

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?

Loyalty, by LTCOL Mick Mumford, CSC

Christian tradition holds that in the 3rd century after Christ's birth a Roman Legion, of mainly Christian North Africans led by an Egyptian called Maurice, mutinied against orders to destroy a Christian village in Gaul (now France). Maurice and his soldiers, it is said, refused the order on religious grounds and the Roman Emperor at the time, Maximian, ordered the Legion be "decimated". Decimation was a group punishment system that involved executing every tenth soldier, decided by lot; in this case some 600 men. Orders to destroy the village were again refused, and the Legion was again "decimated". Finally, after refusing the orders a third time, Maximian had the entire Legion of 6600 killed. This story, albeit it non-biblical tradition, illustrates the many loyalties demanded of military Christians, although thankfully these days in much less dramatic circumstances! Loyalty to God is demanded of a Christian above all else; yet so is loyalty to nation, unit, and fellow soldiers, sailors or airmen. Loyalty, then, should be no stranger to a military Christian, and yet sometimes loyalty can be misguided. Should a soldier give up his mate when he knows he has done the wrong thing? If he is loyal to just his mate then arguably he shouldn't, ever, but

what about his loyalty to his unit, his Service, and even his beliefs? Clearly, this is a difficult decision, and many people get themselves into deep water as loyalties collide and they unwisely choose one or the other. The question, therefore, is not should we be loyal to God, nation, unit, and mates; rather the question is how can we remain loyal without compromising what is right?

To answer this question let us look at those who were privileged enough to learn directly from the Son of God himself. The Apostles were hardly paragons of loyalty at first and had many competing loyalties: family, religion, Jesus, and each other. We see them squabbling with each other as to who would be greatest, we see them leave family business to follow Jesus, and we see them reject the established religion of their own people when it moved away from what they had been taught. And even after all of that, at the first sign of real trouble, they abandoned Jesus, denied knowing Jesus, secluded themselves in locked rooms, and probably sent women on scouting missions for them! But after Pentecost we see an amazing transformation. Gone are doubts and fears ruling their emotions. Gone are quandaries about how and who to be loyal to. The difference? The Holy Spirit! Once filled with the Spirit the Apostles did amazing acts of loyal service, almost all to the very act of martyrdom. And as they did this they had to give up friends in the interest of the kingdom (see Acts 15:36 - 40), and counselled others as to when to be loyal to the group over the individual (1 Tim 5:20). But in each case, they showed great wisdom in deciding where their loyalty should lie. How then do we ensure we make the right loyalty decisions? By trusting the Holy Spirit within us! And since every believer has the gift of the Spirit within him or her (see John 7:39), then it should be our wellspring of strength to remain loyal and the source of our discernment as to where our loyalty should be on any given issue. So, next time that little conscience prick is worrying you, trust the lead of the Spirit within you to help you make the right decision.

So, with such an advantage over our non-Christian brothers and sisters in the ADF, if there are any examples of loyal servicemen it should be we Christians! What a great witness that would be.

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