

Professional Perspectives for Christian Senior Officers

The **Position** of a Christian Senior Officer

What should be our attitude toward the spiritual dimensions of position, authority, and rank?

One concern for a senior Christian officer is the use or misuse of his or her position for Christian activity. Clearly, every individual must come before God and wrestle with how He intends for you to use the authority of your position as a senior officer. This question might be described as a road with a ditch on either side.

The *surface* of the road represents the path of God's intentions for you. The *ditch* on the left represents the abuse of your authority. This could take the extreme, for example, of requiring subordinates to attend a Bible study. A more subtle behavior would be to act in such a way that your subordinates get the impression they must participate in chapel or OCF activities in order to gain your professional approval and get a good "report card." Such a message can be sent without your awareness or intention.

The other *ditch*, the one on the right, represents inactivity or silence about your faith. You fall into this ditch when you fail to integrate your faith and your professional duties in a vital and positive way. Satan loves to lead you into this ditch even more than the other. When you fall into the left ditch, at least people start talking about the proper relationship between Christian faith and the military profession. When you fall into the right ditch, nobody talks about the Bible or Christ.

Too many officers stray into the *right ditch*, either through a lack of proper understanding of God's will for them, or through a lack of faith. You will exert spiritual influence on your superiors, peers and subordinates. *Those who hold senior positions in the U.S. Armed Forces will never have a neutral effect on their people.* **Will your influence be godly, or will it be tainted by the values of this world?**

The priorities of two senior officers:

- A senior commander who was involved in significant and direct spiritual leadership responded to a question on how he found time for such involvement when others in similar positions said they didn't have time: "*You do those things that you want to do.*"
- A senior officer leading a front-line combat unit who met regularly with others for Bible study and who coordinated spiritual activities across a number of units said, "*It just seemed the thing to do.*"

What principles we can draw from Scripture?

Psalm 75

- **God is sovereign.** Even though we are relatively free agents with the ability to make decisions, timing and situations are ultimately in His control, designed for His purpose.
- **Promotion and position come from God.** Verses 6 – 7 are often quoted at a promotion ceremony. The key question is this: "*In addition to giving God the glory for your promotion or position only on one day at the ceremony, how can these things be used effectively for Him every day?*"
- **God is the Judge.** Your final and most important effectiveness report will be rendered by God. How closely will your life reflect the stewardship responsibilities He has assigned to you?

Esther 4:10-14

- **God will not be thwarted by a human leader's inactivity.** He will cause His ultimate purpose to be accomplished, regardless of a leader's choice for personal welfare or actively living for Him.
- **A leader can choose to be significant in God's purposes, or to be insignificant regardless of human accomplishment.** What will be your choice? Fifteen years after you are no longer an active duty senior officer, how significant will the things you accomplished be in the sight of God?
- **The combination of rank and position, and the human needs of your people can provide great opportunities to be used by God.** What specific opportunities are being presented to you? How will you respond to them? Are you willing to be used by the Spirit of God?

Expectations from Christ

Luke 12:48

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”

Matthew 25:14-30

- **Earthly things—position, power, material goods—are not intrinsic to us, but entrusted to us by God.** The characters in Christ's parables are servants who were provided capability by their master.
- **The more God gives, the more He will expect.** Promotion is based on potential, not reward. A military leader knows each promotion means more will be expected of him. Spiritual responsibility is also expected—*demanded*—by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **God will review your performance against His expectations.** Just as a senior officer continues to receive professional performance reviews that are judged against increasing expectations, so God will evaluate spiritual performance against that which He has entrusted to us. Christ's words here are descriptive. How will you use what God has given you?

Comments of officers who served in command positions with national visibility:

- “Your activity as a Christian senior officer may be quietly supporting, privately encouraging, setting the environment, but you must have activity.”
- “You are responsible as the spiritual leader of your organization. You must be concerned about the spiritual welfare of all your people, and as a Christian you would like all of your people to know Jesus Christ. So within the bounds of the first amendment (which I interpret as keeping government out of religion and not vice versa) you must lay the ground work to keep your unit spiritually fit.”
- “You must set the proper Christian example in professional and spiritual activities. You should participate in specific spiritual activities as God leads you, under your circumstances.”
- “As a senior leader, you cannot do all the work yourself, either professionally or spiritually, but you must provide the resources to make your subordinates successful. Put simply, your people need to know from your actions that it is right to love God, trust His plan, and obey His commandments.”

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