

The european chivalry: the ideals and practices

[History](#), [Middle Ages](#)



The Ideals and Practices Andrew Daniels Strayed University Abstract This paper focuses on the ideals and practices of chivalry, specifically in the Middle Ages. During this time, a list of Ten Commandments pertaining to chivalry existed. Knights were expected to uphold a certain code that impacted their country, church, king, and fellow man. This paper will elaborate on those individual commandments and explore what each mandate meant for a knight, and it will show how those obligations affected various aspects of their lives.

Also, the paper will touch on heavily In relation to a knight's demeanor toward a woman, and the rules that were to be followed when engaging in courtly love. Lastly, one will see how some of these ideas have carried into modern day, though they have been altered throughout time. Picture King Arthur, a knight In shining armor, waging war against his former knight Lancelot to prove his love for Guinevere. Most people envision such scenes when they hear the word " chivalry. While dragon-slaying knights and tales of rescuing damsels in distress have contributed to our notion of chivalry, many more unifying aspects make up what it means to be chivalrous. I will be delving into the true meaning behind the principles and what it means to be a knight devoted to the ideals of chivalry. Knights first evolved in the eighth century under the direction of the French ruler Charlemagne; It was from this time that the Idea of chivalry arose. Though the code of chivalry was never formally written, it was understood by all as a way of culture and moral conduct.

During the Middle Ages, knights upheld the ideals and practices delineated in The Code of Chivalry. These values ranged from dedication to the church, to <https://assignbuster.com/the-european-chivalry-the-ideals-and-practices/>

defending the weak and defending your country, and loading yourself to a higher standard by being faithful to your word and respecting others. The unspoken Ten Commandments revealed the duties a knight was to defend. This paper will further expand upon the customs of knights and their chivalric ways. One of the major components of chivalry dealt with protecting the church.

The first commandment stated, " thou shall believe all that the church teaches, and shall observe all its directions" (Marshall, 2002). The second commandment simply stated, " thou shall defend the Church" (Marshall, 2002). In the Middle Ages Christianity in ten Tort AT cottontails was ten only practice religion. I en snuck played a Olsten and dominate role in the majority of people's lives, not only medieval knights. Beginning as free peasants, knights often pillaged churches. Due to such violence, Rome declared knights the protectors of churches starting in the tenth century and threatening sanctions against any who ransacked churches.

Later, in the 11th century, the Truce of God asserted that knights should not make war on all holy days, all saints days or Thursday through Sunday. Abiding to these rules meant that knights exhibited their chivalric duty by observing the churches directions. Not only did the knights protect the church, but the church protected the knights' estate if he embarked on a Crusade to Jerusalem, the supposed burial sight of Jesus. During his time away, the knight was also exempt from paying taxes to the church (Warrior Challenge, 2003).

While knights were required to defend the church, they were also expected to defend the weak, according to the Code of Chivalry (Marshall, 2002). Knights were expected to protect the weak and innocent. Given a plot of land for their services, rather than monetary compensation, knights were required to oversee the land in order to keep agricultural procedures running smoothly and to ensure the well-being over their serfs. Another knightly duty was to avenge the wronged. This was possible with extensive training from the age of seven to twenty one.

In this fourteen year p, knights learned everything from hunting and falconry to wielding a battle and vaulting on a horse in heavy armor (Martin, 1991). With a repertoire of experiences such as these, knights were surely qualified to shield anyone weaker than them. Moreover, knights " shall love the country in which thou waist born" (Marshall, 2002). Knights upheld this chivalric code by living to serve their king and country. In the eighth century when Charlemagne ruled over his vast empire he enacted many longstanding ideas both in religion and education.

During this period he and his vassals were involved in protecting their borders; without such a charismatic leader knights may not have been so obliged to serve and defend their king and country. In order to exhibit love for his country, the knight was sure to obey the king, country, and Code of Chivalry. The fifth commandment found in the code of chivalry, " thou shall not recoil before thing enemy" (Marshall, 2002). In a time when battles were common, knights were expected to fight with honor and die with valor. These

traits would have been taught to these men when they were squires training to be knights.

However, knights also established principles of what not to do in battle. It was thought chivalrous to never attack an unarmed foe, never use a weapon on an opponent not equal to the attack, and never attack from behind (Marshall, 2002). By maintaining these principles a knight showed respect to themselves, their king and their country. The next commandment reads, "thou shall make war against the Infidel without sensation and without mercy," which relates to the seventh commandment "thou shall perform scrupulously tiny Teal outlets, IT teen De not contrary to ten laws AT God" (Marshall, 2002).

Certain tasks categorized under these two commandments were thought of as chivalrous. One such task stated that knights were to destroy evil in all of its atrocious forms. Knights were required to fight for the ideals of their king, country and chivalry, which meant annihilating all those that attempted to steal land or rob people within the kingdom's borders in which a knight resided. Protection of one's country by destroying the enemy remained a priority for knights, as long as they did not betray any teachings of the church.

Knights also abided by the code, "thou shall never lie, and shall remain faithful to thy pledged word" (Marshall, 2002). It was thought gallant to live a life complete with respect and honor. Knights should not take for granted their freedom or their livelihood, and they must remain thankful for the opportunities provided to them. Of course, if knights kept their word of

honor, they must avoid lying or cheating their fellow man. Living an existence abundant of deception would defy the principals these chivalrous men were to uphold.

Just as it was thought unethical to deceive their fellow man, it was also thought improper to desert a friend or ally in need. Likewise, knights were not to relinquish a noble cause, whether it presented itself in the form of a battle, defending one's church, or protecting one's country (Marshall, 2002). By living a truthful, honest existence, knights became role models of suitable gentlemen, which have contributed to our current view of the word chivalry today. Additionally, the code of chivalry demands, "thou shall be generous, and give largesse to everyone" (Marshall, 2002).

Sir Thomas Malory provides a glimpse into such charitable actions as he recounts a scene between King Arthur and Sir Lancelot in his legend *El Mortem d'art*. After Arthur learns of Lancelot and Guinevere's affair, he wages war against Lancelot's kingdom, only to find himself at the mercy of Lancelot and his kinsman, Sir Boors' sword. Not so hardy, said Sir Lancelot, upon pain of thy head, that thou touch him no more, for I will never see that most noble king that made me knight neither slain nor shamed.

And therewith Sir Lancelot alighted off his horse and took up the king and horsed him again, and said thus: My lord Arthur, for God's love stint this strife, for ye get here no worship, and I would do mine utterance, but always I forbear you, and ye nor none of yours forbear me; my lord, remember what I have done in many places, and now I am evil rewarded (Taylor, 2010, Para. L). Lancelot spares Arthur's life, remembering when Arthur once placed his

faith in Lancelot by making him his knight. Despite the quarrel between the former friends over Guinevere, they still respect one another.

In this instance Lancelot's generosity outweighs his desire to defeat Arthur. Such demonstrations of largesse, whether legend or not, reveal the true meaning behind this commandment. The final commandment documented in the Code of Chivalry states, "thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the Right and the Good against Injustice and Evil" (Marshall, 2002). The last commandment disloyally encapsulates ten of the mentioned orders, reminding knights to live for all that is virtuous and to reinforce the need to respect the authority of country, church and king.

Knights were to avoid certain practices such as torture and deceit; they were to remain loyal to their friends and those who placed their trust in them. Furthermore, the concept of respecting women was considered a significant courtesy, though not directly mentioned in the Ten Commandments of Chivalry. Men were to exhibit manners at all times, and they must be polite and attentive to women. Additionally, gentlemen showed respect to whoever should be their host.

Andrea Aquaplanes, a 12th century author, wrote *De Amour*, known today in English as *The Art of Courtly Love*. In his work, he addresses the "twelve chief rules of love," and elaborates on thirty-one aspects of "the art of courtly love. Rules that men must abide by consisted of topics such as chastity: "Thou shalt keep thyself chaste for the sake of her whom thou lovest" (Marshall, 2002). Within these numerous rules, one can see what was

thought of as proper in a relationship and the graciousness that was displayed toward women (Marshall, 2002).

Concepts such as this reveal the origins of present day views on chivalry or in some opinions, the lack of chivalry. Overall, I feel the principles that contribute to the idea of chivalry, whether or not construed by legend, are important ones. The codes that knights abided by revealed number of characteristics: faith, loyalty, strength, honesty, generosity and courtesy. I believe living an existence according to these principles, or even attempting to attain such standards, makes a person a superior, well-rounded individual.

Incorporating such characteristics into one's everyday life allows a person to be more virtuous, and these values reinforce one's relationship with the church, country and allies. The romanticism of chivalry has survived to present day, though the code is not held to standards nearly as high as in the past with the majority of the ideas falling to the wayside. I believe a rejuvenation of several of these notions could benefit factions of society and reinstate principles that should be essential for all mankind.