

The Effects Of Circumstances On Ethics

It seems that people regularly violate the ethic standards they have adopted. A most recent example would be the abandonment of ethics by the couples figure skating judge at the Salt Lake Olympics. When this happens it always poses the question –why? What events in the person’s life triggered this failure? These failures do not seem isolated to one particular community of humanity. It seems even stranger when behaviorists of many fields all seem to agree that seldom does of person commit a wrong act without knowing about it before the act is complete. Why can one person face a situation and avoid it and another fail to avoid the wrong act?

Is there a simple solution to this problem that all humans face? Probably not. But, I would like to look as some remedies that could possibly limit the failures. These three areas can be labeled in these words: Preparation Commitment, and Readiness. Our focus in this seminar is on the world of the warrior. Therefore, I shall limit my remarks to areas that relate to that community.

First, I perceive that many failures occur because an individual faces a set of circumstances that are new, strange or unfamiliar. Second, the alternatives to a course of action are few and one appeals to some of the baser elements of humanity, i.e. gratification of various types, anger, escape or preservation, to name a few. Third there is no commitment on the part of the individual to an ethic, purpose or cause that sways their decision in support of the ethic. Finally, no leader is present that either denies the wrong behavior or whose example is strong enough to influence the individual to overcome the temptation to fail.

Some examples to be considered are: the Olympics incident; David and Bathsheba and the Lt Calley episode in Vietnam. Countless others are available, but these will make the point.

To the three areas. In preparation, it is the responsibility of the individual to consider those areas of his/her life that are vulnerable to ethics failure. For example, the alcoholic realizes each moment of the day that one sip of alcohol is sufficient to send them in to a tailspin of failure.

Realizing their areas of weakness, the person must fortify themselves against the unexpected. This can be accomplished by considering the many way they may succumb to weakness and commit their actions to avoid or resist the satisfaction that may come by submission.

Finally, as happens in the best of military units, training takes place to make the unfamiliar familiar. In so doing, the unit is ready for any set of circumstances. The same must be true of the individual. Only by taking calculated steps that insure readiness can a person have any reasonable expectation of resisting an ethics meltdown.