

“Unity in Diversity”
1 Samuel 30

11/07-08/09

6 pm; 9 & 10:45 am

INTRODUCTION

As I begin to speak, I want to acknowledge the veterans who have helped me to see from their perspective when it comes to military experiences and insights from the Scriptures. Just a few weeks ago I spent time with a few veterans regarding the passage we’re looking at today, 1 Samuel 30.

As a whole, veterans are very reluctant to talk about their service. They tend to feel that they are unworthy of any focus and that those who died in combat are far more worthy.

Also, veterans who did not serve during a time of war, or those who were not on the front lines during combat, often feel *their* particular service or assignment was unimportant or unworthy of mention.

Sometimes this is expressed by saying, “*I was only a cook*” or “*I was just in communications.*”

Information from Department of Defense Web sites sheds a broader perspective on this idea. One piece of information is the ratio of support personnel to combat personnel:

WWII 7 to 1
Korea 5 to 1
Vietnam 8 to 1
Gulf War 4 to 1

In other words, it has taken up to **eight support personnel** to sustain **one combat soldier** effectively enough to insure mission success and force integrity.

Support troops are absolutely essential. And this is not a new concept. Armies that have ignored this fact have suffered the consequences.

Besides being absolutely essential to mission success, support troops are justly to be accorded the same rewards and honors given to front lines troops. With as many wars as are recorded in the OT, you might expect to find the significance of support troops addressed. One example is an event portrayed in 1 Samuel 30.

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Before we read, let me give a little background:

Before David became King of Israel, King Saul felt threatened by his military successes and popularity among the people, and so tried to kill him.

David ran from Saul and his army for many months, and finally decided to escape to the land of the Philistines, sworn enemies of the Israelites. Since it was known that Saul was trying to kill David, a Philistine ruler accepted David into his territory.

More than a year after David was in Philistine territory, the Philistines decided to attack Israel. David's ruler drafted David and his 600 men to fight with them, but when the Philistine commanders saw David and his Hebrew men, he was not allowed to go to war with them, out of fear he would turn against the Philistines in the midst of combat.

So, David and his men headed home to their town, Ziklag.

READ 1 Samuel 30:1-25

In this story we see that a group that has been a unified fighting force, a team that has been through many battles together, faces their greatest challenge.

The challenging circumstances force them into two distinct groups: combat and support. But, in spite of the challenge everyone's value and everyone's contribution is affirmed.

As diverse and distinctive as military jobs can be, there are common attributes shared by all, regardless of the assignment.

What did these men share in common?

I. They Shared in Sacrifice

General Douglas MacArthur stated, "*The soldier above all other men is required to practice the greatest act of religious training – sacrifice.*"

Here are some of the examples of **shared sacrifices** regardless of mission assignment:

A. Individuality/Identity: Except for David, no one is mentioned by name. **Today** all wear the same uniform and are basically known by rank, serial number, job title, nickname or where they are from.

B. Time: The men left behind to guard supplies due to their exhaustion had no timetable. Just guard and wait. **Today** you go and do, wherever and whenever you are told for any amount of time.

C. Privacy: The men could not grieve for their families in private. They had no option but to publicly express their emotions. **Today** it is the same. There is little to no private life.

D. Family: The men physically and emotionally lost their families. **Today**, men and women are away for long deployments, separated, with no guarantees as to when or if they will see each other again.

E. Freedoms: The men were told to stay. They did not have the freedom to make plans of their own. **Today**, you cannot make plans. You are in submission to your superiors and the mission.

F. Talents/abilities: The men left behind were fighters. They had to give up their primary ability to fight, to exercise a different assignment: guarding. **Today** men and women are placed according to “the good of the service” and not always to their primary talents or abilities.

G. Ultimate Sacrifice: *Both* then and **now**, due to the very nature of terrorism and combat, everyone is at risk.

I. They ALL Shared in the SAME Sacrifices

II. They Shared Similar Strengths and Weaknesses

Whether guarding the supplies or fighting the enemy, each of the men shared strengths and weaknesses:

A. They loved their families (v. 4)

When they returned to Ziklag and found them missing, they were overwhelmed.

B. They lost control of their emotions (v. 6)

Their loss was so profound, the men were talking about stoning their leader, David.

C. They were willing to give their all (v. 7-9)

David sought the Lord, and the men were still ready and willing to pursue the enemy.

D. They succumbed to their weaknesses (v. 9, 22)

1. Complete exhaustion

Why did 1/3 of the men (200) become completely exhausted?

a. Physical

2+ days marching. From **Aphék**, the place where the Philistines sent away David and his men, to **Ziklag** is about 50 miles as the crow flies; it would be longer walking ... going with the flow of the terrain ... navigating hills, ravines and rivers ... and the demands of the elements marching through this desert region. It took two full days and part of another (1 Samuel 30:1).

b. Emotional

Their wives and children were captured. Their town was ravaged and destroyed.

c. Mental

What were their families suffering at the hands of their captors? Were they still alive? Would they ever see them again?

d. More physical demands

5 miles in to the pursuit of the raiders they come to the Besor Ravine.

And then they were **“too exhausted to cross the ravine.”**

They looked across the ravine and they had nothing left. Nothing. Not even with their wives and children in captivity. *How horrible that must have felt!*

And, David knew he couldn't wait for them to regain their strength ... the Amalekites already had a head start. They were heading to their home, so they needed to pursue them as quickly as possible if there was any hope of rescuing their families.

So, the 400 who continued the pursuit left everything behind that they could ... they lightened their load as much as possible ... and pressed on.

The weakness of some of the others doesn't show up until after the enemy is defeated and families and possessions reclaimed:

2. Judgmentalism

We'll expand on that in a moment.

II. They Shared Similar Strengths and Weaknesses

III. They Shared in Rewards and Significance

In v. 21 we see David and his men returning from victory with the families and possessions that had been stolen.

The 200 men left behind had been waiting for days. Their strength had returned. They had likely grown nervous and worried: *what had become of David? their fellow soldiers? their families?* They waited.

They were warriors who had run out of strength ... likely feeling like they had failed miserably ... when they needed to be at their strongest, they had nothing left. Even with their wives and children in captivity and headed towards slavery, they could not muster the strength to go on.

And now they see livestock, then David, their families and fellow warriors.

What would everyone think of them? How would they be seen and treated?

David is out front and speaks first:

v. 21: “... **David ... greeted them.**” “greeted” = “shalom” “peace” “friendship.” Everything is OK, it’s understood.

But, some of the men, “**evil and troublemakers,**” wanted to punish them. They wanted them to be deprived of their reclaimed possessions as well as any reward. They would return their wives and children, but they had to take them and leave the company of those who had gone to the battle.

But immediately David speaks up:

1 Samuel 30:23-25: “**David replied, ‘No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the LORD has given us. He has protected us and handed over to us the forces that came against us.**

24 Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be *the same* as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike.”

25 David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this.”

David acknowledges and recognizes the necessary and equal contributions of those left behind by mandating that all will share in the reward, not only in that instance, but from that time forward. (v. 21)

Not only did David say this was morally right, but it was also sound military strategy that has been recognized for its importance. Throughout history, those who wisely utilized support personnel tended to succeed and those who ignored this necessity often suffered defeat:

Napoleon attacked Russia: In 1812 Napoleon lost 400,000 of his 500,000 men to a *much weaker* Russian army because he made no provision for food and supplies and chose to have his army live off the land.

But, as the Russians retreated before Napoleon, they burned every city, farm and field they retreated from, leaving the French army with nothing. And 400,000 were lost.

The Civil War: The South was undersupplied due to the North effectively blocking and controlling supply routes. This forced the South to try to live off the land and eventually fall.

In WW II the Allied Forces prevailed due to General Dwight Eisenhower's attention to the support of combat troops and the Nazi's inability to keep their army supplied with food, fuel and ammunition.

Support troops are absolutely essential.

And every veteran, regardless of his or her specific role, is valued and honored.

God makes the point that every different part is necessary when talking about His Church:

1 Corinthians 12:14-21, 26 **“Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.
15 If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.
16 And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.
17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?
18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.
19 If they were all one part, where would the body be?
20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.
21 The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’
26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”**

CONCLUSION

To all of our veterans, *“Thank you for the contribution you have made!”*

So, no more **“I was just ...”** or **“I am just ...”**

Every role was important ... and every role is still.

“Father in Heaven, thank You for making each of us to design and each of us to fulfill an important task. Please encourage our veterans and bring healing to each one who still carries the scars of their service. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”