



SOLDIERING

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE



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SOLDIERING: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

LTC Bob Cary and LTC Hal Winton were two of the group leaders in the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3). In 1984, they developed the original CAS3 Sunday school study guide. They realized that there was no chapel program focused on CAS3 students' needs. Students who attended the chapel's Sunday school program frequently attended after a curriculum started and departed before it finished. These members of Officers' Christian Fellowship knew that God's Word has much to instruct an Army officer, both professionally and spiritually. They recruited other students to be instructors in this Sunday school program to widen the number of officers touched by this unique ministry, and to model Christian professionalism.

Subsequent directors of the ministry program modified the curriculum from the original nine lessons to six which reflect changes in the CAS3 schedule. The layout of the study guide has matured over the years. However, Cary's and Winton's vision remains the same: to provide a biblical, inspirational Sunday school program contributing to the spiritual and professional growth of CAS3 students.

This study guide is useful for more than just Army officers. The godly principles of leadership, prayer, excellence, and commitment apply to soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Students of this program are encouraged to reproduce the study guide and use it in their chapel ministries. This study focuses on soldiers, but we know it will be helpful and bless students in other services.

There are six lessons in this study.

Lesson	Title
1.....	God's Good Soldiers—Soldiers in the Bible
2	Joshua's Godly Leadership and Consistency
3	Nehemiah's Godly Prayer, Delegation and Action
4	Godly Wisdom and Authority—Soldiers in the New Testament
5	Godly Excellence—Professional Excellence and the Christian Officer
6	Godly Responses—How to Handle Success and Failure

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Lesson 1

God's Good Soldiers—Soldiers in the Bible

Introduction

The Bible is God's inspired writing telling of His love, forgiveness, and presence. It is rich with poetry, humor, inspiration, exhortation and comfort. It is a prayer book, a songbook, and a love story. It tells of how God first loved us and gave His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the perfect sacrifice to redeem His creation. The Bible is also filled with accounts of battles, wars and heroic feats of combat. Professional soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines can and will learn many lessons from the Bible, which gives instruction and encouragement for professional excellence. In the Old Testament, we read about the God of Israel organizing, directing and blessing that nation's army during its many conquests and renewal. In the New Testament, we read of Roman soldiers. We see their cruelty during Christ's crucifixion, and yet also read of some Roman officers' godly character. While the central theme of the Bible is the gift of salvation, as military professionals we can also learn important lessons about how to be God's spiritual and earthly soldier.

To begin our look at what the Bible says about a good soldier, we need a frame of reference. What are the characteristics of a good soldier?

The First Soldiers

1. The first use of trained soldiers in the Bible is recorded in Genesis 14:14-16. Why did Abram train men of his own house to fight?

2. Read Numbers 1:3, Numbers 1:45-50 & Deuteronomy 20:5-8, which describe the Lord's requirements for the army of Israel. Now consider the following questions:

- In Numbers 1:3 what was the basic requirement to be in the army?
- In Numbers 1:45-50 and Deuteronomy 20:5-8, what exemptions did the Lord authorize?

3. Read Numbers 2. How was the army of Israel organized? Why would the Lord give these directions to Moses to organize the army?

Following and Leading

1. Read the story of David's mighty men in 2 Samuel 23:8-19.

What were the individual accomplishments of David's mighty men?

▪ Adino:

▪ Eleazar:

▪ Shammah:

2. Why were these men willing to risk their lives to bring David water from the well in Bethlehem?

3. What did David do with the water? Why? What other action could he have taken?

4. What does this incident suggest to you about biblical principles of leading and following?

Soldiers in the New Testament

1. Read the Apostle Paul's experience with soldiers found in Acts 21:32, 23:23, 24:23 & 28:16.

▪ What do these passages tell us about how well Paul knew soldiers?

▪ Based on Paul's experience with soldiers, what do you think he thought about them?

2. Let's examine Paul's definition of the good soldier. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-6.

▪ What is the source of the Christian soldier's strength (vs 1)?

▪ What obligations do Christians have to share their faith (vs 2)?

▪ What does Paul say is the defining quality of the good soldier (vs 3)?

▪ What is the Christian soldier's proper relation to his or her heavenly commander (vs 4)?

What obligation does this impose (vs 5)?

What common thread unites the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer (vv 3 & 5)?

Application

How can you apply the truths of this lesson to:

1. Your spiritual life?

2. Your professional life?

3. How do the two fit together? Are they two separate parts of you life?

Notes for Abram's Pursuit of Northern Kings

Battles of the Kings: When the kings of the north plundered Sodom and Gomorrah they captured Lot and his family. However, Abram rescued Lot in a daring military action, demonstrating a strong bond to his nephew as well as leadership capacity. Abram routed the armies of the kings of the north (Genesis 14:1-16).

Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem): His encounter with Melchizedek, king of Salem, was a different matter. That priest-king met Abram not with promise of booty, but with a blessing in the name of God Most High, maker of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:19). The word used for God had been used of other gods also, but Melchizedek used it to refer to the true God, creator of heaven and earth. Abram paid him tithes and then to the words of "Most High" added the name Yahweh (Genesis 14:22, "Lord").

Meeting with the King of Sodom: After his victorious return to Canaan, Abram met with the king of Sodom. Abram refused all offers of gifts from the king of Sodom on the basis of a solemn oath that no one should attribute any part of his wealth to the Canaanite king. Abram's allies (Aner, Eschol, and Mamre) did profit from the booty he had captured (Genesis 14:21-24).

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Lesson 2

Joshua's Godly Leadership and Consistency

Leadership

1. How do you define leadership?

2. What are the qualities/traits/characteristics of a good leader?

▪ **Character:** What must the leader BE?

▪ **Knowledge:** What must the leader KNOW?

▪ **Skill:** What must the leader be able to DO?

Note: Your definition of leadership and your assessment of what a leader must BE, KNOW and DO may provide you a framework to evaluate Joshua's leadership.

Joshua's Background

Joshua was a field commander serving under Moses (Exodus 17:8-13) and an aide/minister to Moses (Exodus 24:13). Note Aaron's and Hur's roles as staff officers supporting their commander Moses. A good staff helps the commander win! Joshua receives the mantle of leadership from Jehovah and Moses (Deuteronomy 31:14-15, 23). He was also a dissenting spy (Numbers 13:1-2, 17-33; 14:6-9).

1. Why were the spies sent to Canaan?

2. What did they report upon their return?

3. Contrast the reports rendered by the majority of the scouting party and the report rendered by Joshua and Caleb.

4. What does this tell you about Joshua (Numbers 14:6-9)?

Joshua's marching orders (Joshua 1:1-9)

God's Strategy for Mission Accomplishment: knowledge + strength + courage + obedience = success

1. What was Joshua's mission?

2. What resources did God give Joshua with which to accomplish his mission? Spiritual and physical.

3. What were Joshua's restraints (things he could not do)?

4. What were Joshua's constraints (things he must do)?

Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3)

The conquest of Canaan required the people of Israel to first cross the Jordan River. As many things in our lives have meaning over and above the physical impact, so too did crossing the Jordan. God's plan for the Israelites was not clear but they moved out in faith trusting the Lord to lead them to the Promised Land. Often we too must step out in faith believing that what is happening in our life is part of God's plan for us.

1. What were the people required to do before they could cross the Jordan? (Joshua 3:5)

2. What led the procession? Why?

3. What faith was required on the part of the priests?

4. What purpose did God have in getting the people across the Jordan beyond the obvious one of allowing them to start the conquest of the Promised Land?

NOTES: After the children of Israel crossed the Jordan, they did two things specified by the Lord. First, they erected a memorial with twelve stones, one for each tribe, taken from the Jordan River bed. This memorial served as testimony to the Lord's miraculous work in getting the people across the Jordan. It was to be a place for teaching God's faithfulness to subsequent generations. Second, Joshua and his leaders circumcised all males. This circumcision signified the covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham. It removed God's reproach for Israel's lack of faith while traveling in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb were the only men still alive who had left Egypt forty years earlier. Think about this. With a river to their back and enemy to their front, Joshua and the army of Israel deliberately chose to please God while becoming "combat ineffective due to medical fitness."

The Battle of Jericho (Joshua 5:13-6:27)

Jericho was a key battle for the Israelites because the city of Jericho sat at the entrance to the pass that con-

trolled access into the interior of Israel. It could not be bypassed without leaving the army of Israel subject to attack from the rear. Joshua got his “attack order” from the Captain of the host of the Lord. The divine Captain told Joshua to march the children of Israel around Jericho in absolute silence once a day for six days; then to march them around the city seven times on the seventh day. At the end of the seventh march on the seventh day, they were to blow the rams’ horns, raise a large shout, and assault the city as the walls fell flat. The Ark of the Lord was to be positioned in the midst of the procession. The wall fell, not from sound vibration but because God told the people it would fall, and they believed and obeyed.

1. Why did the wall fall? (Hebrews 11:30)

2. Why total destruction? (Joshua 6:21)

Battle of Ai (Joshua 7 and 8)

1. Compare how Joshua prepared himself and the nation of Israel for the battle of Jericho and the battle of Ai?

2. What happened on the first attempt to take Ai? (Joshua 7:2-4) Why?

3. How did Joshua respond? (Joshua 7:6-9) Why was he so discouraged?

4. What did God tell Joshua to do? (Joshua 7:10-15)

5. How did Joshua locate the problem?

6. What led Achan to sin? (Joshua 7:21) Compare with 1 John 2:16.

7. Compare Achan’s sin and Joshua’s inconsistency. How did each contribute to Israel’s failed first attempt?

8. How did the second attack on Ai differ from the first? (Joshua 8:1-2, 12, 15, 21)

9. Compare and contrast the tactics at Jericho with the tactics used in the second attack on Ai. What military principles do you deduce? What spiritual principles are evident?

The northern campaign (Joshua 11)

1. What was the situation Joshua was facing? (11:4-5)

2. How did Joshua respond? (Joshua 11:6-7)

3. Why did God instruct Joshua to destroy the enemy's horses and chariots?

4. What lessons can be learned from this campaign?

NOTE: Joshua 12 contains a summary of his campaigns. Scholars estimate the campaigns lasted five to seven years and resulted in the destruction of thirty-one kingdoms.

Caleb's inheritance (Joshua 14:6-15)

1. What was the basis for Caleb's request to conquer Hebron?

2. Why did Joshua grant Caleb's request?

3. How do you think Caleb would do on the "over 85" *aerobic* fitness test? How well would he do on the "over 85" *spiritual* fitness test?

4. In thinking about your own life, what lessons can be drawn from Caleb's faithfulness and reward?

Joshua's charge to his people: "Keep on keeping on"

First address (Joshua 23)

1. Who fought for Israel? (Joshua 23:3)

2. Based on this, what were the people to do? (Joshua 23:6-7)

3. What was the most important thing for them to do? (Joshua 23:8)

Second address (Joshua 24)

1. According to Joshua, what good things had the Lord had done for them? (Joshua 24:2-13)

2. What were the Israelites to do with their old gods? (Joshua 24:14)

3. How did Joshua personalize his allegiance and make it known? (Joshua 24:15)

Joshua's legacy

A key task, if not the transcendent task, of leadership is to communicate values to one's followers. This fosters mission accomplishment and enduring commitment to these values. Perhaps the ultimate measure of a leader's legacy is seen in the lives of those they lead. Four techniques of inculcating values are example, exhortation, reward and punishment. Cite instances in which Joshua used each of these techniques to pass on his values to his people.

1. Example

2. Exhortation

3. Reward

4. Punishment

Evaluate Joshua as a leader and as a follower in both spiritual and military aspects. Use the categories below to conduct your evaluation.

1. Leader

2. Follower

3. Character (Be)

4. Knowledge (Know)

5. Skill (Do)

Application

What lessons from Joshua's life can be applied to your walk with the Lord and your professional responsibilities?

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Lesson 3

Nehemiah's Godly Prayer, Delegation and Action

1. Situation. What did Nehemiah learn from Hanani concerning the condition of Jerusalem? (Nehemiah 1:3)

2. Reaction. What did Nehemiah do when he heard this news? (Nehemiah 1:4-11)

3. Nehemiah's prayer. Examine Nehemiah's prayer in detail. What does this examination tell you about the elements of effective prayer?

4. The staff officer response. What was Nehemiah's initial reaction when Artaxerxes began to question him? (Nehemiah 2:1-16)

5. "Commo check." What did Nehemiah do before responding to Artaxerxes' questions? (Nehemiah 2:4)

6. Good staff work. What was Nehemiah's specific request of Artaxerxes? What was Nehemiah's demeanor before the king? What does this indicate about his effectiveness as a staff officer? (Nehemiah 2:5-8)

7. Taking charge. What were Nehemiah's initial actions upon arrival at Jerusalem? What was their significance? (Nehemiah 2:9-16)

8. Call to action. How did the people of Jerusalem respond to Nehemiah's call? (Nehemiah 2:17-19)

9. Responding to opposition. How did Nehemiah respond to the scorn directed against him? (Nehemiah 2:20) NOTE: This is a key verse in the book of Nehemiah because it shows the essential relationship between God's faithfulness and man's duty.

10. How to organize. Read Nehemiah 3:1-7 and read the rest of the chapter. How were the people of Jerusalem organized for their work of rebuilding the wall? What principles of sound organization are evident here?

11. Opposition to God's task.

▪ What were the Samaritan and Ammonite reactions to the Israelites' work on the walls (Nehemiah 4:1-3)?

▪ What does this tell you about the use of ridicule as an arrow in Satan's quiver?

▪ How did Nehemiah respond to this? (Nehemiah 4:4-5)?

▪ How did the people respond (Nehemiah 4:6)?

▪ What were the next Samaritan and Ammonite actions against the building of the wall (Nehemiah 4:7-8)?

▪ What effect did these actions have on the wall builders? What other factor influenced them? (Nehemiah 4:10-12) What additional threat did the wall builders now face? What is the significance of the fact that the project was half-finished at this point?

12. Leadership challenge. What specific steps did Nehemiah take to deal with the outside threat and the low morale of his workers? (Nehemiah 4:13-23) What tactics, and principles of leadership organization are evident in Nehemiah's action? What were the results?

13. Faithfulness. How did Nehemiah's enemies attempt to defeat him when they saw that the wall was almost built?

How did Nehemiah respond? (Nehemiah 6:1-10):

▪ First attempt and response (Nehemiah 6:1-4).

▪ Second attempt and response (Nehemiah 6:5-9).

▪ Third attempt and response (Nehemiah 6:10-14).

▪ What were the common elements in each attempt to influence Nehemiah?

▪ What were the common elements in each of Nehemiah's responses?

14. Results. What were the results of Nehemiah's faithfulness? (Nehemiah 6:15-16) Who got the credit? What does that tell you about Nehemiah?

15. Relationships. Much of Nehemiah's success can be attributed to his ability to establish and maintain proper relations with others and to keep these relations in the proper balance with one another. Comment on the following:

▪ Nehemiah's relationship with the people of Jerusalem.

▪ Nehemiah's relationship with Artaxerxes.

▪ Nehemiah's relationship with the Lord.

16. Professional and spiritual growth. How would you evaluate Nehemiah's growth as a leader from when he learned of the condition of Jerusalem until he finished the work of rebuilding the wall? Comment on the challenges he faced in each of the following situations and the qualities that were required to deal with them:

▪ Obtaining Artaxerxes' approval for the project.

▪ Encouraging the people of Jerusalem to commit themselves to the work.

▪ Dealing with the initial attacks of ridicule.

▪ Dealing with a serious external threat and internal discouragement.

▪ Dealing with deceit, slander and treachery.

Application

How would you sum up the reasons for Nehemiah's success? How could your answer to that question assist you in the accomplishment of a mission that God has for you?

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Lesson 4

Godly Wisdom and Authority—Soldiers in the New Testament

1. Roman centurion asks for a miracle (Luke 7:1-10 and Matthew 8:5-13)

▪ What do these two accounts tell us about the character of the Roman centurion serving in Capernaum?

▪ What is the significance of the fact that the centurion said, “I also am a man under authority?”

▪ How did Christ respond to his request? Why?

▪ What are the military and spiritual lessons that we should draw from this encounter?

2. Roman soldiers crucify Jesus (Matthew 27:27-37)

▪ What did the Roman soldiers do to Jesus when Pilate delivered Jesus to them for scourging and crucifixion?

▪ What does this tell you about how they viewed Jesus?

▪ How does this contrast with how the Capernaum centurion viewed Jesus?

▪ Why was there a difference?

▪ What practical implications does your answer have for being a soldier today?

3. The centurion at the foot of the cross (Matthew 27:51-54, Luke 23:44-47)

▪ What happened when Jesus gave up His spirit that indicated His was not a normal crucifixion?

▪ How did the Roman centurion react to this?

▪ Does this statement indicate a true belief in Christ? (1 John 4:15)

▪ If so, what does this tell us about God’s power to convert sinners?

4. Cornelius, the centurion of Caesarea (Acts 10:1-48)

- From the description of Cornelius in verses 1-8, what is revealed of his character?

- How was God working in Peter's heart at the same time He touched Cornelius? (Acts 10:9-22)

- Why did Cornelius gather his whole family together for Peter's visit (Acts 10:19-33)? What does this tell us about the importance of family as the center of our spiritual experience? Is there special application of this for the military?

- What did Peter preach to Cornelius and his family? (Acts 10:34-43)

- What happened as a result? (Acts 10:44-48)

- What is the significance of God's choosing a soldier to be the first Gentile to hear the Gospel, believe in Christ, receive the Holy Spirit, and be baptized?

- What can we learn from Cornelius's experience?

Application

Based on your examination of the above four instances of soldiers in the New Testament, what have you learned about how God deals with soldiers and what He expects from them?

Other Soldiers in the New Testament

- Acts 21:32-40: Soldiers rescue Paul outside the temple in Jerusalem
- Acts 22:24-30: Paul placed into bonds by Roman soldiers
- Acts 23:23-24: Roman soldiers escort Paul to Caesarea
- Acts 24:23: Paul placed in protective custody
- Acts 27: Roman soldiers escort Paul to Rome
- Acts 28:16: Paul kept by a Roman soldier

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Lesson 5

Godly Excellence—Professional Excellence and the Christian Officer

1. Definition. How do you define “excellence?” What do you think are the essential characteristics of something that is excellent?

2. Spiritual excellence. Military professionals aspire to professional excellence. As Christians, we should aspire to spiritual excellence as well. Daniel, an Old Testament prophet, provides an example of excellence in both areas. Read Daniel 1:1-20, 5:5-1, 17-30, and 6:1-28. What do these passages teach concerning the:

▪ Source of excellence—

▪ Practice of excellence—

▪ Rewards of excellence—

▪ Perils of excellence—

3. Godly excellence. What does the Bible teach concerning Christ as the ultimate example of excellence? (Hebrews 1:3-4, 8:1-6)

4. God’s Desire. What does the Bible teach concerning God’s desire for excellence in our lives? (Philippians 2:13-16, Colossians 3:22-24)

5. Resourcing for excellence. Who provides the power for excellence in the Christian life?

▪ Romans 5:10-11

▪ Philippians 1:9-11

▪ Philippians 4:13

▪ Romans 8:11-15

6. Rewards of excellence. How does the Lord reward those who are faithful to Him in the pursuit of excellence?

▪ 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

▪ Matthew 25:19-21

▪ Contrast with Matthew 25:24-30

7. Practical application—professionally and spiritually.

▪ What opportunities are there for you to pursue excellence in your present or forthcoming assignments?

▪ What specific steps can you take to prepare yourself to achieve excellence?

NOTE: In his pamphlet “Professional Excellence and the Christian Officer,” Lieutenant General William K. Harrison discusses professional and spiritual excellence. For further reading, please visit: www.ocfusa.org/articles/harrisons-professional-excellence/

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Lesson 6

Godly Responses—How to Handle Success and Failure

1. Successes and failures. The Bible provides guidance to the military professional on how to deal with success and failure. Success can be defined simply as the attainment of a goal, while failure can be defined as not attaining a goal. Areas in which we frequently set goals for ourselves can be professional contribution (this is much different than professional attainment), family relationships, financial management, time allocation, physical development, and spiritual maturity. In each of these areas, it is vital that we seek the Lord’s will when setting our objectives. Remember—“What you want out of life is probably what you are going to get!” If there are two perspectives on goal setting—worldly and spiritual—and there are two possible outcomes in each—success and failure—then the matrix below outlines the four possible outcomes.

Worldly		Spiritual		Result
Success	+	Success	→	Victory
Success	+	Failure	→	Defeat
Failure	+	Failure	→	Defeat
Failure	+	Success	→	Victory

What are the implications of the success and failure matrix as expressed in the result column?

2. Joseph’s handling of success and failure (Genesis chapters 37-45)

- What was Joseph’s position in his father’s house? (Genesis 37:2-3)

- How did his brothers react to Joseph’s position? (Genesis 37:4)

- Did Joseph initially help the situation? (Genesis 37:5-7, 9-11)

- How did Joseph react to his captivity in Egypt? (Genesis 39:1-4)

- What did he do when enticed by Potiphar’s wife? What happened as a result? (Genesis 39:7-20)

- How did Joseph react to his unjust imprisonment? (Genesis 39:21-23)

▪ The butler promised to remember Joseph when he (the butler) was restored. How did Joseph react when forgotten by the butler? (Genesis 40)

▪ How did God intervene in Joseph's behalf? (Genesis 41:9-13)

▪ To whom did Joseph give credit for interpreting Pharaoh's dream? (Genesis 41:16)

▪ How did Pharaoh reward Joseph? (Genesis 41:37-44)

▪ When Joseph ultimately revealed himself to his brothers who came to Egypt for grain, what attitude did he display toward them? Who does he see as responsible for sending him to Egypt? How has this realization influenced the performance of his duties? (Genesis 45:1-15)

3. Application

Joseph's faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord set an example of spiritual constancy despite alternating ups and downs in his worldly or professional situation.

▪ What principles can you derive from Joseph's actions in the good times?

▪ What principles can you derive from Joseph's actions in the not-so-good times?

▪ What specific things can you do to put the above principles into action?

4. Basic truths. What do the following scripture verses teach concerning what constitutes success and failure and how to deal with them?

▪ Mark 8:36

▪ Romans 8:18

▪ Romans 8:28

Notable quotes on success

Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson (1824–1863): "Duty is ours, consequences are God's." Jackson died after the Battle of Chancellorsville from a wound in the left arm; a Confederate sentry when returning to his own lines from a forward reconnaissance shot him. When Lee learned that Jackson's arm had been amputated, he said, "Give General Jackson my affectionate regards, and say to him: he has lost his left arm but I my right."

Jim Elliot (missionary to the Auca Indians in Columbia): "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim was killed by the Aucas while attempting to establish his ministry. His wife, Elizabeth Elliot, successfully carried on his work, living with the Aucas and winning many to Christ.



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