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This month, we finish discussing Army values and their importance to the Soldiers and civilians who serve in the United States Army. The letter "P," marks the end of the acronym "**LDRSHIP.**" **P** reminds us of the importance of personal courage, both physical and moral, as a core Army Value.

Army Field Manual 6-22 defines Personal Courage: ***Face fear, danger or adversity.***

Personal courage takes two forms: physical and moral. Both forms are important components of this Army Value. "Physical courage" means having courage in the face of physical pain, hardship or threat of death. "Moral courage" on the other hand, means having the courage to do the right thing in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal or discouragement.

Physical courage is a concept we are all well acquainted with. We consider a person physically brave when the person is able to overcome the fear associated with pain, suffering and even death in order to do one's duty. Such courage, Aristotle noted, is a virtue. Aristotle further went on to note the two vices of courage, "where its vice of deficiency is cowardice and its vice of excess is recklessness."

Moral courage is the willingness to stand firm on the values, principles, and convictions that define who you are. It enables the Soldier or civilian to stand up for what he or she believes is right, regardless of the consequences. People who take full responsibility for their decisions and actions, even when things go wrong, display moral courage.

An extreme example of moral courage comes from the story of Warrant Officer Hugh C. Thompson Jr., a helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War. On March 16, 1968, he and his crew were supporting Task Force Barker in a reconnaissance capacity. During his mission, Warrant Officer Thompson spotted the My Lai Massacre as it was going on. His initial attempt at stopping the massacre was ignored, but through diplomacy and the threat of force, he and his gunners were able to stop the murdering of civilians.

When news of the massacre reached the United States, Warrant Officer Thompson testified before a closed session of the House Armed Services Committee. Chairman Mendel Rivers (D, SC) publicly stated that he felt Thompson was the only Soldier at My Lai who should be punished (for turning his weapons on fellow American troops) and unsuccessfully attempted to have him court-martialed.

The cost of Warrant Officer Thompson's moral courage was exceedingly high, but he had the courage to follow his convictions. Thirty years after the massacre, Warrant Officer Thompson and his two crewmen were awarded the Soldier's Medal, the Army's highest award for bravery not involving combat. "It was the ability to do the right thing even at the risk of their personal safety that guided these Soldiers to do what they did," then-Maj. Gen. Michael Ackerman said at the 1998 ceremony. The three "set the standard for all Soldiers to follow."

Much less dramatic examples occur on a daily basis. They include the Soldiers and civilians who speak out against inappropriate actions or orders and people who take action to stop sexual harassment or other forms of abuse. Not because someone told them to, but because they saw a wrong and had the moral courage to take action.

Many of us will never be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate physical courage, but most of us will have many opportunities to display moral courage.

SECURE THE HIGH GROUND!