

Arlington National Cemetery

At the tomb of the unknown soldier, a commander appears to announce the “changing of the guard.” The new guard, the new sentinel, begins his work, unlocking the bolt of his M-14 and signals to his relief commander to begin the changing ceremony. The commander walks out to the tomb and salutes, facing the crowd and asks them to remain silent.

The commander inspects the weapon, every part of the rifle. Then the commander and the sentinel meet in the center of the path in front of the tomb. All three salute the unknown soldiers. The relief commander orders the sentinel, “Pass on your orders.” The sentinel responds, “Post and orders, remain as directed.” The new sentinel responds, “Orders acknowledged.” The new sentinel begins marching at 90 steps per minute.

The guard marches 21 steps down the mat behind the tomb, faces east for 21 seconds, then faces north for 21 seconds, then takes 21 steps down the mat and then repeats the path. After turning, the guard does a sharp “shoulder-arms” movement with the rifle on the shoulder closest to the crowd to show that the guard stands between the tomb and threats. Twenty-one is the highest military honor that can be given.

When guards are not on duty, they spend time in the quarters below the amphitheater. There, they study the history of the cemetery, clean their weapons, and help others prepare for the changing of the guard.

If a soldier passes his first training phase, he begins training as a “new-soldier.” These soldiers study the history of the cemetery and grave locations of about 300 veterans. They study the ceremony, the manual of arms for the inspection, keep their uniforms clean and weapons in immaculate condition.

The sentinels will be tested after several months. When they take their test - 100 randomly selected questions - they must make at least a 95%.

I have given these details to make a point. If symbolically guarding a dead body deserves such intricate attention, detail, seriousness, and training, what about coming into the presence of God? What about our attention and detail given to worship God?

Men have been killed, coming into the presence of God without proper authority (Lev. 10:1-2). In the New Testament, Paul teaches that worship is to be done decently and in order - 1 Cor. 14:40. The “order” is *what* God has ordered and *how* God expects it to be ordered. Not only does God deserve our attention, seriousness, and training in worship, He expects us to do our best, according to His directions.

Your fellow-servant in Christ,
Paul

Veritas non verba magistri