

REVOLUTION CHURCH // SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

SOLDIER'S ORDERS

A Biblical Field Guide for Those Who Serve

For soldiers, veterans, first responders, and everyone who has had to carry the weight of service.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Romans 8:1

THE QUESTION

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

What does the Bible say about a soldier, or first responder, who has to carry out orders to kill? This question doesn't get answered enough in the Church, and the silence leaves people carrying weight they were never designed to carry alone.

Let me say up front: there is no single verse that gives us airtight clarity on this. But there is a lot of Scripture that speaks to it, and when you put it all together, it forms a picture that is more clear, and more comforting, than most soldiers have ever been told.

One critical point for any warrior reading this: the time to settle this question is **before** you are ever put in a position to act on it. A soldier who has not resolved the theological and moral weight of taking a life may hesitate at the moment of truth and that hesitation can cost lives, including innocent ones. This guide exists so you can work through it now, on this side of that moment.

FOUR HISTORIC POSITIONS WHERE CHRISTIANS HAVE LANDED

01 NON-RESISTANCE	Christians should never participate in any form of violence, including self-defense. Associated with the Amish and Mennonites.
02 CHRISTIAN PACIFISM	Non-resistance plus active work for peace while refusing all violence. Associated with Quakers and Anabaptists.
03 JUST WAR THEORY (Where we land!)	War is sometimes morally justified when specific criteria are met. This is the dominant position of the historic Church — Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin all held it. This guide is written from within this framework.
04 PREVENTATIVE WAR	Nations sometimes have a duty to wage war offensively against evil. Less common; largely absorbed into just war thinking.

SCRIPTURE

WHAT THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAYS

THE HEBREW WORD MATTERS

The sixth commandment says “thou shalt not murder” and the Hebrew word God chose for murder is **ratsach**: the premeditated, unauthorized, unjust taking of an innocent life. God had seven Hebrew words available. He picked that one on purpose.

He did not use the Hebrew word for a soldier carrying out orders. Not the word for self-defense. Not the word for capital punishment. Not the word for accidental death. Those are different categories in God’s language and in God’s law.

“You shall not murder.” — Exodus 20:13 (ESV)

GOD COMMANDED IT AND GOD NEVER COMMANDS SIN

When God gives battle orders, and He does repeatedly, those soldiers were not violating the sixth commandment. They were obeying God. God would never command you to sin; it is against His very nature.

Joshua 5:14	Pre-incarnate Jesus appears to Joshua as Commander of the Army of the Lord and gives him a specific battle plan.
1 Samuel 15:3	God tells Saul directly: “Go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them.” A direct order from God.
2 Samuel 5:23–25	David defeats the Philistines following God’s specific strategy step-by-step. Military victory authored by God.
Genesis 14	Abraham launches a military rescue operation. Defensive, humanitarian, authorized — a prototype of just war.

THE NEW TESTAMENT NEVER CONDEMNS SOLDIERS

Take a hard look. You will not find a single passage where a soldier is rebuked for their military service. You will only find them honored.

Matthew 8:5–10	A Roman centurion comes to Jesus. Jesus says: “I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.” No rebuke. No call to quit the military.
Acts 10:1–2	Cornelius is a career military officer, “devout and God-fearing.” The Holy Spirit falls on him before he is even baptized.
Luke 3:14	Soldiers ask John the Baptist what they should do. He equips them rather than dismissing them: “Be content with your wages.”
Hebrews 11:34	The Hall of Faith explicitly celebrates those who “became mighty in war and put foreign armies to flight.” Military victory is in the Hall of Faith.

“If being a soldier were inherently sinful, the Holy Spirit would not have inspired Paul to use soldiering as a model for the Christian life.” — Ephesians 6; 2 Timothy

JUST WAR THEORY THE JUST WAR FRAMEWORK

Developed by Augustine in *The City of God* (c. AD 413) and refined by Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. Just war theory has been the dominant framework of the Church for over 1,600 years. It is not a compromise. It is a faithful reading of Scripture.

“We do not seek peace in order to be at war, but we go to war that we may have peace.” — Augustine, *The City of God*

“Peace should be the object of your desire; war should be waged only as a necessity, and waged only that God may by it deliver men from the necessity and preserve them in peace.” — Augustine, *Letter to Boniface*

The goal of just war is always **peace**, not victory, not national interest, not vengeance. Everyone is affected in war. There are no true victors. The moment war begins, you are already operating at a deficit.

THE SIX CRITERIA

01 JUST CAUSE Defending innocent life, resisting aggression. Not conquest or revenge.	02 LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY Declared by proper governing authority, not private actors or rogue groups.	03 RIGHT INTENTION The goal is peace and justice. Not domination or profit.
04 LAST RESORT All reasonable peaceful options exhausted first. Diplomacy must fail.	05 PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS Not sending people to die in a hopeless cause. Commanders bear this weight.	06 PROPORTIONALITY The harm caused must not exceed the harm being prevented. Ever.

THESE CRITERIA ARE IN SCRIPTURE

I encourage you to go read these scriptures and the provided commentary:

Proverbs 31:8–9 — Kings are commanded to protect the weak and vulnerable. Restraining evil, not expanding power.

Deuteronomy 20:10–13 — Before any siege, Israel must offer terms of peace. War only if the city refuses. Last resort, embedded in the law itself.

Romans 13:4 — Paul chose the word “*machaira*” the specific Roman sword used for executions. And he calls that governing authority the “*diakonos*” of God: the **servant of God**.

A soldier operating under just authority is NOT outside of God’s order. In Paul’s theology, they are an instrument of it.

True warriors are sheepdogs. Sheepdogs protect the sheep from wolves who would use violence to prey on them. The critical difference between a sheepdog and a wolf is not the capacity for force. Both possess it.

The difference is **whose authority they submit to**. A sheepdog without a shepherd is just a wild dog. We submit to our Shepherd, Jesus Christ. That is what makes the difference.

WHEN ORDERS ARE UNJUST

Just war theory also protects the soldier’s conscience. Military law (the UCMJ) reflects this directly: officers bear the burden of giving lawful orders, and every service member has both the right and the duty to refuse an unlawful one.

“Therefore, even in waging war, cherish the spirit of a peacemaker; that by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantages of peace... Let necessity, therefore, and not your will, slay the enemy who fights against you.” — Augustine, Letter to Boniface

CARRYING THE WEIGHT MORAL INJURY & THE WEIGHT OF SERVICE

DAVID: THE CLEAREST PASTORAL PICTURE

David was called a man after God’s own heart. He was a warrior. He shed blood in authorized, justified combat. And God loved him deeply. Yet when David wanted to build the temple, God said no, not because David had sinned, but because God wanted a man of peace to build His house.

“You shall not build a house for my name, because you are a man of war and have shed blood.” — 1 Chronicles 28:3 (ESV)

What this tells our veterans: You are **not condemned**. You are **not disqualified**. God loves you. But you might be carrying something that has shaped you. That is real, and it deserves real care.

PTSD VS. MORAL INJURY

PTSD	MORAL INJURY
Primarily a fear response, the nervous system stuck in threat mode.	Primarily a wound to the conscience, the soul wrestling with what was done.
Triggered by danger, helplessness, and terror.	Triggered by acts that conflict with one’s own moral code, even when justified.
Needs safety, trauma processing, sometimes clinical help.	Needs community, permission to grieve, and theological clarity.
The wound is in the body’s alarm system.	The wound is in the soul’s moral framework.

A MISTAKE AND THE REMEDY

When a soldier comes home carrying moral injury, the church often offers the wrong medicine. It says: “You are forgiven.” Forgiveness is the remedy for **guilt**. But what many veterans are carrying is not guilt, it is **grief**. Those are two completely different things that need two completely different responses.

“Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?” — Ezekiel 18:23 (ESV)

God grieves the necessary death even of the wicked. So it is not surprising that a soldier, made in God’s image, would grieve even the necessary death of an enemy. That is not weakness. That is the image of God functioning correctly.

Grief needs something different from forgiveness:

- **Time** — healing is not instant.
- **Community** — people who will sit with you in it.
- **Permission** — to feel the weight without being told it was sin.
- **Theological clarity** — the truth that what you did was not murder.

**FOR THE CHURCH
WHAT THE CHURCH MUST SAY AND DO**

The Church has to say two things at the same time and actually mean both:

WHAT YOU DID WAS NOT MURDER.

01

It was not ratsach. It was not a violation of the sixth commandment. You followed legitimate orders under just authority. You are not disqualified. You are not beyond God's grace. You never were.

WE ARE HERE, AND WE WILL SIT WITH YOU.

02

The weight you are feeling might not be guilt, it might be grief. And grief belongs in the Church. This is the place to grieve, to process, to heal. You are not alone in it.

PRACTICAL WAYS THE CHURCH CAN SHOW UP

BEFORE DEPLOYMENT	WHILE DEPLOYED	WHEN THEY COME HOME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Pray over them publicly and continue to pray for them, by name, daily. — Equip them theologically with resources like this one before they go. — Get their address for sending care packages later. — Ask: Who is checking on your family while you are gone? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Check on their spouse and kids: groceries, childcare, presence are all a huge help. — Send letters / care packages: a soldier's Bible, a note, hot sauce (for that bland food they'll be eating!) or something personal. — Pray for them regularly, not just on Veterans Day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Homecoming is not the finish line. The hardest months are often after. — Never ask: "Did you kill someone?" Let them bring it up when / if they're ready. — Get them plugged into community and a meaningful role in the church. — Watch for moral injury and grief. Offer presence. — They are not a liability. They are an asset. — Consider your words. Instead of "Thank you for your service," try: "I am blessed by your sacrifice. I honor you and pray for your peace of mind."

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION EVER DO YOU FOLLOW JESUS?

Maybe you picked this resource up and you are not a Christian. Maybe someone handed it to you, or you found it, or you are just trying to figure out if any of this applies to you. It does. Every word of it.

The weight you have been carrying, the things you have seen, the things you have had to do, the questions that follow you home, Jesus already knows about all of it. He is not waiting for you to clean yourself up before He will welcome you. The centurion in Matthew 8 did not clean himself up first. Cornelius did not clean himself up first. They just came as they were, and Jesus met them right there.

If you have never given your life to Christ, why not now? Not just because you are broken in sin, but also because you were made for more than carrying this weight alone. You can pray something as simple as this: *Jesus, I need You. I repent from my sins. I believe You died for me and rose again. I give You my life. Come in to my heart. I want to serve you all the days of my life. Amen.*

That is it. That is the door. And if you just prayed that, tell someone at Revolution Church, we want to walk with you from here. Reach out to us at info@revyourlife.com

THE FINAL WORD

God is not confused or caught off guard by any of this. He built the distinction between *ratsach* (murder) and authorized force right into the language from the beginning. He is a God of both mercy and justice — not one at the expense of the other. You are not condemned. You are not disqualified. You are loved. And you do not have to carry this alone.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

— Romans 8:1 (ESV)