

The Coin

In WWI the pilots were clearly men of steel but their planes were little more than cloth sewn together to cover the fuselage and wings and an airframe fashioned of wood that was held together by a handful of wires. Young men from all walks of life volunteered to fly. One wealthy young American officer serving in Europe decided to have some expensive specially minted medallion-like coins made that he gave to the men of his squadron. The coins had the squadron insignia on them and they were to embody the courage, commitment, honor and mutual support that he had seen among his friends.

One squadron member of modest means kept his treasured coin in a leather pouch that he hung around his neck. While out over enemy territory his plane was hit by ground fire and although he was able to land his crippled plane safely, he was immediately captured by the Germans. He was fortunate to escape from them but as he tried to make his way back across no man's land he was caught by some French soldiers. The Germans had been sending saboteurs into France disguised in civilian clothes and since his identification had been taken by the Germans and he was unable to speak French, he looked like just another spy. As the young flyer was about to be executed he remembered the coin from his leather pouch and showed it to the soldiers. One of the Frenchmen instantly recognized the squadron insignia on the coin as belonging to the American allies stationed nearby. The coin saved the flyer's life and after that these coins have become common among military flying squadrons and other military groups. Those that possess a coin will hold up theirs to challenge another group member and they must show their coin back. Hence the term "Challenge Coin". This in an effort to be sure the coin is in their possession at all times. The coin is a constant reminder of courage, commitment, honor and mutual support. It is an ever present reminder that they must never disgrace the unit that the coin represents and that they would never leave a fallen comrade behind.

At our Men's retreat a couple of weeks ago we were given a similar coin that speaks of this same commitment, honor and mutual support. The slogan "Gradior Dignus" or "Walk Worthy" is on one side with a picture of three men climbing a mountain together. On the other side is the verse Col 1:10 "That you may live a life worthy of the Lord". It has been fun to see how these coins have become a tangible expression of the mutual encouragement that we all want to give each other.

We must commit ourselves to stay with our "wingman" and encourage him to continue to walk worthy of the Lord. We don't "shoot our wounded" but lovingly restore them. We must help others to recognize the hand of God on their lives by pointing out the symptoms of growth we see. Sometimes there may be the darts and arrows of the enemy flying all around but we have to stick like glue. As we encourage others and stick with them through the ups and downs, they will begin to experience the life of love and compassion that brings the peace of Christ and great joy into their lives.

COL 3:12-17 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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