



**The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and
Accepted Masons of Virginia**



Committee on Masonic Education

DEO Presentation Program Paper

**PRINCIPLE CENTERED LEADERSHIP: THE INFLUENCE OF
MASONRY ON UNITED STATES MILITARY LEADERSHIP**

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When we teach the ritual, we are concerned with more than just rote memorization. Our ritual is a powerful tool by which we turn men into Masons and develop in them an understanding of the principles and values of our great Fraternity. Consequently we go beyond the words to explain the symbols and teach the candidate and new Mason the underlying meaning of our ritual.

With this in mind, I have often reflected on the similarity between the principles of Masonry and that of military leadership. Reflecting on both my Masonic and military careers, I have come to the conclusion that there has been a strong Masonic influence on leadership in the military. The military teaches "Principle Centered Leadership" which is strongly focused on high moral principles and values. A book could be written on the subject but I only hope to illustrate this through a few examples.

I believe that this strong focus on principles and values can be directly attributed to George Washington being a Mason. General Washington was well known and highly regarded for his exemplary moral

character and his ability to lead troops in adverse situations. When we think of patriots such as General Washington, we can only begin to imagine the selfless service and sacrifice of these great men.

One piece of evidence that suggests this strong influence of Masonry on military leadership goes back to the tradition of military Lodges and in recent history to the presence of Masonic Lodges on military bases, which was a common occurrence, until this practice stopped around 1949.

So, what is Principle Centered Leadership? Webster's dictionary defines principles as: rules or standards, especially of good behavior; fixed or predetermined policies or modes of action, such as the golden rule. Value is defined as: a principle, standard, or quality regarded as worthwhile or desirable, such as traditional moral values. You would agree these are attributes of a Mason.

The U.S. Army Field Manual describes Principle Centered Leadership in detail and teaches the "Be, Know, Do" philosophy. Tonight I will focus on the "Be" which is precisely what we must "Be" as Masons and leaders at work, in our communities, in our churches, and in other civic and charitable organizations of which we may be a member. I am sure that these will all sound familiar to you all:

- Loyalty;
- Duty;
- Respect;
- Selfless Service;
- Honor;
- Integrity; and,
- Personal Courage.

As further evidence, I would like to give two other examples: first, the Oath of Office for a Commissioned Officer, and second, “The Fouled Anchor, Symbol of a Navy Chief.”

As you listen to the Oath of Office for a Commissioned Officer, you will hear some similar terminology to that of our Masonic obligations:

“I, (state name and SSAN), having been appointed an officer in the Army of the United States, as indicated above in the grade of _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter; So help me God.”

There are even more similarities as you listen to “The Chief’s Fouled Anchor,” which is heard at every Chief Petty Officer’s pinning ceremony. It seems as if it might have been written by a Mason because, like the Masons, the Navy here utilizes tools and implements of architecture, and symbolic emblems most expressive to imprint on the mind wise and serious truths. Here is how it goes:

The **Fouled Anchor** is the emblem of the Rate of Chief Petty Officer of the United States Navy. Attached to the Anchor is a length of chain and the letters U.S.N. To the novice, the anchor, chain and letters only identify a Chief Petty Officer of the United States Navy, but, to a Chief, these have a more noble and glorious meaning.

The "U" stands for **Unity**, which reminds us of cooperation, maintaining harmony and continuity of purpose and action.

The "**S**" stands for **Service**, which reminds us of service to our God, our fellow man, and our Navy.

The "**N**" stands for **Navigation**, which reminds us to keep ourselves on a true course, so that we may walk upright before God and man in our transactions with all mankind, but especially with our fellow Chiefs. The Chain is symbolic of flexibility and reminds us of the chain of life that we forge day by day, link by link and may it be forged with Honor, Morality and Virtue.

The Anchor is emblematic of the hope and glory of the fulfillment of all God's promises to our souls. It is by the golden or precious Anchor that we must be kept steadfast in faith and encouraged to abide in our proper station amidst the storm of temptation, affliction and persecution.

In conclusion, my Brethren, we must encourage each Mason to follow "Principle Centered Leadership." Each day we are faced with choices. Our character is determined by the actions we take and choices we make. We should encourage each Mason to listen closely to the closing charge recited by the Worshipful Master at the conclusion of the meeting, for when our actions are guided and our choices are made in accordance with that charge we cannot materially err.

Reference resources used in preparing this paper:
U.S. Army Field Manual 22-100 "Army Leadership"
Dept. of the Army Form 71, 1 August 1959
Website www.goatlocker.org