

The Lord's Army
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Good morning, Lighthouse! Are you ready for the Word of God this morning?

In the preaching of God's Word, few things are more valuable than a good illustration.

Illustrations are best known as pictures or drawings found within the text of a book or pamphlet.

If you want me to explain how to build something, give me a pen and a napkin and a cup of coffee and I will get the message across.

Illustrations used in preaching are very often word pictures.

The parables in the New Testament are such word pictures.

Comparing the known to that which is yet unknown in an accurate way will shed great light on whatever subject is being revealed.

Lots of great illustrations have been invented and used over the years, but the greatest illustrations of all are found right here in God's Holy Word.

Just last week God's awesome illustration of Moab as wine not properly processed and purified taught us much about the process God is using in growing each of us up into real and productive servants of the Lord.

Often great lessons can be learned examining and exploring some of the great illustrations of the Bible.

One of those great illustrations of the Bible is the subject we will be exploring today.

2 Timothy 2:1-4

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

If you are saved this morning, God has chosen you to be a soldier!

When the Lord saved you, He made you a citizen of His Kingdom, thereby qualifying you to be a soldier in His army.

Certainly, we have a duty to serve our King. He bought us with His own blood and we are His.

However:

I. This is an “all-volunteer” army.

A. The Lord’s Army is different than some.

1. Take Israel for instance:
2. Every citizen, male and female; with certain exceptions for Rabbis and Arabs, upon their 18th birthday owes their country 2 ½ years of military service.
3. These young men and women are conscripted into service; it is their duty, and it is compulsory.
4. If you go to Jerusalem today, you will see groups of uniformed young people carrying machine guns everywhere you go.

B. The Lord’s Army is all-volunteer.

1. There is no conscription program in the Lord’s Army.
2. Even though you certainly have a duty, you must either serve voluntarily, out of love for your King, or not at all.
3. If you follow the parallel of this illustration, you will find that your baptism (only, of course, AFTER you are saved) equates to your enlistment in this army.
4. Your baptism makes you a member of the Body and, as illustrated, a soldier in the Lord’s Army.

II. Phase one, after enlistment, is Boot Camp: this is the hard and rigorous initial training phase.

A. Basic Training is necessary for every soldier; many essentials are established during this time:

1. Here a soldier learns to stand and function as a part of a unit, not just one out there on his own.
2. This is where he/she learns how and when to speak and when to listen.
3. Here we learn how to handle our weapon.
 - a. Our weapon is the Word of God!
 - b. Learning Bible doctrine is the equivalent of a soldier mastering his M-16 rifle.
4. This is also where he learns how to wear his protective armor.
5. **Ephesians 6:11** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
6. This is where he learns to give; not just possessions but of himself as well.
7. It is here in Boot Camp that the oath of loyalty he took when he signed on becomes something to be lived out.
8. A properly trained soldier will lay down his life for his country and he will lay down his life for his fellow soldier at his side.
9. This is exactly what the Lord will instill in every one of us as He trains us as members of His Body.
10. **Ephesians 5:30-32**
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
11. When we each become one with each other and with Christ, a properly trained soldier/member likewise will, indeed, lay down his life for his Lord or his fellow member.
12. This usually takes the form of living for and being there for the Lord and each other.
13. **Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*.

B. Like the army, not everyone makes it through Boot Camp:

2 Timothy 2:3 said, Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

1. Sometimes soldiers simply wash out.
2. They say things like, "He just didn't have what it takes" or, "He just couldn't cut it."
3. The truth is either his oath of loyalty was not real or he simply was not willing to pay the price that it takes to be a soldier.
4. How is it with you? Are you willing to pay the price to be a properly trained member/soldier in the Body of Christ?
5. When crucial training takes place and you are AWOL, how are you going to get that back? – and what are you going to do when the battle is raging, and you need it?

III. Phase Two is usually some type of Special Training.

A. You must realize that in the military as in the Body of Christ and... as in life itself; the training never stops.

1. We simply move from one level of training to the next and to the next.
2. In Basic Training we are simply told what to do and expected to do it.
3. After Basics a soldier usually begins training to become something Specialized.
4. Perhaps a tank operator or a gunner or a radar technician or a clerk or maybe go on to Special Forces training.
5. With us it is the same; children's worker, teacher, administrator, bookkeeper, deacon, musician, singer, grounds maintenance, pastor, missionary...and the list is virtually endless.
6. Yet, regardless of position or rank, everyone carries his weapon and everyone is expected to use it.
7. **2 Timothy 2:15** Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

B. As our training advances there are some higher expectations as well as other training tools employed.

1. There is less telling and more showing and hands-on doing as we progress in our training.
2. Often your Advanced Member Training is a matter of being shown; OK, here's how it's done; now go do it...and keep doing it until you get it down and become good at it.

3. Once you have been shown how to hold your rifle and how to squeeze off a shot and how to fire multiple rounds; then you practice...and practice...and practice...and practice some more!

4. There will always be help available but becoming proficient is pretty much up to you.

5. This means that if you are a teacher, you come prepared; musicians and singers practice until they get it right; you stay with it and work on it until it is right.

6. **Ephesians 6:7** With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

IV. Enlistment also includes many benefits.

A. In the Military and in the Body, there are rewards for service.

1. In the military there are medals, recognition, extra leave, higher pay grades, better duty and many other advantages given for excellent service.

2. It is the same in the Body:

Ephesians 6:5-8

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, **doing** the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will **doing** service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man **doeth**, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

3. Verses 6, 7 and 8 all talk about “doing”.

4. Although there are consequences for disobedience, the emphasis is on doing service with an attitude of excellence that is motivated from the heart.

B. Many Christians do not understand the benefit package.

1. Let me give you a profound statement for you to remember: **God is far more interested in the righteousness you do, than the sin that you don't.**

2. Read verse 8 again:

Ephesians 6:8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man **doeth**, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

3. God blesses us with rewards and returns good for righteous achievement; good works that advance the Kingdom and build up the Body.

4. "Lord, I quit cussing and I quit smoking and I quit getting drunk and I quit screaming at my kids; don't I get a reward for that?"

5. No you don't, that is simply expected: **it's your duty**. Besides that, if all you do is quit some sin without putting righteous activity in its place, it will come back worse than before anyway.

6. Have you ever seen a medal for not going AWOL; or a ribbon for not letting your rifle rust up; or a promotion for not disobeying orders?

7. Rewards are for achievement! Filling your life with righteous things, with righteous activity; they in themselves are what replace and thus eliminate the sin in your life.

Proverb 16:3 Commit thy works unto the Lord, and your thoughts shall be established.

8. What righteous endeavors are you involved in right now? What ministries are you serving in; giving your life to; that are building up this Body and God's Kingdom?

9. You may have just discovered the key to why you seem to remain unrewarded.

V. There are other benefits that come straight from the top:

A. The Bible tells us that the Lord not only nourishes or trains us, but that He cherishes us as well.

1. In our military there is extended care and medical attention for our wounded and our veterans.

2. The Lord expects us to be there for our wounded fellow members as well, just like He is.

3. In some countries as well as in some Churches, they simply shoot their wounded; it is too much trouble and expense to care for them.

4. That doesn't happen in a Church where Jesus is in charge, and by God's grace it is not going to happen here!

B. Our United States Marines have a slogan.

1. Drilled into the mind of every Marine from the first day on is "No man left behind."

2. I think I know where they got that idea:

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conversation [behavior] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

3. Jesus will not leave anyone behind who has trusted Him to save them; it doesn't matter how badly you messed up before or after for that matter; the Lord keeps His Word!

4. As the Body here at Lighthouse grows and goes forward for the Kingdom, God expects us to the best we are able that none of you be left behind either.

Conclusion: Are you ready to enlist?

Some of you have trusted Christ to save you but since then have not been baptized.

For some of you, your weapon is rusty.

Some of us are ready to take on new duties or some specialized service but have not yet stepped up.

Some may need to disentangle themselves.

We all need to become a "good soldier".

2 Timothy 2:3-4

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