



INTEGRATED

FAITH PROJECT

FAITH & PROFESSION

Integrating Faith in Profession

From the first through the last chapters of the Bible, the good news of God through Jesus Christ is clear and resounding. Frequently God uses prophets, apostles, and priests to proclaim His word. Just as frequently, He uses men and women engaged in more secular professions. Joseph, Esther, Nehemiah, and Daniel were government officials; Priscilla and Aquilla tentmakers; Boaz and Amos farmers. And often God sovereignly used warriors for His divine purposes.

Although a prophetess and judge, Deborah led 10,000 soldiers of Israel in a great victory over the Canaanites. Benaiah, Uriah, Josheb, Eleazar, Shammah, and David fearlessly led and fought in godly faith. Joshua and Caleb conducted intelligence operations in the boldness and wisdom of faith. Roman leaders like the Centurion at Capernaum and Cornelius were commended for their faith and used by God for His Gospel purposes.

Today we, like those found in Scripture, face challenges in living out our faith in a secular and culturally diverse military environment. The real and imagined constraints and restraints we encounter can impose some difficult choices on a believing leader. And like in Biblical times, God chooses to use normal professionals today for His purposes.

How do we respond when our faith seems to collide with expectations placed on us as a military leader? Do we separate the secular from the sacred, compartmentalizing our lives into separate domains of profession and faith? Or is all of our life governed by our faith in Christ whether in a religious setting or in a setting defined by the world as purely secular and professional. If it is the latter, how do we do that?

You may recall from the Foundation session of the ***Integrated Faith Project*** that as Jesus was ending His earthly ministry, He paused for prayer. In that prayer He reported his fulfillment of the Father's will while on earth. Then he continued with the mission given to all His followers, "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Jesus sent His disciples into the world—and His military disciples into the military profession for the Father's gospel purposes.

Simply stated, WE ARE CALLED TO THE MILITARY AND TO LIVE OUR FAITH WITHIN IT.

A professional is characterized by service beyond self, special training, high standards of excellence, and a sense of calling to the vocation. The military today is a professional calling. For a fuller study of profession, access the resources found on the OCF website under this subject.



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Although the military was still evolving as a profession in the Civil War, a sterling example of professional character during the war is Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, a devout Christian and hero of the Battle of Gettysburg. At Gettysburg he led his regiment on a bayonet charge against the enemy under extreme conditions and overwhelming odds to save the Union's defenses. Chamberlain was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions. Years later, when recounting the story to another veteran, he stated "as a young man, my cousin who was a devout man of faith, told me that the Lord's calling was upon me for a work of significant importance. Upon reflection, I realize it was for that day, the 2d of July 1863." Before the war Chamberlain had been a successful college professor. He left that work to respond to a divine calling to be a soldier and leader. His words and actions throughout his life provide timeless testimony to his faith and how he lived that out within his military responsibilities.

Ask yourself: "Am I called to the military profession as a leader? Am I called by God to serve Him within it?" Imagine how the answers to those questions could change your entire outlook. Let's consider some theological facts.

God is Sovereign; He has absolute Power, is ever present, and has infinite knowledge and love. We see in Scripture that God calls us to His purposes. We receive our assignments through military officials, but know the sovereign God can direct the hand of the one that makes the assignments.

That means that in His sovereignty and wisdom, God placed you into service where He desires and for you to live out His purposes. You aren't in your role by accident. But rather, for a purpose! A divine purpose! If that's true, then even if you wanted to compartmentalize your profession as separate from your faith, you can't! They are joined together from the start!

Let that sink in.

God called you into your military profession, He placed you in the role you are given, and he assigns you to live out His Gospel mission wherever you find yourself.

But let's be honest with ourselves. Knowing we should live out our faith in the workplace and actually doing it, are two very different things. As men and women under authority, there are legitimate rules and regulations we are to follow. Yes, there are risks that some in authority will attempt to interpret those rules to expand them beyond what is legitimate. What if your intent is perceived as imposing your authority on a subordinate through proselytization or coercion? Reading the guidelines or concern about criticism might lead you to believe that separating your faith from our profession might actually be the wisest path you could take.

But it's neither the wise nor godly path, and if you'll stick with us for the next few minutes, we'll share



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with you the four avenues that have been used by OCF members since 1943 that enable leaders, just like you to operationalizing their faith in Christ while serving in the military.

Here's the first avenue: Find the sacred within the discipline in which you are engaged.

Dr. Richard Chase, president of Wheaton College in Illinois, required of every professor before entering his or her first class to answer the question, "How does the discipline you are engaged in reflect the reality, glory, and gospel of Jesus Christ?" Let's not create an artificial separation of the secular from the sacred. Every military professional is serving God through the government, which is an institution God personally established for His kingdom purposes. See Romans 13:1-7. Within the military, Paul describes men and women in the military as those who wield the sword; they're God's instrument and His avenger to the "wrongdoer" and God's servant for the peoples' good (verse 4).

After appealing for us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice as a form of worship, Paul tells us to exercise our gifts, including the gift of leadership, to the measure of faith that God has given us. Those in medical duties are partnering with God in healing. Those in administrative duties in providing for order, caring for others' needs, and assisting in their personal and professional hopes. We could go on, but regardless of your specific specialty, God has a kingdom purpose for us to pursue within any legitimate secular role. What is the Gospel characteristic of your specialty or discipline?

As we discover the gospel nature of our duties and leadership responsibilities, we can better realize the Apostle Paul's admonition, "Whatever you do, work heartily for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

In his book *Every Good Endeavor*, pastor Tim Keller notes the false dichotomy concerning the secular and the "Christian." Keller writes that if we view only religious tasks as Gospel-worthy activity, we are mistaken. We should "Instead, think of the Gospel as a set of glasses through which you look at everything else in the world." Let us see our work through Gospel lenses! This in itself is a work of faith.

Here's the second avenue: You serve God, through the manner and excellence of your service.

Serving in a way that reflects the character of Christ is an excellent way of witnessing for Christ. Jesus calls followers to be a light in the world "that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). Oftentimes, a witness of Christ through action opens the door for a person to seek out the eternal truth is found in Jesus Christ. It is the pre-evangelism that is so critical to effective to conviction and conversion to eternal life (1 Peter 3:15).



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Here's a third avenue for living your faith in the profession: You influence the culture by seasoning the environment in which you serve.

Leaders have a great platform to be the salt that seasons the environment where they serve (Matthew 5:13). A staff or unit's standards of moral and ethical behavior, self-discipline, culture, and professional excellence can be bolstered uniquely by a leader's influence. Leaders who know the wisdom of God, whose strength comes from God, and who seek to first please Him are empowered beyond normal human capacity to influence the culture in which they serve.

And here's the fourth: You honor God by serving in obedience, even when it is hard.

Military service is difficult. Long hours, deployments and family separation, cultural and moral challenges and restraints, danger, frequent moves, and other trials exist. Paul writes, ". . . be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. . . . Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus . . . (whose) aim is to please the one who enlisted him" (2 Timothy 2:1-4). We please Him by our obedience, especially when it's challenging to do so.

We can imagine the professional, cultural, and peer pressure placed on Biblical leaders like Joshua and Caleb, Uriah the Hittite, Roman centurions, and Daniel in captivity. They all honored God through a firm faith in God. As stated in the book of Daniel, "... the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action" (Daniel 11:32). Armed with a growing knowledge of and intimacy with Christ, discernment through the Spirit and the Word, and perseverance in obedience to His calling we, too, can serve and please the One who enlisted us.

This session is a call to serve Christ in faith as professional military leaders. We serve Him through excellence in our military duties, in our Christ-like character, through His seasoning effect in the work environment, and in honoring Him by faithful resolve and obedience to His call. Embark on that journey. Don't listen to the lies that would try and convince you that the wisest path is to compartmentalize your faith and profession. Others before you have done it effectively and our mission is to help equip leaders, just like you, to increasingly and faithfully respond to God's call through Biblical fellowship and growth.

Let's join with other Christ-following leaders in serving to advance the mission of God within our military and government!