

# Light Brings Salt

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## Iron Range Bible Church

*Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God*



### Special for Veterans Day Onward Christian Soldiers...

By Mark Alexander

Last year, I was invited to fly with a Carrier Air Group fighter squadron. I had met the commander some years earlier at an Air War College seminar. He is a devout Christian, which cemented our brotherhood for life, and it was an honor to visit his Wing.

Navy and Marine aviators (OK, and you Air Force and Army pilots) are an impressive lot, but what impressed me most about this commander's squadron was how unabashed his F/A-18 drivers were about their faith.

The image most folks have of fighter pilots is one of arrogant brawn, and that image is often affirmed when aviators start talking about their skill set, and who is the best among them. Such bravado seems discordant with the humility advocated in the Gospels, but most of these guys leave that boastful icon on station.

What was entirely concordant with the Gospel message is the underlying service ethic displayed by all of this wing's personnel, from green E-1s to career O-6s. I inquired of my friend whether there were aviators matriculating through his squadron who did not have reverence for their Creator. He replied with a smile, "Yes, but they don't last long."

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to train with a lot of military officers and senior enlisted personnel, many of whom were of strong faith. Yes, most were also type-A's—some to a fault—

but unlike too many of their countrymen, most military personnel understand the order of command, their place in the ranks, and that their ultimate Commander in Chief is the sovereign God of their oaths.

Ah, yes, their oath—"I will support and defend... so help me God." Another general, George Washington, once queried, "[W]here is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation deserts the oaths...?"

These would be the same oaths repeated by politicians who are elected or appointed to national office, although the very same words have a far different meaning to the men and women serving our nation in uniform.

Most politicians on the Left, and a few to the right of center, think of themselves as lords over those they are elected, ostensibly, to serve. Conversely, military personnel are prepared to lay down their lives in service to others. As Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Over the years, I have asked military leaders from each service branch about the disparity between the prevalence of faith within the ranks and within American culture at large. Some respond that because the majority of those serving in uniform are conservative, there is a higher instance of reverence for God. Others suggest that the real potential of coming face-to-face with one's own destiny tends to bring one closer to God. Still others say that those who are self-centered, those who believe that they are "little gods," rarely make it beyond the first weeks of basic.

As a former commandant of the Marine Recruiting Station in San Diego put it, "Most

young people either enter the service with the right frame of reference for who is in charge, or they best learn that order quickly.”

Unfortunately, at the prompting of congressional Leftists, military leaders are under increasing pressure to ensure they maintain an “inclusive environment” for personnel under their command. That is code for a “don’t ask—don’t tell” constraint on the expression of faith.

Typical of that mandate is the 2005 case against Brig. Gen. John Weida, who, when serving as commandant of cadets at the Air Force Academy, was accused of commingling character development with Judeo-Christian principles—as if the two are mutually exclusive.

General Weida sent an email to cadets promoting “national prayer week,” and encouraging cadets to “ask the Lord to give us wisdom.” He even had the audacity to suggest, “Remember, you are accountable first to your God, this great nation, our great Air Force.”

Worse yet, the USAFA’s football coach hung a banner in the locker room proclaiming, “I am a member of Team Jesus Christ.”

When Americans United for the Separation of Church and State got wind of these acts of intolerance, they accused Weida of violating the First Amendment’s establishment clause and protested, “There is a general climate of religious coercion and official hostility toward those who do not practice evangelical Christianity.” They whipped up a congressional storm of protest on the Left.

Apparently, AUSCS, congressional Demo-gogues and half of the Judicial Supremacists are unable to comprehend the plain language our Founders used in that clause, stipulating that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion,” but offering no restriction on anyone else.

Gen. Weida was rebuked. His cadets and instructors were ordered to attend a 50-minute sensitivity training class entitled “Respecting the Spiritual Values of All People,” still in use at the USAFA.

Currently, military leaders, including chaplains, have a cloud of congressional Leftists hanging over their head, just waiting to pour down judgment should they be accused of advocating Christian principles.

Nonetheless, a few military officers have figured out a work-around.

Major General Mastin Robeson, Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division, has this notice tacked up around his base: “My Personal Priorities. There are three priorities in my life. You need to know them in order to understand some of the decisions I will make. First—God. Second—Family. Third—Service to Country. All of us (and our families) make sacrifices in order to wear this uniform, but I expect each of you to have priorities that are more important than your profession. My rationale is simple. God is an eternal commitment; my family is a lifetime commitment; and my service to country (though very dear to me) is limited in the number of years I can serve. I will never make a decision that jeopardizes my faith or my family in order to further my military career, nor should you.”

The notice concludes, “When bullets start flying, the spiritual welfare of your warriors will be as important as any. I ask that every member of this command be offered a worship opportunity weekly, and be encouraged to attend. As such, I ask that training not be scheduled on Sunday mornings.”

Of course, he is not proselytizing, just letting his command have an insight into his motivational criteria.

Army Major General Clay Buckingham, now retired, says of Christians in uniform: “The highest Christian value is that human life is infinitely precious in the sight of God, and therefore whatever protects and enhances life is good, and that whatever destroys or degrades human life is evil... In its purest and most fundamental essence, the purpose of military force is not to destroy life but to protect life—to protect the lives of the citizens of the nation so that they may live in peace and security... This purpose is entirely consistent with, and actually flows from,

the highest Christian ethic—that which protects and enhances life is good.”

Of course, the atheist Left is always looking for new ways to abolish the vestigial remains of faith from our military.

Democrats in Congress have now instructed the Department of Veterans Affairs to scrutinize the ceremonial folding of flags after being removed from the caskets of fallen warriors.

An appropriately proportioned flag folds 13 times on triangles, representing the original 13 colonies. But at many interments, there is a secondary recitation with each fold pertaining to faith. The National Cemetery Administration now prohibits that recitation, it claims, “to create uniform services throughout the military graveyard system.”

Rep. Ken Calvert (R-CA) is demanding the VA reverse its decision. “If a family member would like the 13-flag fold recitation at the funeral of their loved one, they should not be prevented by Washington bureaucrats. The VA is being manipulated by out-of-control secularists who wish to banish the word ‘God’ from American history and culture. What’s next? Disallowing the playing of Amazing Grace at military funerals?”

Don’t give ‘em any ideas, Ken.

Thomas Jefferson once proclaimed, “God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure [without] a conviction... that these liberties are a gift from God?”

Some seem to think so. According to most Democrats, God is an impediment to liberty.

### **Quote of the week**

“My Christian home and education did not teach me what God wanted to do with my life. It taught me that I am to be obedient to His direction and leading in spite of my personal desires. I stayed in the military because I felt God’s call... The Marine Corps still embeds corps values of courage, honor and commitment in the heart of every recruit—that these young men and women understand that

the only thing worse than war is believing that there is not anything worth dying for.” —  
Maj. Gen. Mastin Robeson