout their lives and the Army.