

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY?

Women in Combat: A Biblical Worldview - Part 3

Who lobbies for women in combat? Is it with national security -- or something else -- in mind?

In light of terrorists and all-male armies around the world, should we regard serving in combat as an “equal job opportunity?”

Elaine Donnelly and the Center for Military Readiness, released a 42-page report in January of 2013 exploring the unintended consequences of putting women on the front lines. “It will do great harm to women in the military, especially those who will find themselves in the infantry – something there’s no indication they wanted.”

Mrs. Donnelly asks an important question: “Why is the Secretary of Defense ramming this on through?” This, says Mrs. Donnelly, “is social engineering to achieve a political end in the name of diversity”. . . [but] it is unfair to the women, it’s unfair to the men, it’s problematic for the readiness and efficiency and effectiveness of infantry battalions.

TITANIC CHIVALRY

Sociologist George Gilder notes that while all-male armies grow in countries that pursue America as their prey, we seem to regard combat as an obstacle to women’s rights. He notes that this “demand for equality [is] nothing more or less than a move toward barbarism. (*Men and Marriage*, p. 136) **What might he mean? Do you agree or disagree?**

Civilized cultures have always trained men to protect and defend women and children. Christian fathers who follow the example set by Jesus mentor sons to be gentlemen and guardians of a woman’s virtue and well-being. However, the effective utilization of women in combat requires that men put aside such behavior in order to treat a woman like just another man. **What kind of culture does this create?**

Even non-Christians note that groups tend to disintegrate and face extinction when societies fail to train their men to protect and defend women. Men on board the Titanic gave their lives for women, not because they were all Christian men, but because Biblical teaching for society had become the “rule of the sea.” **Read Ephesians 5:25.** The titanic chivalry of “women and children [into the lifeboats] first” follows the example of Jesus who gave His life for His bride, the Church.

There is also the issue of mentoring. **When we focus on “it’s my right” or perpetuate the myth that “equal means ‘being the same,’” how are we instructing a younger generation? What is a young man taught to think about women as they endure the rigors of military training side by side? What do boys learn from fathers who intentionally put women in harm’s way?**

What is the carry-over to life outside the military? If society will not tolerate male aggression toward women in everyday life, is it wise – or necessary – to make an exception in combat? A civilization that wants to thrive does well to think beyond the present to the future.

What are the realities of both training and battle conditions? We may want to envision pleasant images of skilled women managing high tech equipment, young men and women successfully practicing self-control in close quarters, and enlisted men snapping to the attention of female drill sergeants, but evidence reveals much to the contrary. There are reported increases of sexual abuse, unfaithfulness of spouses, unintended pregnancy, a supposed “need” for easier access to abortion, and deployment of single moms.

It may be politically correct to claim that differences between male and female are socially constructed, but basic biology proves otherwise. Mrs. Donnelly says, “Women don’t have an equal opportunity to survive in combat.” **Why might this be? How might the anatomy of a woman put her more at risk than a man?** In seeking a bush for privacy, how does a woman avoid sniper fire and landmines? Men can quickly unzip and zip, but is it the same for women? Besides dignity and modesty there are important issues of hygiene and gynecology. Women can chemically shut down their menstrual cycle, but is this natural and healthy? **Feminists and social engineers may deny the differences between men and women, but will the enemy? How might a female prisoner of war be treated differently than a man?** Jessica Lynch, pulled from her Humvee and taken prisoner in Iraq, was raped and sodomized by her captors (*I Am A Soldier, Too*; the biography of Jessica Lynch by Rick Bragg). **If he is obedient to his calling as a defender of women, to what lengths might a male soldier go in protecting a female soldier?**

Women are engaging in modern warfare today by way of piloting drones from remote locations. But drone pilots suffer higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than many conventional bomber crew members. Kimi, 26, is an intelligence analyst who works with drone pilots to guide decisions about where to deploy weapons in the fight against ISIS and al-Qaida. She is stationed at Langley Air Force Base with the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing. “I wanted to go to art school for photography,” she said, but for financial reasons opted for the military. “The recruiter told me that this was like working with photography. But ... it’s not.” Analysts like Kimi witness executions and are exposed to the horrors of mass graves. It is not uncommon to witness a rape. Kimi’s wing surgeon, Lt. Col. Cameron Thurman, says, “You don’t need a fancy study to tell you that watching someone beheaded, or skinned alive, or tortured to death is gonna have an impact on you as a human being.” Airmen must also determine if what they’re seeing is a group of enemy combatants or women and children. (“The Warfare May Be Remote But...” NPR, 4-24-17). The commute from the job of warfare to home and family in a quiet cul-de-sac may be short, but the transition from soldier to spouse and parent is a psychologically stressful one. Although both male and female pilots may deal with PTSD, it affects them differently. Women who’ve had

abortions often experience symptoms very much like PTSD which includes pulling away from relationships or developing a coldness toward children. **How does the bearer and nurturer of life engage in warfare from 8 to 5 but engage children, husband, and the neighboring village the rest of the day?**

ADAM, EVE AND THE ENEMY OF LIFE

Rev. F.A. Hertwig asks, "If there is a threatening noise at the front door, who do you expect should be the first to investigate? Will the man sit back and send his wife, daughter or mother while he goes to the basement?" (*"Letters" in The Lutheran Witness, June 2003, p. 4*)

Let's return to Genesis, the Book of our beginnings. **When Eve stood in harm's way before Satan, how did Adam respond (Genesis 3:6, 12)? What is the significance of these verses when it comes to the discussion of women in combat?** Genesis 3:6 reveals that Adam sinned when he failed to remember God's Word and use it in the battle between life and death. Adam failed to protect his wife from Satan's attack. He failed to bring order out of chaos for the sake of future generations.

Rev. Hertwig, a pastor in Lincoln, Missouri, explains Genesis 3:12 in this way: "When God stood at the door, a confused and fallen Adam sent his wife, Eve, to face the catastrophe. He chose to deny the one who had come from his side. For the rest of his 930 years, he lived with daily contrition each time he looked at his bosom friend. His protecting embrace had all the more fervor mixed with regret that he had failed." Rev. Hertwig continues, "For a man to see his wife, mother or daughter writhing in the mud with a bayonet rifle is repulsive to the core. When Adam retreats, yes even in the face of God, he has in a miserable moment surrendered to the devil. To venture the 'absence' of specifics on our subject is an accommodating detail to the devil's question, 'Yea, hath God said?'" (*The Lutheran Witness, "Letters," June/July 2003*)

There are many mixed emotions when considering women in the service of their country, particularly when it comes to combat duty. You may say, "But there is the example of Deborah!" Deborah is held up by many Christians as the Old Testament example of a woman in combat. But, was she? Let's move on to Part 4 in this series to discover the truth.

Dear Lord of Life, please help us remember that Your created order and design for male and female is for our good and the good of society. Rather than defaulting to our own ideas of right and wrong, help us to trust Your Word for life in all circumstances. AMEN.

This four-part study written by Linda Bartlett is adapted from a larger collection of studies entitled *Men, Women and Relationships* first published in 1999 and revised in 2004. All four lessons may be downloaded from the "Resources" page of www.titus2-4life.org.