

**Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)**

Deuteronomy 2:16; 3:18

Men of War or Men of Valor:
on Loyalty

So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, that the Lord spoke to me (Moses), saying: "This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab."

Then I commanded you at that time, saying: "The Lord your God has given you this land to possess. All you men of valor shall cross over armed before your brethren, the children of Israel."

There's an interesting contrast between men of war and men of valor in the context of Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. The distinguishing characteristic seems to be loyalty.

Those Israelites who came out of Egypt and died in the wilderness were called men of war (Joshua 5:4). These were the ones who decided that they could not win Canaan, even though God commanded them to take it. They assessed their situation from their own perspective. They thought only of what could be accomplished out of their own might. They sought their own counsel and refused to obey God (Joshua 5:6). Their loyalty was not invested in Him.

In Exodus 15:3, Moses and the people called God a *man of war*, and rightly so. For in their exaltation, they acknowledged what God did of His own accord, from His own perspective, out of His own might, and by His own word. This is the way a man of war acts. But only God can do it perfectly. In the nation of Israel's case, God did this for His people because they could not do it for themselves.

The Israelites who spent 40 years growing up in the wilderness were called men of valor. As children, they personally witnessed God's faithfulness and protection. They learned to assess their situation from God's perspective. They did well in the wilderness, not just surviving but thriving. Young boys became men of valor when they declared their loyalty to the Lord. Because of this, God made them His special people (Deuteronomy 26:17-19). Likewise, it is this kind of childlike faith that Jesus implored when He said, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it"* (Mark 10:14-15).

When I shared this contrast with my friend and colleague Bob Chichester, he summed it up nicely by stating, "Anyone can start a war but it takes a man of valor to fight under God's providence and power." Spiritually speaking, this is where we're at today.

Anyone and everyone who is born comes into this world at war with God. We are sinners one and all, wandering in the wilderness of disobedience. Even so, *God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). When we come to Him with childlike faith, the man of war dies – *old things have passed away* – and a man of valor is born – *all things have become new* (II Corinthians 5:17). We could not do this for ourselves. Christ had to do it for us. And now, with our loyalty firmly established in Him, we can fight the good fight because we are under God's providence and power.

This is what we have in common with Israel and her 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. We, too, are either men of war or men of valor.

We, too, are men who must decide what to do with our loyalty.

Copyright © 2005 Don Hamlin. All rights reserved.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Deuteronomy 2:16; 3:18
Men of War or Men of Valor: On Loyalty

HOOK

1. Which outdoor sport are you most devoted to? Which sport do you participate in the least?

2. What was the most exciting activity you enjoyed as a child? Why is this memorable for you?

3. Describe the most difficult outdoor skill you've learned and how you learned it.

LINE

Those Israelites who came out of Egypt and died in the wilderness were called men of war. These were the ones who decided that they could not win Canaan, even though God commanded them to take it. They assessed their situation from their own perspective. They thought only of what could be accomplished out of their own might. They sought their own counsel and refused to obey God. Their loyalty was not invested in Him.

The Israelites who spent 40 years growing up in the wilderness were called men of valor. As children, they personally witnessed God's faithfulness and protection. They learned to assess their situation from God's perspective. They did well in the wilderness, not just surviving but thriving. Young boys became men of valor because they placed their loyalty in God. Because of this, their inheritance was the Promised Land. Jesus implored us to have this kind of childlike faith.

How can you relate to the nation of Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness? Explain in terms of your relationship with God.

Where have you placed your loyalty? If in Jesus, tell why you consider yourself to be a man of valor. If not in Jesus, tell why your loyalty is misplaced.

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.
Key words: loyalty/valor character manhood

