



Servant Leadership:
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How Christian Should an Army Officer Be? The Answer May Lie in Servant Leadership

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Abstract

Limits of faith-based behavior in the military are poorly understood. Christian officers may face conflicting imperatives between moral obligations of military service and discipleship. This paper proposes that a Christian officer can satisfy all obligations by pursuing the work of their profession in a faithful manner through servant leadership. The tenets of servant leadership as described by van Dierendonck (2011) are compatible with Christian theology and Army doctrine, and avoid key pitfalls of transformational leadership.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Military Doctrine, Army Officer, Christian Leadership

The genesis of this paper was a series of conversations and discussions stemming from a Maneuver Captain's Career Course (MCCC) Team Chief's use of a bible story to illustrate a leadership lesson. After emphasizing that he was not trying to push his faith on everyone, he explained Peter walking across the water to Jesus and starting to sink when he looked down at the waves. The metaphor was that we all need to keep our eyes on what matters to us, whatever it might be, and not throw it away with misconduct on the weekend. The first questions for many in the cohort were "Can he say that? Can he talk about Jesus at work?" Not having ready answers, the natural substitute was "Should he say that?" The importance of answering these questions became apparent to us in the strength of opinions and volume of discourse generated amongst the entire group of peers, not just (and we would argue, not even primarily) the Christians. We posit, though, that Christian officers can and should have ready, individual answers in their dual role as Army leaders and followers of Jesus.

A commission as an officer in the US military carries a significant weight of responsibility, a burden that does not diminish from Lieutenant to retirement. Platoon leaders understand they are responsible for everything their unit does or fails to do. Officers carry total responsibility and unlimited liability within their organizations. Particularly in the combat arms, which by nature pursue 'life and death' endeavors, there is a seriousness inherent to the charge of leadership not found in most other institutions. If indeed America's most precious resources are her sons and daughters, specifically those who have volunteered to serve, then the officer corps assumes the moral obligation of full commitment to its craft. The resulting culture has many positive aspects: intensity and focus, a drive for excellence, continuous self-development, and many other characteristics of professions. For many officers, this commitment manifests in the profession becoming the driving force of their lives; they find their identity in their role as an officer.

As depicted in the opening vignette, Christian officers can, in this committed culture, see themselves as facing conflicting imperatives: "Can I be a fully committed Christian whose identity is in Christ while simultaneously fulfilling my obligations to those I lead?" To zero in, a Christian officer should ask himself two questions: "Is my faith a hindrance to officership?" and "Is officership a hindrance to my faith?" We propose that a Christian officer can, through servant leadership, faithfully follow and emulate Christ as a committed Army leader.

The obvious questions at this point are surely, "what is servant leadership?" and "how does it tie together Christian faith and officership?" To generate support for our premise that a concept as vague as "Christian enough" is helpful, we start by addressing tempting, quick answers to this paper's question on either end of the spectrum ("Too Christian," "Not Christian Enough"). This bracketing is followed by an exploration of Jesus as servant leader, both in teaching and in action. Next is an explanation of the Army's currently preferred leadership theory, transformational leadership, and why some aspects of this style are troublesome for Christian leaders. This is followed by discussion of servant leadership, with focus on similarities and crucial differences from transformational leadership. For each tenet of servant leadership, we seek to show compatibility with the Army's

Leadership Requirements Model (LRM) and general Christian teaching. Finally, we hazard an answer to the titular question.

The Christian officer might initially be tempted to simplify their thought process by choosing (to exclusion) the highest imperative, answering this paper's question with something resembling "I'm a follower of Jesus first, therefore I should be as Christian as I can be." This position is initially satisfying, but is unhelpful in practical application. We cannot imagine any Christian officers who did not believe that they were acting within God's will in being commissioned. It follows that any Christian's mission of bringing God glory, bringing people into the Kingdom, or any other purpose God has for them is compatible with their profession, because God has them there. The question all Christian officers should ask themselves is "how can I best be a follower of Jesus in my current line of work?" On the other hand, another quick answer to the paper's question may be "I'm a Christian in my personal life and a professional at work." Even at first glance, this position does not seem to be one that will pass many Christians' "comfortable telling my pastor" test. It seems reasonable that for each officer, there is an appropriate and ideal calibration of behaviors as a Christian leader, somewhere between starting all company functions with scripture readings and giving no indication of faith.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TOO CHRISTIAN

To quickly address, "can he say that?" in a legal context, the strict answer is yes. Religious speech is broadly, even in the military, supported within individuals' First Amendment rights. Furthermore, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) does not specifically prohibit any religious expression, even proselytizing. Interestingly, the very authority that would make such a restriction unconstitutional (the Establishment clause) is itself the greatest limit to the actions of Christian officers. Proselytizing (in the simplest sense, trying to convert someone to a different faith) violates this clause and is inappropriate when "military members (misuse) their official position to advance, favor, endorse, or coerce religion (Fitzkee, 2011, p. 9)." In reading through recent press around this topic, our impression is that splashy headlines like "Pentagon bans proselytizing in the military" result from an officer being asked a tough, interpretive question with the response then taken out of context. Given the opportunity to clarify, such a person might point to the distinction of acting in personal or official capacities. Officers balance their rights as citizens with the restrictions inherent in positions of government-derived authority, knowing that these restrictions exist to protect the rights of subordinates. Christian officers must develop an awareness of when their actions are (or will be interpreted as) official. As a rule of thumb, it follows then, to avoid proselytizing in any arguably duty-related situation unless requested by the subordinate (Fitzkee, 2011, 8).

Obvious misuses of position and authority are not the only failings Christian officers need to avoid. Sitting in your office with the door closed, reading the bible for hours may feel like a faithful activity, but is - through omission - failing in your duty to those you serve. Stating your discomfort with others' sinful or

unwholesome activity in such a way that prevents or damages group cohesiveness at the very least, appears to lack wisdom. If you believe that your position as an officer is within God's will, and in light of Paul's exhortation that "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord" (Col 3:23 English Standard Version), the question "is my faith a hindrance to officership" looks similarly important to its reverse.

NOT CHRISTIAN ENOUGH

Because of the poorly-defined boundaries of acceptable 'Christian' behavior in the Army, there is often a significant amount of discomfort surrounding discussion of faith. This discomfort and ambiguity may lead a Christian officer to keep her faith to herself. But completely separating one's "faith life" from their "work life" paints an incomplete picture. No sound study of leadership (including, later on, this one) will argue against being genuine in one's leadership role. We learn as children to identify when people are not being honest with us. One of the surest ways as an officer to fail in gaining the respect of one's Soldiers is to try to fit into some persona, to "put up a front."

More importantly, committing to keeping one's faith segregated from some aspect of life is disobedient to a God who asks for full surrender. A personal policy of "not talking about God at work" eliminates the possibility to exercise the judgment he gives you to recognize appropriate situations, and ignores the possibility that he intends one talk about him in their place of employment. It is tantamount to a soft denial of Jesus.

JESUS AS LEADER

Clearly, neither the 'all' or 'none' approaches to faith as an officer can satisfy both a Christian's calling and an officer's obligations. How then does a Christian officer go about calibrating their behaviors and 'leadership style'? In this and any situation it is difficult to argue with the answer, "be more like Jesus." So, what does Jesus have to say about leadership that officers can put into practice? Speaking of the rulers of Gentiles lording their authority over their subjects, Jesus says in Matthew 20:26 (also recorded in Mark 10:23) "Not so among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." Later, in Matthew 23:11-12, after listing selfish attributes of the Pharisees for his followers to avoid, he says "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

It seems fair, before leaning on these verses as a foundation for servant leadership, to examine whether Jesus was teaching specifically to leaders. In Matthew 20:26, it seems clear that he is drawing a contrast between the behaviors of Gentile leaders and how he intends his disciples to act when they become leaders. We know that the disciples were leaders in the early church following Jesus' death; foresight and preparation for their future trials is consistent with the rest of Jesus' teaching to his followers. From Matthew 23:12, "those who humble themselves will be exalted" is vague enough out of context to be read as a proverb or maxim applying to anyone. But Jesus says this in clear contrast to the leadership of the Pharisees, who he often holds up as examples of selfish, hypocritical, and ultimately

unsuccessful leaders. Merriam-Webster defines “exalt” as “to raise in rank, power, or character” and “to elevate by praise or in estimation.” Read in the context of leadership, Jesus can reasonably be seen to be explaining that the position of leadership is bestowed upon those who humble themselves, and that, in contrast to the Pharisees, the humble leader who serves his followers will be held in high estimation.

A popular unit motto within the Army is “Deeds, not Words;” the classic example of Jesus demonstrating himself to be a servant leader is the washing of the disciples’ feet. Feet washing in those days was more practical than ceremonial, but it was also a measure of status; if able, a host would provide a servant to wash the feet of his guests, one of the most demeaning tasks to be performed (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002, 59). Recorded in John 13: 12-15, Jesus said:

“Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

This exhortation also seems to be applicable to all followers, but Jesus puts special emphasis on his leadership roles. Anyone can act in a laudable, servant-like manner, but leaders are expected to provide the example for their followers; Jesus chooses this most humble act as the one to specifically highlight the servant nature he expects from his disciples who as developing leaders are “the rock on which I will build my church” (Mat 16:18).

Having set initial “left and right limits” and reviewed some biblical arguments for leaders’ servant nature, the next step is to narrow the focus to the specific leader attributes and actions that will result in committed, effective, and faithful leadership.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Many leaders in the army and other professions are currently touting transformational leadership as the ideal style towards which leaders should aspire. It may be the most-studied variant of leadership and has been shown through rigorous empirical studies to have positive effects on both employees and organizations (Alegre & Levitt, 2014, 61-62). This concept was initially developed in direct contrast, in terms of employee motivation, with transactional leadership (Alegre & Levitt, 2014, 62); a more authoritative, carrot-and-stick approach. In an oft-cited definition of transformational leadership, Bass and Riggio (2006) offer four dimensions: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and charismatic leadership. Their expansion on each tenet follows.

In regards to *individualized consideration*, they write: “Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor. Followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential.” Regarding *intellectual stimulation*, Bass and Riggio (2006) write: “Transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged.”

When describing *inspirational motivation*, Bass and Riggio (2006) state: “Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers’ work. Leaders get followers involved in envisioning attractive future states.” Finally, Bass and Riggio (2006) say of *charismatic leadership*: “Transformational leaders behave in ways that result in their being role models for their followers. The leaders are admired, respected, and trusted (Bass & Riggio, 2006, 3-6).”

The Army’s War College literature is full of papers arguing the merits of transformational leadership and calling for its adoption as the focus of the Army’s leadership development program. The changing nature of the army and of the battlefields upon which it will continue to find itself are leader issues that some argue demand transformational leadership (Huse, 2003, 3). These ideal Army leaders are described as “agile, innovative, flexible, imaginative, and creative” (Combs, 2007, 2), and “competent, effective leaders that possess the ability to lead in an uncertain, asymmetric environment” (Huse, 2003, 39). These do indeed sound like valid, appropriate, and valuable traits and abilities in Army leaders, and with the use of a thesaurus it seems that one can accurately label such people as the transformational leaders described by Bass and Riggio (2006). The purpose of transformational leadership is to attain a higher level of commitment in followers, with the intended results of an improved organizational culture and, at the very core, higher levels of performance (Alegre & Levitt, 2014, 62). We posit, however, that this presents a problem for the Christian officer. The primary allegiance of transformational leaders is to the organization (or to themselves), not to followers (Graham, 1991, 110). Jesus was follower-focused. This is not to say that he did not fit neatly into each of the tenets of transformational leadership; on the contrary, he can be accurately described as a charismatic leader who showed individual consideration for his followers and stimulated them intellectually, all while inspirationally motivating them. It is also not to say that he is not the head of the church or that he did not build, by reasonable definition, a lasting organization while on earth. But he did not shy away from speaking the truth (“the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life”) when it resulted in most of his disciples leaving (John 6:63-66). His Great Commission to the disciples before the Ascension was not to take his church to the ends of the earth, but the message that everyone can personally have a relationship and be saved.

An additional troubling factor for transformational leadership among Christians is the focus on charismatic leadership. Charisma is not inherently problematic; the church has many charismatic leaders who do great work inspiring others. But Christians generally do not exhort one another to charisma. Charisma is not found among the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The answer to “how can I be a better follower of Jesus” is very rarely “grow a bigger personality.” The danger in the charismatic aspect of transformational leadership is the potential for narcissistic self-focus of the leader (van Dierendonck, 2011, 1235). This is obviously a backwards attitude for a Christian committed to denying the self and giving all glory to God.

A transformational leader can be great for an organization, but the very charisma that secures their success can end up a major detriment. There is much

value in having leaders to look up to, but when followers idolize a leader they create the potential for a damaging void in that leader's absence. No officer goes long in the Army without experiencing or hearing firsthand the account of the company or battalion firing on all cylinders with a great, charismatic leader that "falls apart" under his replacement. Officers better serve both Soldiers and organizations by developing a culture that outlasts them.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The seminal work in the field of servant leadership was Robert Greenleaf's (1991) essay "The Servant as Leader," inspired by his reading of Hermann Hesse's (2003) "Journey to the East." The most famous and most-quoted passage of Greenleaf's essay, in which he comes closest to defining servant leadership, is:

The Servant-Leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead... The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (Greenleaf, 1991, 15)

The key characteristic of servant leadership, setting it apart from other admittedly similar and overlapping leadership styles, is the prioritization of service driving the desire to lead, as opposed to the leader attempting to serve for the sake of better or more effective leadership. Starting with this foundation and Greenleaf's "best test," scholars have expanded the study of servant leadership. Parris and Peachey, in a synthesis of 39 validated, empirical studies of the "mechanisms, outcomes, and impacts of servant leadership," found that "(a) there is no consensus on the definition of servant leadership; (b) servant leadership theory is being investigated across a variety of contexts, cultures, and themes; (c) researchers are using multiple measures to explore servant leadership; and (d) servant leadership is a viable leadership theory that helps organizations and improves the well-being of followers (2013, 377)." We argue that the concerns of the validity of servant leadership as poorly-understood or under-researched should not deter Christian officers from striving to be servant leaders. The broadly accepted attributes of servant leaders, which we expound on shortly, allow Christians to satisfy their moral imperatives as committed followers of Christ and leaders of Soldiers. The lack of one accepted definition for servant leadership is not a problem for the individual servant leader; leadership is in the act of leading, not in talking about how you lead. A study exploring the antecedence of emotional intelligence to servant leadership found that *self-reported* high emotional intelligence was a good predictor of a leader's stated servant leader ideology, but not a good predictor of servant leader behaviors, as attested by the leaders' followers (Barbuto, Gottfredson & Searle, 2014, 315). Declaring that you're a servant leader does not make you one. We would argue that even adopting some of the attributes of a servant leader does not convert you. The servant leader seeks first to serve his followers; his actions

flow from this attitude. In contrast, a transformational leader will adjust their behavior and perform servant-like actions to solicit performance from followers.

Synthesizing an identified 44 characteristics of servant leaders through combination of conceptual models and empirical evidence, van Dierendonck provides six key characteristics which can be evaluated for compatibility with both the Army's Leadership Requirement Model (LRM) and general Christian practice: empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship (2011, 1232-1233).

Empowering and Developing

One example of Jesus empowering and developing his disciples is found in Matthew 10, in which he gives them authority over spirits and power to heal. He sends them out “as sheep in the midst of wolves,” exhorting them to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Mat 10:16); with his power and guidance he is preparing and equipping them to face the hardship and persecution that will surely come. A servant leader does not develop and empower subordinates by shielding them from problems; he understands that problems are the primary opportunities for growth. A servant leader also does not spare followers from criticism; the Gospels overflow with examples of Jesus rebuking the disciples and correcting their behavior or way of thinking. One culturally intuitive critique of servant leadership is that it is a ‘soft’ approach; yet, there is very little in the six key characteristics to do with being soft. The key to empowerment and development is “the servant leader’s belief in the intrinsic value of each individual (van Dierendonck, 2011, 1233),’ which can be held without manifesting in touchy-feely behavior.

On a related note, the Christian officer should be naturally inclined to pursue the empowerment and development of followers because it is a method of emulating God. In broad terms, each Christian is on the path of sanctification, which is the Holy Spirit empowering and developing them into the person he intends them to be for his glory.

The Army's LRM consists of Attributes (what a leader is) and Competencies (what a leader does) (ADP 6-0, 9). Directly correlating with servant leadership, one of the specified core competencies is ‘Develops’ (see Figure 1).

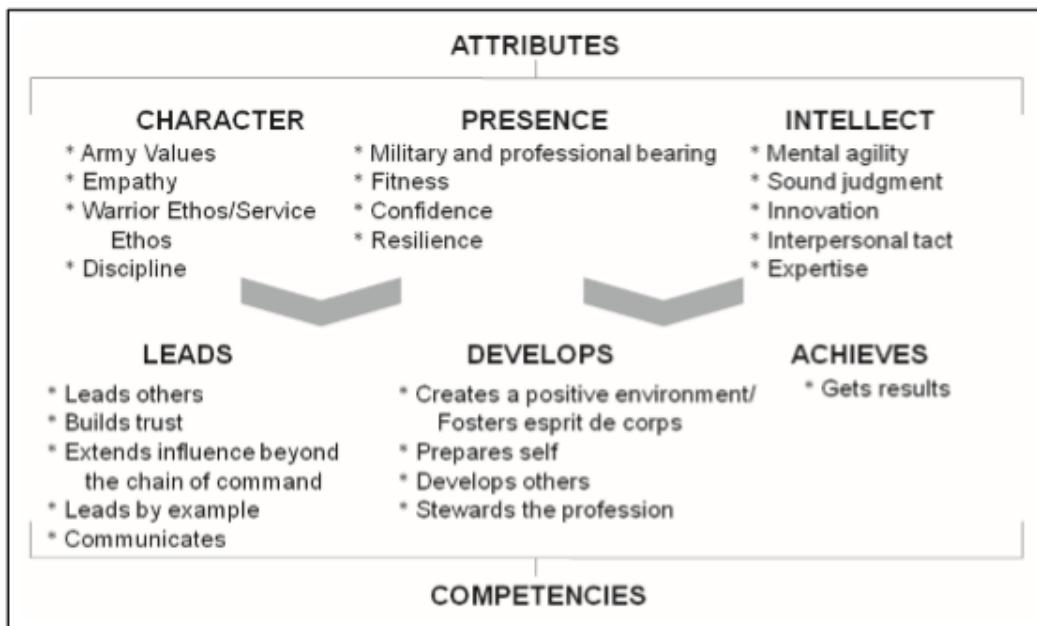
Army doctrine is in great part written by and for transformational leaders; the goals and performance of the organization are paramount. However, understanding the great overlap between transformational and servant leadership, it is not at all a stretch to say that servant leadership characteristics are supported by Army doctrine.

The focus of Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, under ‘Develops Others’ is leader development, “a deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process grounded in the Army Values” (2012, 60). Army leaders are expected to develop their subordinates into leaders. The resulting “up or out” dynamic receives some criticism, but this mandate to train and develop new leaders forces us to recognize, acknowledge, and realize the abilities of our subordinates (Greenleaf, 1998), behavior completely in line with the tenets of servant leadership.

A final and self-explanatory parallel between Army doctrine and servant leadership is the principle of Mission Command: “the exercise of authority and

direction by the commander using mission orders *to enable* disciplined initiative within the commander's intent *to empower* agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations" (ADP 6-0, 10) (italics mine).

Figure 1.



Humility

The relationship between servant leader characteristics and Christian behavior in terms of humility is clear. What we think is interesting is how humility is central to both. The importance of humility is stressed in the Old Testament, the Epistles, and the Gospels; "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom" (Prov 11:2), "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourself" (Phil 2:3). Most importantly, Jesus "emptied himself, by taking the form of servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8); It seems fair to say that humility is one of the most important attributes for Christians to strive for. Regarding servant leadership, a servant leader's humility "shows in the extent to which a leader puts the interest of others first, facilitates their performance, and provides them with essential support" (Van Dierendonck, 2011, 1233). Of all aspects of servant leadership, humility is the foundation. The whole concept hangs on the humble attitude of putting others before oneself.

Humility is not prioritized in Army doctrine, but it appears to be a generally accepted value. A humble officer can keep a proper perspective of their role, in their immediate environment and the Army at large. A company commander may be the most influential person in her company, but she is still just one person, and one whose replacement is already "on the bench." Though humility is not specified, the Army Values (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage) (ADRP 6-22, 24) are included under 'Character' within the

LRM. Selfless service is to “put the welfare of the Nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own (ADP 6-0, 24).”

Authenticity

For a Christian, authenticity is closely tied to humility. Inauthenticity is an attempt to gain someone’s favor by hiding or changing some aspect of yourself, rather than humbly and honestly being yourself. A real danger for a Christian is becoming inauthentic with God; failing to honestly assess (or listen to honest assessment of) your failings and open yourself up to God’s sanctifying process puts the brakes on your spiritual development. An inauthentic faith only fools yourself. At best, you stay as you are and fail to become the person God intends you to be, and at worst it reveals you as a person saying “Lord, Lord” and not entering the Kingdom of Heaven (Mat 7:21). An authentic faith, open to God’s development and guidance, will spill over into everything you do (such as command a company).

In servant leadership literature, authenticity encompasses “integrity, the adherence to a generally perceived moral code” and “accurately representing – privately and publicly – internal states, intentions, and commitments,” while manifesting in “doing what is promised, visibility within the organization, honesty, and vulnerability (van Dierendonck, 2011, 1233).” This set of attributes most closely aligns, within the Army’s LRM, with “Character;” it is the responsibility of the officer and NCO corps to ensure that the Army remains a values-based organization. An officer who is authentic creates a climate of consistency and trust. Soldiers can tolerate a great deal of hardship, but greatly resent being misled, being treated unfairly or inconsistently, and not knowing what to expect of their leadership. The importance of building trust is the subject of an entire separate field of study; the Army summarizes with “Leaders build trust to mediate relationships and encourage commitment among followers. Trust starts from respect among people and grows from common experiences and shared understanding (ADRP 6-22, 46).” A Soldier can follow and trust a leader who behaves “in such a way that professional roles remain secondary to whom the individual is as a person” (van Dierendonck, 2011, 1234), who does not have a “leader façade,” and who develops and trusts them. Mutual trust is also a key principle of Mission Command, the Army’s “Human solution to complex operational challenges (ADP 6-0, 11).”

A significant risk for a Christian officer taking pains to keep their faith to themselves is that of losing subordinates’ faith in your moral code. An important part of the trust followers should have in their leaders is trusting that the leader will do the right thing, even in difficult situations. Even non-Christians can take confidence in the knowledge that their leader has a moral code driving their actions.

Interpersonal Acceptance

The Gospel is a story of interpersonal acceptance: a loving and just God sends his Son to be with and to die for his people who separated themselves from him, so that everyone can be made right with him, accept his forgiveness, and enter into relationship with him forever. God accepts his people, and not because of anything they did or failed to do. Therefore, they also should accept others, understand and forgive them. Again, this is not to say that Christian officers need

to be soft on their Soldiers. Rather, they have a duty to hold subordinates accountable in pursuit of their highest good. But the servant leader understands that they themselves are imperfect and are working with imperfect people.

Interpersonal acceptance assumes the ability of the servant leader to empathize with followers and “experience feelings of warmth, compassion, and forgiveness in terms of concern for others even when confronted with offences, arguments, and mistakes (van Dierendonck, 2011, 1234).” The Christian officer as a servant leader needs to have the self-control and emotional intelligence to choose the appropriate behavior for the particular follower and situation. If two Soldiers commit the same offense the officer is duty-bound to administer the same punishment: one may need to hear “hey man, you screwed up. But this doesn’t make you a terrible person. You’re still an important part of this team, and if you can put this behind you, you’ll be fine,” while the other is best served with “I expect you to return to your high level of performance...dismissed” and a firm handshake.

A significant problem, and the topic of many Officer Professional Development sessions, is the Zero-Defect culture found in units across the Army. A description of an officer in such a culture, written during the Vietnam war, says he is “engulfed in producing statistical results, fearful of personal failure, too busy to talk with or listen to subordinates, and determined to submit acceptably optimistic reports which reflect faultless completion of a variety of tasks” (Thornton, 2000, 141). Again, the problems with and fixes to this type of workplace are worthy of books. At the individual level, however, the Christian officer needs to be aware of whether he is a part of the problem or of the solution. We do not argue that interpersonal acceptance, *per se*, is the panacea to ending a Zero-Defect culture, but without building up subordinates’ trust, then building a healthy culture is undermined.

Providing Direction

It is no surprise that two leadership models (LRM and servant leadership) would have similarities between their separate definitions of leading. The servant leadership literature, under the more-specific action of providing direction, highlights that leaders “ensure that people know what is expected of them” and “provide the right degree of accountability (van Dierendonck, 2011, 1234).” In the LRM under the leader competency “Leads,” providing direction is most closely related to ‘Leads others’, which the Army summarizes as “Using appropriate methods of influence to energize others... Providing purpose, motivation and inspiration... Enforcing standards... Balancing the mission and welfare of followers (ADRP 6-22, 45).”

It may be fair to argue that the concept servant leadership often gets dismissed in the Army because many people’s idea of a servant leader is their Mom, and when you focus on stereotypical Mom attributes there seems to be little crossover with “combat leader.” But servant leadership is not about being caring and nurturing to the exclusion of all other methods of follower development and leadership. The Army’s doctrine on leading leaves wide latitude for all different types of motivation and influence. If an officer has a moral and ethical method of influencing people that gets results, the Army supports it. Whatever the perception

of the ideal combat leader, so long as they develop and empower their subordinates, are humble and authentic, employ interpersonal acceptance, and provide direction and stewardship, they fit the tenets of both servant leadership and Army doctrine. Within those bounds are all the nuts and bolts of leadership that individual leaders may employ.

Stewardship

A servant leader may describe stewardship as their “choice to preside over the orderly distribution of power” and their “willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization in service, rather than in control, of those around us (Block, 2013, xxiv).” This assumption of accountability offers a clear divergence between servant leaders and those more driven by self-interest. Other leaders view the results of this accountability as either punishment or prize based on the performance of the larger organization. The servant leader is willing to pay whatever price accountability may impose for the opportunity to serve.

The LRM places ‘stewards the profession’ as a leader competency, which is explained in terms of supporting professional and personal growth, and improving the organization (ADRP 6-22, 68). Specifically, “leaders demonstrate stewardship when they act to improve the organization beyond their own tenure” (ADRP 6-22, 68). Again, this is transformational leadership language, but servant leadership satisfactorily mirrors these concepts.

The Christian officer can think of stewardship in terms of four principles: ownership, responsibility, accountability, and reward. (Peel, 2010, 2-3). The Christian officer needs to humbly remember that God owns everything, and that everything comes from him. Leaders’ abilities, their opportunities, even their very desire to serve and to lead; all come from him. God graciously gives leaders responsibilities as stewards, which they are to fulfil in accordance with his will and purposes. It is easy to think of stewardship in terms of money, such as the parable of the Talents, but Christian leaders are stewards of his most prized possession: his other children. The servant leader understands the potential of all subordinates that Peter writes about [“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet. 4:10)] and understands their inherent responsibility in developing those gifts (Peel, 2010, 2). Each of Jesus’ parables regarding stewardship ends with the servant giving account of his actions (or lack thereof) to his master (Peel, 2010, 3); the Christian officer must therefore hold personal accountability as a core value and be able to give an upstanding report to both the chain of command and to God. Lastly, the steward can expect to reap the fruits of their work, whether faithful or otherwise. The master in the parable of the Talents says, “You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much” (Mat 25:23); sounds like the classic Army saying, “the reward for good work is more work.”

DISCUSSION

Before finally answering the paper's question we feel the need to address a few likely arguments service members may have with the concept of servant leadership in the Army. We once spoke with a former company commander (preferring to stay anonymous) who is a Christian and generally supports the concept of servant leadership. He talked about separating a difficult Soldier from the military for the sake of the rest of his organization, and pointed out that because this was certainly to the Soldier's detriment the action seems inconsistent with a servant leader's "follower first" mandate. Our argument is that when he says, "for the sake of the organization," he means, "for the sake of the other 130 Soldiers I am responsible for." He was a servant leader throughout the process, spending an inordinate amount of time personally supporting the Soldier, trying to keep him an effective member of the team, going so far as to (anonymously) spend money out of his own pocket. But at some point, the well-being of the rest of the team must outweigh the one. An emotionally satisfying argument is that an ineffective Soldier puts his comrades at unnecessary risk in combat. A calmer, if inexact, calculation is the opportunity cost of leader time and effort; is my attention to this individual leading to harm for others? These are tough judgments without a formula or easy answer. But having made them, the servant leader can act with a clear conscience.

Another argument against servant leadership in the military is that giving primary allegiance as leaders to our followers is inconsistent with our officers' oath to support and defend the Constitution. We do not see the two as mutually exclusive. What may be most confusing is the phrase "that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same." The Constitution gives Congress the authority to raise and support armies, and the line of reasoning is that the authority Congress delegates down carries our pledged allegiance with it, all the way down to our individual unit. We find no fault with this; the authority of any battalion or company is constitutionally valid. What we are digging down to is the exact form this allegiance takes. The argument against servant leadership takes a step away from entirely solid ground into a level of interpretation, which is that the officer's allegiance is to the *purposes* of the organization, or at unit level, the *mission*. This perspective pits the welfare of the Soldier against mission accomplishment, and therefore the servant leader's loyalty to the follower against their Constitutional oath. Granting this perspective, we assert that a Christian officer can uphold their oath while acting as a servant leader, and the combat scenario illustrates why.

An officer in combat may be faced with the decision to either order a Soldier or group of Soldiers to execute a task that will likely, or even certainly, result in their death, or to abandon the assigned mission; as blatantly as can be conceived, to choose the men or the mission. There is no way around an officer's duty to complete the assigned mission. We cannot fall back on the argument from above and claim the good of many Soldiers over one; we can just as easily imagine a scenario that requires the death of most of a company. But because we are an all-volunteer force, an officer can give such an order while staying within the boundaries of servant leadership. The act of enlisting or being commissioned implies the subjugation of one's own well-being, even unto death, to that of the

service organization. For this reason, an officer acting in good faith and to the best of his abilities does not assume the moral weight of such a decision; the Soldiers assumed that weight themselves by volunteering to serve the nation.

CONCLUSION

How Christian should an officer be? An officer who finds their identity in Christ can fulfill obligations of faith and of the profession, while an officer finding their identity in the profession cannot fulfil their calling as a disciple of Jesus. In light of Colossians 3:23, a Christian officer views the fulfillment of the obligations of officership as faithful and worshipful acts, and pursues them wholeheartedly. Knowing that they are to submit to authorities God has placed them under (Heb 13:17), Christian officers understand the appropriate limits on their behavior as government officials. Christian officers recognize that being a disciple is in both “being” and “doing,” and can look to Jesus as an example of a servant leader.

Christian officers who are servant leaders should, in their effort to emulate Jesus and to lead outstanding formations, seek first to *serve* those for whom they bear responsibility. They comprehend that both servant leadership theory and Army doctrine allow great latitude in personal pursuit of leadership, and seek out tenets and techniques that, like those above, meet the standards of each framework and of their faith. Bearing all this in mind, servant leader, and Christian officers should, like Greenleaf, develop their own “best test” and weigh their actions accordingly. Finally, they should seek to develop (and to receive) the wisdom to fight off their self-interest and faithfully apply their “best test” as a true servant leader.

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