

Lessons from Yusufiyah: Module 09
“Trust” (SSG John Diem)
Example Questions

[Watch “Trust”]

1. Diem says, “Justin Watt joined the Army with the belief that it would allow him to become the man he wanted to be.” Why did you join the Army?
2. How do a person’s expectations of the Army impact the quality of his/her service?
3. Diem describes Watt’s sub-organization’s “capacity for rape and murder” as an attack on Watt. What does this say about Watt’s value system and how he identified with the Army?
4. Diem describes the bond between Soldiers. He says, “It’s a very powerful bond that’s not intimate, it’s organizational; it’s institutional.” A) What does Diem mean? B) How does a strong sense of professional identity increase trust among Soldiers?
5. Diem describes the type of trust held between Barker and Cortez, two of Watt’s peers that committed the war crimes. Diem says, “That’s a different kind of trust that is not acceptable.” A) What types of trust exist? B) What other word(s) could describe a negative trust?
6. Consider different units that you have been in, and ways that you or others may have felt an obligation “not to tell” on your peers. How would a strong sense of organizational trust have impacted your response?
7. Consider Diem’s description of organizational trust. A) How do leaders build organizational trust? B) How do a person’s character and competence tie into organizational trust?
8. Consider how sub-groups form and exist within organizations. A) What are the results of a sub-group on the inclusive individuals? B) On excluded individuals? C) On the organization as a whole?
9. SSG Diem says Justin Watt “re-nested himself within the institution.” What does this mean? What do those actions say about Watt’s character?
10. SSG Diem alludes to Watt’s action of “gravitating toward the more professionally and morally right organization.” What might have prompted Watt to leave his sub-group and re-connect with the larger institution?
11. Did Watt “betray” the Army at any point? Did he “betray” his sub-group? Explain.
12. How would you describe the trust that you have for your fellow Soldiers?

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Transcription

Diem tells his story:

During a combat deployment, Justin Watt discovered that his fellow Soldiers had committed heinous war crimes. He reported the crimes to John Diem, a non-commissioned officer who he trusted.

“Justin Watt joined the Army with the belief that it would allow him to become the man he wanted to be. Most Soldiers who join the Army infantry really believe that. Well, if you become part of a sub-organization like he did, which demonstrates we have the capacity for rape and murder, that is a personal attack against him—he would feel like. That’s not what he joined the Army to do.

Organizations produce people. You can trust those people intimately with your life, and you should. They’ve been trained and led as well as an organization that you believe in can produce, but have an intimate trust with one other person while very powerful motivation. I think when you hear older veterans talk about trust, “I really did it for my buddy on my right and my left,” what they’re really talking about is the organization. They’re not talking about this specific guy because how many World War II vets started with that specific guy and ended the war with that specific guy? No. There were dozens and dozens of *that* guy. He could have been anybody. He could have been a replacement, a medic, anybody that just happened to be fighting with them at the time. It’s a very powerful bond that’s not intimate, it’s organizational; it’s institutional.

When an organization separates itself into small schisms, that’s when you’re talking about personal, intimate, trust between two individuals instead of organizational trust. It’s a negative leadership influence.

Trust is the most significant piece, not because it’s like an intimacy—because that’s what Barker, Cortez and them had an intimate trust—that’s not really how I mean it. Trust is more you understand where people stand. You understand that there’s a standard of behavior and everybody acts within that standard of behavior. Not that if I mess something up or I do this then this guy won’t tell on me. That’s a different kind of trust that is not acceptable.

It’s a trust in the organization and the fact that the organization will do the right thing. (It’s trust) that the organization is not going to fly off the handle, and that the organization is not going to treat you badly when you mess up, and that the organization is going to invest you with trust when you earn it. It’s going to make you an exemplar when you accomplish things above the standard. Just trust in the organization—not trust in any one person, or trust in a small group of conspirators or people—trust in an organization, in the Army really. I feel like at the squad-level at least if you have a group of people who trust in you as the squad leader and trust in the squad as an organization, they will trust in the Army more.

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If you think about it, like those small group of people, Justin Watt interacted with them every day—a lot more than he would ever interact with me. They had a very mutual, intimate, trust that made them part of their own, separate organization. Personal, intimate, trust with the people involved is a strong motivator, especially when that small sub-group is your only support structure to deal with the reality that you’re just having a hard time dealing with.

When they demonstrated that they had morals and a sense of professionalism that were abhorrent to Justin Watt and what he thought the Army was about, he came back to the parent organization with agents that he could believe in. He basically re-nested himself within the greater institution.

So, do I feel like there is a sense of betrayal? Yes, because they shared a personal, intimate, trust, and he felt like he was a part of the sub-organization. But at the end of the day, if there’s a more professional, if there’s a more morally right organization, you’re going to gravitate towards that if you have that in you.”

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Additional Resources

Additional Resources:

Enduring Attributes of the Profession: Trust, Discipline, Fitness

General Robert W. Cone, U.S. Army

- *Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly, and they will show themselves great.* —Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Trust can be considered the lifeblood of our profession. Our Nation puts its trust in the military, relying on our ethic, integrity, and professionalism.
- http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20110930PofA_art005.pdf

The Army Ethic, Public Trust, and the Profession of Arms

Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen, Jr., U.S. Army, with Captain Nathan K. Finney, U.S. Army

- In adapting to the demands of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to the new strategic realities of the 21st century, our army has been so busy that we have not consistently thought through how those challenges, and our solutions to them, have affected the institution as a profession.² To address this issue, our army’s senior leadership began a campaign of learning in order to understand what impact the last 10 years of war have had on the profession of arms. This campaign will identify where we need to bolster professional successes and where we need to address deficiencies evident from the last decade of war. This effort has only just begun, but what is clear is that the three key concepts tying all aspects of the profession of arms together are our professional ethic, our professional standards, and trust.
- http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20110930PofA_art007.pdf