

Military Christian Values Series



In this series we discover that the Australian Defence Force Values are as timeless as the Bible and a guide for Christian living. Adherence to the Defence Values is something expected of all members of the ADF and Department of Defence. Professionalism, Integrity, Courage, Loyalty, Teamwork, and Innovation are core characteristics of the culture of the ADF. It should come as no surprise to anyone that these values are also inherently Christian values. This series is based upon articles written by senior ADF officers and clergy and originally appeared in Crossfire, MCF's magazine. They explain why these six biblical values are not only important to our military life but essential to our Christian walk. MCF groups are encouraged to use the six essays as topics for study and discussion during meetings and study groups.

Let us ask ourselves the following:

- Do we show God's glory through adherence to these values? If so, how best do we do so?
- Are there any aspects to these values that are contrary to our beliefs? How do we deal with that?
- What do we do when Christian co-workers and friends are not showcasing these values?
- What are the core values of Christian life not encompassed by the Defence Values? What can we do to reinforce these within our workplace?

Courage, By Bishop Len Eacott, AM, RFD

“Courage is the strength to do what is right, whatever the physical or moral challenges. Courage is more than putting life and limb on the line for country, mission, and mates. It is also about making hard decisions with honesty and integrity. It is acting in the best interests of the nation and the Army, in the achievement of the assigned mission, whatever the personal consequences. It is having the moral strength to balance the will to win with compassion, and duty with mateship.”¹ Courage, by means of this secular or worldly definition, characterises the fighting spirit of the warrior, and identifies one with an ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from a chosen course of action.² It implies working in a team and striving to attain high ideals. In the Australian Defence Force (ADF) it typifies an idealised virtue and is defined as “...courage under extreme hardship and danger, a fierce spirit of independence, and the willing sharing of difficulties and

opportunity among mates.”³ There are many examples from history of courageous behaviour predominantly associated with leadership, sacrifice and war fighting. With such a heritage, surely every citation for valour or bravery ought to include the virtue of “courage” in the text. It is no surprise then that courage is included as one of the core values of the modern ADF. Across the nations and generations courage has been a widely celebrated virtue. The Bible has its own honour roll of heroes who were courageous in battle and martyrdom. But courage in the scriptures does not stand as an independent virtue; here it has a religious context, inspired by and exhibited in the service of God. Obvious among many in the Old Testament, is the example of David’s courageous confrontation and defeat of Goliath.⁴ David epitomises the fighting spirit of the Biblical warrior doing battle for God’s people. In the New Testament the fighting spirit and courage of the warrior is left behind and the emphasis changes radically. Although the military metaphor remains, the focus is Jesus’ own example of courage in his ministry and passion which is the definitive inspiration for his followers. Although the Greek word for courage appears but once in the New Testament,⁵ the spirit of courage is exercised throughout by the disciples and believers by the employment of steadfast endurance, boldness of speech, and undaunted faith in the face of social and physical opposition. Peter and John bravely face their accusers. Stephen goes to his death with words of forgiveness on his lips. Paul carries the gospel confidently to the Diaspora and stands bravely before his judges.⁶ The message is that that which is central in the Christian tradition is to be defended with vigour, with loyalty, with courage, and with strength. And so, by way of conclusion, Christian courage is not derived from human interaction and national ideals and even with implicit links with the warrior tradition of the Old Testament, it is of God. Therefore, be firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. “Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”⁷

NOTES:

¹ Army Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD 0-2), “Leadership” 2002, para 2.14.

² Encarta On-line Dictionary.

³ LWD 0-2, para 2-9

⁴ 1 Sam 17

⁵ 1 Cor 16:13

⁶ The Interpreter’s Bible Vol. X. Abingdon, 1980, p 259.

⁷ 1 Cor 16: 13-14 (NRSV)

The Author: Prior to becoming a Chaplain, Len Eacott was a National Serviceman, infantry officer, soil conservationist, and Anglican priest. He had served as Chaplain from unit to Land Command level including Senior Chaplain of the Deployable Joint Force HQ in East Timor during INTERFET. In 2002 he was collated as Archdeacon to the Army and subsequently that year appointed the Principal Chaplain - Army. In 2007 he was appointed Anglican Bishop to the ADF.