

FIVE QUALITIES OF AN OUTSTANDING MARINE

**“He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me:
for there were many with me.” Psalm 55:18**

Perhaps the highlight of my life has been the privilege of serving as an FMF Corpsman during two tours of duty in Vietnam with the United States Marine Corps. I served with Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, 1st Marine Division, and Combined Action Platoon 2-3-2, 2nd Combined Action Group, 3rd Marine Amphibious Force. It has been more than fifty years now, and the memories of service and camaraderie with America’s ‘first to fight’ still linger. How can we forget the experiences and personalities of those who fought and bled, and the haunting memories of those faithful Marines who died? They were outstanding Marines. Let’s consider five qualities of an outstanding Marine.

I. First of all, an Outstanding Marine is a Follower.

- a) Following **implies a relationship** with the Corps. The first steps are to join the Marine Corps, successfully complete the training, and follow the multitudes of ‘Devil Dogs’ that have gone before. He is someone who supports the brotherhood and a set of principles. He is devoted to the chain of command and follows protocol. Nobody can be a follower of the Supreme Commandant until they first get into His army. You won’t be drafted; you must enlist and voluntarily follow Him. This is accomplished by grace through faith.
- b) Following **implies rank**. My first assignment with a Marine Corps unit was as an E-3. I wore a medical caduceus on the right collar of my stateside utilities, and three bars on the left collar that looked very much like captain bars. I spent a lot of time returning salutes from young and outstanding Marines who were eager to respect the uniform of officer rank. After advancements to E-4 and E-5, I thought the saluting would cease; but instead, after pinning on my crow, I was suddenly elevated to the rank of colonel. I was definitely under ranked when I returned the salute from a second lieutenant. Nevertheless, there is always someone with higher rank than you. Every child of God is under ranked and is responsible for following Him and His will for their lives. He is the Supreme Commandant.
- c) Following **implies rule** and to refuse to follow orders is treason! When temporarily assigned to a remote outpost garrison located on a river tributary, a reactionary squad ‘saddled up’ at the orders of our sergeant to rescue the village chief who was held hostage by the Viet Cong. Intel also reported that an ambush was being staged on the trail, and that Charlie was hoping to cut us down with several machine guns. Marines never question their orders and follow precisely and promptly. Thankfully, our squad leader exercised a little common sense and wisdom, by ordering us to ‘stand down’ as we started to ‘move out’ through the open wire. When we are in the Lord’s army, we have the obligation of obeying His orders even unto the death!

Marines follow bravely, not blindly. Our platoon sergeant, Gary Keith More, was not only a follower, but also a leader who always walked point to our next objective. Gary was a brave grunt, and our Marines would follow him anywhere, without reservation. He was an outstanding Marine, killed in action at Hoi An, Dien Ban Province.

II. Secondly, an Outstanding Marine is Always Faithful.

- a) This faithfulness can be seen in **his patience**. He endures hardships and does not quit. The outstanding Marine realizes that there will be troubles along the way and is not deterred by it. He tirelessly treads on without complaint and understands that pain is often part of the experience. It has been said, “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” Those in God’s army are called upon to face life with extreme patience.
- b) The outstanding Marine’s faithfulness can also be seen in **his priorities**. He seeks to please the Commandant. The outstanding Marine has no higher goal in life than pleasing his superiors. The outstanding Marine knows that anything interfering with the performance of his duties must be done away with. He is constantly training to successfully carry out his next mission. He does whatever is necessary to get that job done! The same is true in the spiritual realm; pleasing God ought to be our first priority.
- c) The outstanding Marine’s faithfulness can also be seen in **his practice**. He takes care of the things delivered unto him. His uniforms, weapons, and gear are meticulously ‘squared away.’ He is determined to do a good job, and he refuses to do anything to bring disgrace and dishonor upon his unit, his superiors, and his Corps. We should live our lives in a manner that brings honor to the Lord and not dishonor.

An outstanding Marine is always faithful, hence our motto, Semper Fidelis.

III. Thirdly, an Outstanding Marine is Familiar.

There are some things that the outstanding Marine knows.

- a) He is familiar with the **sound of the Commander's voice**. While serving with Lima Company, I spent one night on the hill, followed by two nights with a 'kill team' in the valley below. When standing long radio watches, the call sign 'Lima-6' coming over our frequency indicated that our commanding officer was on the other end. We got to know him very well. The way to get more familiar with the Lord's voice is to spend more time listening to Him. You do this by getting into His Word.
- b) He is familiar with the **skill of using his weapons**. Every Marine is skilled with a rifle, many are qualified with pistols, and depending on your MOS (military occupational school) others become skilled with complicated and elaborate high-tech weaponry. The outstanding Marine knows that he is engaged in mortal warfare, and he knows that the only way to succeed in the fight is to be proficient in the use of his weaponry. At CAP school, we were not only expected to be proficient with Marine weapons, but we were also trained to use explosives and Chinese and Russian made weapons.
- c) He is familiar with the **strategy of the enemy**. The outstanding Marine knows that the enemy is ever active and never rests. The outstanding Marine studies the methods of his enemy and learns about his weaknesses and exploits this knowledge to the fullest extent of his ability. We know that our spiritual enemy is shrewd and ever attacking, but we also know that the Lord is always there to help us. Regardless of the trap, God will make a way of escape.
- d) He is familiar with the **shadows of his friends**. The outstanding Marine not only cares about his own welfare, but he also looks out for the welfare of his fellow Marines. He learns about them through the bonds of brotherhood and by a mutual trust in the thick of a firefight. Marines are a team, working together.

You and I would do well to learn the art of spiritual warfare and be familiar and proficient with God's arsenal of weaponry. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:" Ephesians 6:13-17

IV. Fourthly, an Outstanding Marine is a Fighter.

- a) An outstanding Marine is **determined**. The outstanding Marine does not retreat in the face of the enemy; he does not run from a fight. Instead, he stands his ground and fights until the battle is over! Tom Petty sang the song, "I Won't Back Down!" The outstanding Marine is a determined Marine; he won't back down!
- b) An outstanding Marine is **driven**. The outstanding Marine is in the battle to the finish. Spiritually speaking, many are just one 'firefight' away from quitting on God. We are to keep serving and keep fighting!
- c) An outstanding Marine is **dedicated**. The outstanding Marine dedicates himself to keeping his oath. He is 'gung-ho' regardless of the personal cost. He does heroic feats in the face of the enemy, displaying extraordinary courage in the midst of the battle. Our heroes fought beside us! "He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me." The outstanding Marine continues this dedication throughout his entire life. "Once a Marine, always a Marine!"

My life-long friend, Major Chuck Cofty, is an outstanding Marine and a fighter. He served with Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, at Khe Sanh, during the 1968 Tet Offensive. He was the recipient of the silver star, bronze star, purple heart, and other decorations. Major Cofty is a fighter, and I've known him to get into a few scraps after his retirement. He is an outstanding Marine and Mustang Officer, and you could say, he is always the first to fight.

V. Lastly, an Outstanding Marine is a Finisher.

- a) An outstanding Marine **has resolve**. He is in it for the long haul. He does not quit at the first hint of trouble. He is a finisher. God give us some men with the attitude of never quitting or surrendering.
- b) An outstanding Marine **has a reason**. Why does the outstanding Marine endure hardship, stay in the fight, and follow his leader selflessly? Because he is a member of the few, the proud, the Marines. He knows the price that has been paid, in the highest tradition of the Corps, since 1775. So it is with the spiritual soldier, who knows the price that was paid by the Supreme Commandant (His death, His burial, His resurrection) to make a place for him in His army. Therefore, he loves God, and no price becomes too high to pay.
- c) An outstanding Marine **has his reward**. Those returning from Viet Nam got a welcome we weren't expecting. Anti-war activists invaded the San Francisco and Dallas Airports with placards. Hecklers jeered, obscenities were hurled, and some of our men were spit upon. Still, amid the chaos and confusion of that time, we had a great sense of pride and accomplishment. Many years later, an ungrateful nation began to acknowledge the sacrifices that so many made for our country. We started to hear people say, "welcome home," and "thank you for your service!" An outstanding Marine knows that at the end of the war, every deed will be rewarded, eventually! For those who stay in the spiritual battle, there will come a glad day of blessing. They will hear our Supreme Commandant say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant...."

Semper Fi

Chaplain Ron