

# ***LeaderPerfect Newsletter***

May 1, 2003

## **What's Your Job, Soldier?**

by Dr. Mike Armour

It was an unforgettable Wednesday morning in Baghdad. Reporters knew it immediately. As they came down from their hotel rooms, they found a relatively deserted lobby. Their government minders, those ever-present watchdogs who controlled press movements, were nowhere to be seen. They simply stayed home that morning. They didn't show up for work.

So the media poured out into the dazzling sunlight of a bright spring morning, free to go anywhere in search of a story — only to have the story break right in front of them.

Suddenly, without warning, American armored units pulled into view. While onlookers stared in stunned disbelief, soldiers poured out of armored personnel carriers and took up positions around a familiar landmark. They quickly deployed themselves around a huge traffic circle that framed a small park. Centered in the park was a towering statue of Saddam Hussein, his hand uplifted, his gaze staring out over the city.

### **An Interview at the Edge of History**

The soldiers were hardly in position before television crews pushed into the growing throng, interviewing Iraqi citizens sensing a newborn freedom and U.S. soldiers now guarding a scene of building jubilation. One reporter walked over to a young soldier on the perimeter. At the ripe old age of 23 he was one of the "old men" in his unit. He was a corporal, responsible for a squad of 18 and 19 year olds who stood their posts nearby, their eyes alert, guns at the ready.

The reporter asked the corporal's name and his hometown, neither of which I recall, regrettably. But I will never forget his answer to the next question. "What's your job here, soldier?" asked the newsman.

Without a moment's hesitation the young man made a sweeping gesture that took in his nearby squad. "Sir," he answered, "my job is to get every one of these boys back home alive."

That was it. Pure, simple, and straightforward. Here he was, only yards away from crowd already clamoring onto the statue to topple it. History was being made right before him. Moments later, as the statue came crashing to the ground, he would be an eye-witness to one of the most definitive moments in modern history, a scene spirited by television around the world and destined for replay for decades to come.

## Zeroed In On The Real Job

So much was going on. So much excitement. So much to grab your attention. To distract your focus. But with everything that could have side-tracked him, this stalwart G.I. was zeroed in on his real job. His job was to get a squad of young soldiers back home to wives, sweethearts, and mothers.

Oh, along the way there would be some critical missions to complete. Some assaults to mount. Some attacks to repel. Orders from Washington to execute. Suffering citizens to help. But none of that changed his first and foremost task, to get his men home alive.

The simplicity of his response begs us all to stop and ask, "What's my real job here? What am I truly about?" We need to ask that question in the context of our family. Our business. Our profession. Our volunteer efforts. Our work in our church.

In each of those arenas we have a primary job. An essential commitment. Do we know what it is? Can we state it as succinctly as that soldier in Baghdad? And most importantly, are we staying focused on it?

Like that young corporal, we fight daily distractions. They may not be so epoch-making as those he faced that morning. But they are real and threatening, nonetheless. They steal our focus from what really counts. They bog us down in side issues and minutiae. They magnify what's only secondary so that we neglect the things that are primary.

Each one of us needs a voice inside us, a probing voice, that asks several times a day, "What's your job, soldier?" It's a great question to keep us on track and on target. To keep us on mission.

So, what is *your job*, soldier?

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