

On the Threshold of Opportunity: Mirroring Christ in Your Career

by AURELIA SMITH

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It's a saunter down memory lane I thoroughly delight in from time to time: that golden, glorious day of my United States Air Force Academy graduation and commissioning. I vividly remember the sights and sounds—tossing my wheel cap up into the blue sky, my triumphant shout drowned out only by the Thunderbirds' echoing flyby above the USAFA stadium. For our Christian brothers and sisters in uniform, just ahead of you in your new military career are great blessings and challenges you will have the privilege of experiencing because you are a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You now have the profound opportunity to mirror Christ to those around you: a servant leader humbly, sacrificially giving of time, talents—and even life, if required—for a greater good. When overwhelmed by the enormity of this call, and all the seemingly relentless and trying circumstances involving it, you can depend on Jesus for wisdom, strength and grace. He will empower you to be faithful to this high calling, “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

The active duty life of frequent moves, hazardous duties, and distance from family and friends delivers large-scale opportunities to grow in God-dependence in ways you’ve never experienced before. As a young, single lieutenant working in intelligence, I found myself stationed far away from my parents and prior support networks. Sometimes I was on required duty seven days a week. At other times, as a part of contingency operations, the lives of others were at stake—based on the quality and accuracy of the information I provided. Some assignments had me “disappearing” without being able to tell anyone how long I’d be gone or what I was doing. Nor could I contact anyone during that time.

These difficult and fear-inducing circumstances drew me closer to God, teaching me just how dependent I was upon Him for His protection, grace and wisdom. He was with me—a refuge, strength and

ever-present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1). I was never hidden from the loving Father’s eyes, whether in the most remote or secreted of locations (Psalm 139:7-12). Because He is all knowing and has complete authority over everything, I could perform my assignments with joy and a sense of eternal purpose rather than fear. By trusting Him, I could know that it was He who placed me in a certain time and place for His sure purposes—essential for effective service to both Him and my country (Esther 4:14).

Interdependence with other Christians is also paramount for believers to recognize. During those intense times of my responsibilities, I would gather with other military Christians to worship the Lord, study His Word, and pray for each other. Those relationships became some of my most enduring friendships and cherished memories.

Our nation lauds and applauds the independence and self-sufficiency of those who seemingly overcome insurmountable odds with grit and determination. But our autonomous reserves aren’t big enough, strength strong enough, nor intellect and planning powers ample enough to overcome the extraordinary challenges of the military life. The message of the cross makes it clear that apart from God we can do nothing (John 15:5). We are utterly dependent upon Him for life, breath, provision, and salvation.

Learning to more fully lean on God in every situation of life, particularly in your new military career, is an opportunity of an ever-growing delight to know: God’s strength is sure, His wisdom unending, grace sufficient, and love never-ending. ☩

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