

**Imagine...Being a Good Soldier**  
**November 12, 2017**  
**Lynn Haven UMC**

**Introduction**

“Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.” (2 Timothy 2:3-4 NIV)

Veteran’s Day is a time to recognize all the brave men and women who have served (or are serving) to defend our country. To say we are thankful for your service is an understatement. It is safe to assume the people of our armed forces know what it means to be a good soldier. But to what kind of soldier is Paul referring in the epistle as described in 2 Timothy above? This week we will try to imagine what it might look like to be a good soldier for Jesus Christ.

**Digging Deeper**

**A good soldier is...**

**DURABLE**

- The reason Paul chose the analogy he did in 2 Timothy 2 is because a soldier knows something about suffering. Throughout the New Testament, we are told that we must suffer with and for Christ. In other words, enduring difficulties and suffering enables us to become like a good soldier who is durable and able to face any challenge, “Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33 NLT) As soldiers in Christ’s army, we can “take heart” because trials and sorrows won’t defeat us; with God’s help, they will simply make us stronger. What does “suffering along with Christ” mean to you? What are some of the most prevalent instances of true suffering that are happening in our world today? Does the knowledge that Jesus has overcome all the troubles of this world give you resilience to be able to face difficult circumstances without anxiety?

**DILIGENT**

- A good soldier of Christ is diligent and ready, willing, and able to serve whenever, wherever, and however they are called upon. But a good soldier is also diligent in another way – they are trained to be attentive and careful. Life is found in the details so we must be attentive and ensure that we’re getting things right when it comes to following God’s will and ways. It’s why Paul once told the Philippians, “Carefully practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us.” (Philippians 4:9a CEB) In other words, be diligent as a good soldier of Christ. Would you say that many Christians today have become too lax in their standards and conduct? Do you find the media outlets and the general “anything goes” mentality of a growing faction of our society to be in conflict with what you know to be true of God’s Word? Are you diligently sharing what you believe in an effort to combat this?

## **DELIBERATE**

- Paul says, “No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs...” Why don’t soldiers get entangled in civilian affairs? Because it can distract them from the task at hand. As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we are to be deliberate in that role and stay focused and purposeful as we seek to live as God’s people in fallen, foreign world. Jesus made it clear to His disciples that, while they were in the world, they were not to be of it. Armed with that mindset, they could fulfill their calling for a higher purpose. The writer of Hebrews says, “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles...” (Hebrews 12:1b NIV) It is easy for us to become distracted as Christians by the things of this world (technology, activities, and yes, sinful practices, can entangle us and keep us being focused as a good soldier of Christ). So like a sentry on duty, with his eyes and ears open, we must be very deliberate and purposeful as we seek to follow Jesus. What are the main things that distract you from your relationship with Christ? Do they hinder your ability to witness to others and make disciples for Christ? Spend some time this week seeking God in prayer that He might break any strongholds these things have placed upon you so that He can be exalted to His rightful position as number one in your heart, soul and mind.

## **DEVOTED**

- What does devotion mean to you? It is not a word to use capriciously as its usage conveys a deep commitment to the object of your adoration. As such, if we are to become good soldiers of Christ, we must be devoted to protecting and defending His way of life – the scriptural way of salvation. Remember, we have an enemy that seeks nothing short of our total destruction – Satan. And our orders come, not from human authorities, but a Divine One – the Lord. And so our only aim should be to please our commanding officer. In that regard, remember that partial obedience is not obedience at all. Using the military standard as a guide, how devoted are you to the One who has absolute authority over you? Does your obedience to God and His commands meet the definition of a good soldier?
- How would you describe the steps one must follow to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ?

## **Conclusion**

Do you desire to be more durable, diligent, deliberate, & devoted in order to please your commanding officer, the Lord Jesus Christ? Would you like to be a part of the greatest fighting force in the history of the world, one that is victorious against all enemies? If so, take up arms and imagine being a good soldier of Jesus Christ!