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Soldier, Wife & Mother; My Ethical Dilemma

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### Abstract

This paper will discuss ethics, morals, and the inner struggle that I face as a career female Soldier. As a female senior noncommissioned officer, I face many internal decisions and choices as it relates to my family and my career. This inner battle that I struggle with effects my decisions as not only a Soldier, but as a wife and mother as well. It is through a strong sense of duty, devotion, and love that I balance my time between the three. My ethics and morals are based on my faith and trust in God. My ethical dilemmas and challenges that arise often cause me to place my career over my family or my family over my career. As a Soldier, wife, and a mother my struggle continues daily to balance and make the ethical and morally based decisions that are in accordance with my faith.

## Introduction

Merriam-Webster's defines ethics as "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation" (Webster's, 429). In my review of this definition, I can see how and why I deal with the daily ethical dilemma of being a Soldier, a wife, and a mother. For the past seventeen years, I have enjoyed military service. My morals, values, and ethics have shaped my career path and my personal life choices. It is in the pages of this ethics paper that I will attempt to explain a heaviness that is on my heart daily and the precepts and principles that guide me.

## My Inner Struggle

Ethical dilemmas can exist in ones self. The inner struggle that takes place when you are trying to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. For me, my dilemma is with what role has priority at each moment of my day. I find that my ethical dilemma often lies in that grey area, not the black and white, but indiscreetly placed in the fine print. I wrestle daily with finding balance in being a Soldier, a wife, and a mother. The more complex the problem, the harder the dilemma. I have a love for all three positions that I am blessed to hold, however, they are all demanding of one me and there is only twenty-four hours in a day.

## Priorities

I once stated that I didn't have time to be married and my priorities were the Army, family, and God. But even in my singleness, I found myself consumed with work and little or no emphasis was placed on my family or my faith. The ethical dilemma wasn't hard then; I just selfishly placed my career and myself in front of everything else. It was in these times that I felt most distant, unfulfilled, and unsure. My ethics, morals, and values was a haphazard

mixture of Christian upbringing and the Army Values. I stood firm on the fact that the Army came first and all else was second. As a young Soldier the thoughts of having a family or being in a committed faith walk were far from my personal agenda.

### The Challenges of Motherhood in Service

Motherhood presented an incredible challenge with the birth of my son, Darrand. He is my joy and a true gift from God. I am a believer that God uses circumstances in our lives to shape us and mold us into what He has for us to be. Once I became a mother, my ethics and morals shifted from being self-centered to focusing on my son. I tried to balance being a Soldier and a mother, which did seem to work for a while, but soon duty was a conflict. I never questioned about whether I should stay in the Army or not, and when the opportunity came to perform drill sergeant duty I eagerly accepted the challenge.

After a few months on the trail I found myself as a single parent and not able to take care of my son. Still in pursuit of being the best Soldier and drill sergeant that I could be, I lacked the fineness and time to be a productive mother. It broke my heart to choose the Army over my son. In keeping with my past convictions of Army, family, and God, I had to send him to stay with my parents. It was in this time that my entire ethical foundation would change. I found myself empty, depressed, and unfulfilled. Thoughts of suicide caused me to question my very existence. I found myself asking God "If you are real, help me. I don't want to be alone." In my prayer God answered me that I was not alone and I should go get my son. My sister agreed to stay with me while I was on the trail and help to take care of my son.

### Salvation, Ethics, and Priorities

December 31, 1999 at midnight, while attending a Watch Night Service, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. This changed my ethics, my morals, my priorities, and my

life forever. Since that day, I have never been the same. I was now faced with a new priority list in my life; God, family, and the Army in order of precedence. I often found myself saying that I would make “a good drill sergeant and a sorry mom; or a good mom and a sorry drill sergeant.” My desire to excel as a Soldier was wrestling with my desire to be a good mother. How would God hold me accountable? Would it matter that I was a great Soldier, but a so-so mother? Would God expect me to be a good mother and my career as a Soldier come second? My ethical dilemma within had just begun.

### Marriage & Family

When I married my husband Charles, I had no idea that I would face another ethical battle, but I was so excited that the Lord God had blessed me with a loving, God-fearing husband. My desire to be a good wife wrestled with my desire to be a good mother, and there was hardly anytime to think about how to balance all of this with being a Soldier. I thank God for patience and much prayer. My ethical foundation changed again with marriage. I now faced the fact that God would hold me accountable for what type of helpmate I was to my husband. God would surely hold me accountable for how I trained and reared my children. And then there was the matter of being a Soldier. No matter how hard I tried, I could not find balance in all three.

### Balance and Choices

I must admit that no matter how much I enjoy being a Soldier, my decision of retirement or continued service will rest upon how much I am willing to compromise my role as a wife and a mother. I know the day will come when the needs of my family outweigh that of my desire to be a Soldier. It is in that moment I will make one of the hardest ethical decisions ever in my life, and that is to leave service. I tell myself that this is one of those ethical dilemmas that only

another Soldier who happens to be a female, married, with children could understand. But then I am reminded that there are leaders who are males, married to Soldiers, with children and I know that I am not the only one going through this struggle.

### Ethics, Soldiering, and Family

I praise and thank God for the opportunity to serve in the Army. I have enjoyed my career and look forward to the challenges ahead. My ethics and values are now firmly rooted in the word of God and my faith is renewed daily. And I am continually overwhelmed by the pure joy of being a mother and a wife. The ties that I have to my family, no doubt drive my decisions while in service. And even though I was first in the Army before my family, I now appreciate even more having a military spouse that knows my struggles and assists me daily in the challenges that I face. We thank God for every opportunity that He has given us and trust that He has a divine purpose and plan for our lives.

### Conclusion

On any given day the internal struggle is still going on. I am required to be an excellent Soldier and role model. I find myself spiritually tied to being a committed wife, helpmate, and homemaker. My heart is tied to a little eleven year old boy, who calls me “mommy”. I know that my God “will never leave me, nor forsake me...” and I find rest and peace in trying to be committed to all three (NKJV, Hebrews 13:5). This is my ethical dilemma, the balancing act of being a Soldier, wife, and mother.

## References

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