

Small Group Study Guide for
Faith Deployed...Again:
More Daily Encouragement for Military
Wives

A resource of <http://www.faithdeployed.com/>

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Faith Deployed...Again written by Jocelyn Green and 28 contributing writers, including
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Introduction

Small groups change lives. I've seen women who were extremely depressed and lonely, get plugged into a small group and have their entire demeanor change. I've seen women who have dealt with some of life's most difficult circumstances call first on those within their small group before their family can ever come to their side. When you come together to study God's word, there is a huge amount of power and connection that comes from that and from joining with other believers in prayer.

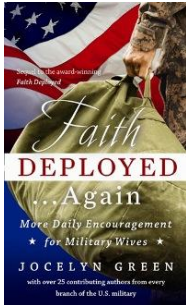
This Faith Deployed Group Study Guide was developed for military wives as a tool to help you grow deeper in your relationships with Christ and with each other. Use it, and be prepared to watch as God's work takes place in you and through you!

It is an amazing thing when believers come together in faith and discuss what God's Word means to their lives! Congratulations on answering such an important call in bringing women together for this purpose. Be prepared for amazing blessings. You are going to see lives change in incredible ways and find yourself as a leader even more blessed than anyone. Our prayer is that this study guide will bless your group and bring those in your group into a deeper understanding of what God's Word has to say to us as military wives.

God bless!

Catherine Fitzgerald, Marine wife

About *Faith Deployed...Again*



Faith Deployed...Again: More Daily Encouragement for Military Wives (Moody Publishers, 2011) was written by former Coast Guard wife Jocelyn Green and 28 contributing writers from every branch of service. Through this book, the Christian military wife will better understand how to biblically respond to the specific challenges she faces. Every devotional seeks to answer: How does the Bible relate to what I am experiencing in the military community?

Here's what others have to say about it:

"Daily reminders of the truth we find in God's Word are so important for a military spouse. In her new book, *Faith Deployed...Again*, Jocelyn Green creates yet another wonderful opportunity for military spouses to focus on God's truth while relating to the shared experiences of other spouses. Knowing many of these contributors personally, reading this book is like listening to friends over coffee and being reminded of the blessings God gives us even in the midst of the challenging season of deployment."

~ Sara Horn, founder of Wives of Faith (wivesoffaith.org) and author of *GOD Strong: A Military Wife's Spiritual Survival Guide* and *Tour of Duty: Preparing Our Hearts for Deployment*.

"Hope and encouragement – I can think of no greater gift to give the military home front. *Faith Deployed...Again* is Christian military wives and mothers...cheering, encouraging, challenging, guiding, mentoring us in our journey to know the Author of Hope, Jesus Christ, while we combat the challenges of the military lifestyle."

~Benita Koeman, Army wife and founder of OperationWeAreHere.com

Purchase *Faith Deployed...Again* at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, or ChristianBook.com. (Ebook versions also available.)

Now, for the first time, military wives can use this book in a group study to further enhance personal spiritual growth as well as relationships in their own communities. Let's get started!

How to Use this Guide

This study was designed for military wife small groups. The seven-week topical study provides group discussions that can be used with *Faith Deployed...Again*. Each session takes approximately 45-60 minutes.

As a group leader, it is your job to guide the discussion and keep the focus on the topic being discussed. Women love to talk. Women love to share experiences. And these are valuable ways to get your group connected to one another and thinking about these topics through God's word. Your group might need to establish some ground rules such as keeping what is shared confidential, not gossiping and being encouraging to one another before beginning this study.

Structuring your time:

Each group must make determinations as to their own purpose and desires through the group. Here is a sample of how your group might choose to structure an hour and a half meeting:

10 minutes: Fellowship/snack and drink time- Have a time as ladies are coming in to get food and/or drinks and to just get to know one another better.

10 minutes: Welcome/Announcements/Memory Verse/Introductions- Welcome any new ladies and discuss the purpose and ground rules of the group (things like no gossip, keeping prayer requests confidential, etc.), make any announcements about any activities the group has coming up, take volunteers to recite the memory verse and give out inexpensive prizes for those who day, allow time for quick introductions when there are new ladies present.

5 minutes: Intro prayer- ask one of the group members to open the group in prayer.

10 minutes: *Introduction activity*

45 minutes: *Discussion*

10 minutes: Prayer requests/closing prayer-take any prayer requests, have a member record them and email to the group so they can pray throughout the week. Close the session in prayer.

Introduction:

The introductions in the group guide are fun, engaging activities to get the ladies in your small group thinking about the topic at hand. These ideas can easily be modified for your group or can be taken out all together, depending on your group's dynamics, time and structure.

Discussion:

The discussion section is the part of the study that really dives into God's word. A series of questions as well as verses are in this section that will point your group to God's take on the various topics in this study. Also included in the discussion section are *Faith Deployed* entries that are directly related to the topic. Since there are so many verses and readings in this section, a good way to keep the discussion moving is to have each lady find a certain verse or devotion and have it ready as you begin the study. It is important to gauge your group's discussion. Sometimes a question or discussion point will really bring about a lot of discussion. It may be a point your group needs to stay on and discuss in detail based on what is going on in your group member's lives. That's okay. You don't always have to finish a discussion in one meeting. Sometimes God will focus your group on a particular issue for a reason. Be sensitive to that as a group leader. Other times, group members will start to veer off the topic and use it as a time to complain. This should not be your group's purpose. Sometimes you will need to refocus the discussion through God's word, even though it may mean stopping discussion.

Life Work:

Women's lives are so busy nowadays. Military wives are even busier. The life work is a way to extend the lesson from just being words we hear into making real life changes without having to complete fill-in-the-blank type homework. Each life work has a series of questions or action items for the ladies to do throughout their week. Your group can decide to discuss at the beginning of each meeting what changes or impact the lesson from the previous week made in how they lived their lives.

Included on every life work is a memory verse. One way to use this memory verse is to encourage members to memorize the verse throughout the week or two you do not meet. Then, when you come back together, take volunteers to recite the verses. Get small, inexpensive prizes or come up with a reward system for those who memorize the verse. Although it can feel like something we used to do as children, you will be surprised how grown women will get excited and sometimes competitive at hiding God's word in their hearts.

More Tips for a Successful Small Group

Prayer time: There are a variety of ways you can structure your prayer time. If you have a larger group, you may wish to break up into smaller groups to discuss prayer requests and pray. Have a member from each group write down the requests and then email them out after each meeting so the group as a whole can pray. You can have 3x5 cards available and a box for ladies to write down anonymous requests or ones they did not wish to say aloud. You can partner ladies up and have every person have a prayer partner in the group who they commit to praying for throughout the week. You can do a different method each week if your group prefers or you can choose your method based on how much time you have left after your discussion.

Roles/responsibilities: It is so important to share the roles and responsibilities for the group. Have signup sheets for snacks and drinks. Encourage ladies to take turn leading the group. Create committees who can plan fellowship events outside your regular Bible study times, help when there are needs within the group such as meals for new babies or those going through a difficult time, and ladies who can call new ladies who came or those who were absent.

Childcare: One of the greatest challenges a small group may face is the issue of childcare. If you are doing your study through your church, consider putting an “ad” out in your bulletin, asking for volunteers to assist the group with childcare. You can have group members each put in a couple of dollars each week and find paid childcare. Or you can have group members rotate and assist with taking care of children. You might have to get creative. Sometimes a baby monitor where the group is meeting and discussing the topic can make it so those assisting with childcare can at least hear the discussion and talk amongst themselves as time permits.

Accountability: One thing you want to encourage is that the ladies start to hold one another accountable for living the Christian life. Accountability partners are a great way to do this. There are a variety of websites that offer accountability partner questions, in which two equally mature believers will pair up and meet together outside the group. During their time, they can discuss confidentially what struggles they’ve had in their walk as well as what victories they have had. This will really bond your group as well as move the ladies into a deeper faith and walk.

Spiritual Maturity levels: In almost every group, you will have a variety of spiritual maturity levels. You may have non-Christians and new believers all the way to those who have been Christians for most of their lives. It is important for those who are further along in their maturity to disciple those younger in the faith as well as to show grace during group discussions. Create an environment where no matter what a person's maturity level, they will feel comfortable sharing. If you find your group having difficulty with creating an environment of acceptance, take individual members aside and just encourage them to use the various levels as a way to grow their own faith. Those who are more mature should be willing to speak boldly on God's truth without making non-believers and those younger in the faith feel inferior or like they shouldn't discuss the Bible because of their lack of knowledge. Make sure your discussions will have times for all levels of spiritual maturity to be involved.

It is an amazing thing when believers come together in faith and discuss what God's word means to their lives! Congratulations on answering such an important call in bringing women together for this purpose. Be prepared for amazing blessings. You are going to see lives change in incredible ways and find yourself as a leader even more blessed than anyone. Our prayer is that this study guide will bless your group and bring those in your group into a deeper understanding of what God's word has to say to us as military wives. God bless!

Week One: Accepting Military Life

From "Basic Training: Guiding Principles for Military Living"

Introduction:

Give each participant a 3x5 card or small post it note. Ask them to write down the top three things they were unprepared for or did not expect in military life and military marriage. Ask for volunteers to share some of the things they did not expect. (Examples might include: the amount of time apart, him not being "home" even when he is physically in the country due to training or a demanding work schedule, doing so much alone, etc.)

Discussion:

Begin by having a volunteer read, "The Reluctant Military Wife" on page 22 of Faith Deployed...Again. Ask the following:

Pattie Reitz says in this entry that, "whether your marriage begin with the military...or you came into the military life later...chances are you know what it's like to be reluctant over something that was not part of "the plan." What are some things we fight or are reluctant about in this military life? (Possible answers: moving to a new duty station, another deployment, an increase in the demands of our husband's schedules, going through holidays or special occasions alone, having him miss milestones in our children's lives, etc.)

So often times, we as military wives view our husband's call into the military as solely his. Yet, just as God has called our husband into the military, He has called us to be married to men in the military. How might realizing that this life is not just God's will for our husband's lives but also for us change our reluctance? (Possible answers: it may make it easier for us to bear some of the burdens, it may give us a sense that we have a purpose in this life as well, it may help us be more supportive of the call God has placed on our husband's life, etc.)

Let's take a look at a well known figure in the Bible who was reluctant to the call God placed on His life. Today we are going to look at the story of Jonah. As we read through these passages, relate Jonah's actions and reactions to your own as a sometimes "reluctant military wife." Will someone please read Jonah 1:1-3?

What was the call God placed on Jonah's life? *(To go to the city of Nineveh and preach to them about their wickedness.)*

How did Jonah react to this call? *(He ran away, literally. He boarded a ship in an effort to flee from God.)*

What are some ways we as military wives can "run away" from our call as military wives? *(Possible answers: we try and "fight" this life-many wives will fight the fact that they got married to be with a man, yet they find themselves apart more than together. They may complain, argue, and become angry or resentful. They may "run away" in more dangerous ways through inappropriate relationships with men when their husband is gone or through social media sites. They may ignore their feelings and stuff down emotions like anxiety and depression. Sometimes, we will run away from God and stop doing the things we need to do in our relationship with Him: prayer, quiet time, etc.)*

Let's see how well this running away worked for Jonah. Will someone read Jonah 1:4-10?

What was the result of Jonah's running away? What did God send to him? *(Wind, which created a violent storm)*

Have you ever seen this in your life, in your reluctant military wife times? What are some ways God may send a wind that turns into a storm during our retreating from our call? *(Possible answers: our emotions can sometimes turn a wind into a storm during our running, God allows us the Holy Spirit to convict us when we are "running" and sometimes, if we are not careful, Satan can get us to feel guilt or condemnation instead of conviction. We can make a bigger mess of things or things can get worse before they get better when we run. Like Jonah, we can end up brining a lot of people into the storm with us because we run-like our children can get the brunt of our storm or our husbands or others close to us.)*

Well, just like us, Jonah attempts to clean up his mess. Rather than just going back to shore so he could go fulfill the mission God had for him, what does Jonah decide is the best course of action? Let's read on in Jonah 1:11-17.

What did Jonah do instead of suggesting they take him back to shore so he could go to Nineveh? *(Wanted them to throw him overboard.)*

Anybody ever act like Jonah sometimes? He knew he was not doing what he was supposed to and yet, instead of doing the right thing, he just wanted to end the storm and save those around him. How do we try to end our storms yet still ignore what God has called us to as military wives? *(Possible answers: We might stop complaining about military life, yet do not change our hearts towards it. We may try to act joyful about the duties and responsibilities, yet not change our thoughts.)*

How does God react? Jonah is still in disobedience, but rather than ending his life right then and there, what does God do in verse 17? *(Provides a fish to swallow him up)*

Now I bet some of you are thinking that doesn't seem like the greatest solution. You'd much rather God provide maybe a lifeboat or life preserver to save Jonah. But, don't miss this. Even in the midst of his disobedience, in his running away, God still delivers Jonah. Has this ever happened to you when you have fought military life? What are some ways God has delivered you in the midst of your reluctance in military life? *(Allow for personal stories)*

The being stuck in a giant fish for three days scenario might have seemed like a less than favorable result, but it sure beat death! In addition, verse 17 tells us Jonah was there for three days and three nights. He probably got a lot of time to think as there was probably not much to do inside of a whale. Someone please read Jonah's prayer from inside the whale in Jonah 2:2-9.

There are a lot of great lessons to be learned from this prayer inside of a whale after fighting the life and mission God had called one person to:

First, even in the midst of what may seem less than ideal circumstances, we can pray and God will hear us! How have you found that to be true in your life? *(Allow for personal testimonies.)*

Second, Jonah wasn't asking for deliverance from the inside of the whale. He was instead thanking God for not ending his life. Part of learning to accept our military life and our role and mission as a military wife is to find things to be thankful for within it. What are some things that you are thankful for about this life? *(Possible answers: the friendships that are made, a steady paycheck/job, the life experiences through living in different parts of the world, being able to travel or spend time with family during deployments, learning about a new culture, etc.)*

And how does God respond to Jonah's attitude (have someone read verse 10)? (*God commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*) Sometimes God is waiting on us to stop fighting so hard against what He has called us to do before He releases us from our whale.

The good news is that Jonah does go on to faithfully fulfill the call and mission God had placed on him. He still had some behavior issues, namely anger, about fulfilling the mission as you can read on your own in chapter 4, but Jonah did eventually obey the call God placed in his life.

Conclusion:

Take a minute to think about this in terms of our call as military wives. Think about Jonah's story and how he fought God's call. The Bible is not just a storybook. It is the chosen words and real human experiences handpicked by our God. Each one of them reveals to us mistakes we as human beings make over and over again as these stories from thousands of years ago still have relevance and meaning to us today. Take out the name Jonah and replace it with your own. Instead of a mission to preach to the people of Nineveh, make it about a mission to minister to your husband, your children, and those in your circle of influence. That is the general mission God places on us as wives, as mothers and as women, but then within that, there is a specific mission He has called you to: military life. Relating Jonah's experiences to your own life, how might accepting this mission change the entire outcome of our story? (*Possible answers: it would let us have the heart and thoughts God desires for us to have about the life He has given to us-joy, love, thankfulness, gratitude, etc., it would help us focus on the things that are good in military life rather than constantly focusing on the negative, it would make us more supportive of our husband's call, etc.*)

Lifework

Accepting Military Life

From "Basic Training: Guiding Principles for Military Living"

Scripture Memory Verse:

"In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help and listened to my cry." –Jonah 2:2 NIV

- (1) Take some time and journal ways you might find yourself a "reluctant military wife." What are some things you have been fighting in your mission as military wife? Are there things you need to repent of: attitudes, words, actions?
- (2) Read "Whatever!" on page 38 of *Faith Deployed...Again*. How might your "whatevers" be off? What are some thoughts or things you dwell on that can hurl you into a full out sprint away from the call God has placed on your life? How might you need to adjust your "whatevers" to be in alignment with Philippians 4:8?
- (3) Start looking at the *specific* mission God has for you in this military life. 2 Corinthians 1:4 says that God "comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." You have a unique set of life experiences. Perhaps you have experienced a trial or challenge in your life that God is calling you to use as a basis to minister to others. Be praying this week for opportunities to use your experiences for His glory!

Week Two: Unmet Demands and Expectations

From "Intimate Allies: Protecting your Military Marriage"

Introduction:

Have participants describe what types of expectations and demands do people have in life, in relationships, and with God. Ask, What makes us expect and/or demand things?

Discussion:

It is very easy to equate the love of our husband and the expectations we have on him as needs. *Have a volunteer read "To love like Christ," on pages 54 in Faith Deployed...Again. Ask the following:*

What are some "needs" we have that we place on our husbands to meet? *(Possible Answers: Our emotional fulfillment, happiness, our wellbeing, our steadfastness, etc.)*

Which of these so called needs truly belong only to God? *(All of them.)*

What are some of the dangers of seeking the needs we have for our creator while expecting our earthly partners to meet them? *(Possible Answers: disappointment, resentment, bitterness, anger, etc.)*

Today, we are going to see that this expectation of a bridegroom to fulfill our most pressing of needs is not unique to just our day and time, but rather, women have been struggling with this since the beginning of time. Let's look at one such story.

We are going to be looking at the story of Leah, Rachel and Jacob. Jacob had fallen for a beautiful, young woman named Rachel. He had struck a deal with Rachel's father, Laban, that in exchange for seven years of work, Rachel would be given to Jacob as his bride. So, Jacob worked hard for seven years and at the end of the seven years, Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his much less attractive daughter, Leah. But, Jacob was not about to give up his dream quite yet, so he agreed to work for another seven years in exchange for Laban's daughter, Rachel. Ladies, you can imagine how ugly a situation like this could get. Two sisters, who have probably been in competition for most of their lives, married to the same man. This is where we are going to pick up with this story. *Have a volunteer read Genesis 29:31-30:24.*

Ask the following:

Were you able to keep up with all that family drama? Let's start from the beginning. In Genesis 29:31-34, what was it that Leah desired most of all? (*The love of her husband*)

Look at all the things Leah said after each child, "surely, my husband will love me now...", "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved...", and "now at last my husband will become attached to me." Is there any evidence that Leah's desire was fulfilled? Did Jacob ever love her the way she was yearning for? (*No.*)

Think about this in terms of your own marriage. What are some crazy things you've found yourself doing in order to get your husband's love or attachment? (*Allow for personal testimonies.*)

Do these things truly gain the kind of love we desire or do they only create bitterness and resentment? (*Allow for answers*)

How can these behaviors worsen during deployments or long separations? (*Allow for answers*)

It seems like in Genesis 29:35, Leah was starting to understand that she needed to change her focus from having her needs met from her husband to seeking her God to meet her needs. What was her response to her fourth son being born? ("*This time I will praise the Lord.*") Leah seemed to be making some very important headway and we could all benefit from her example in this verse. Instead of focusing on that which she did not have, she started **praising** God for what she did have. How can praising God for what He has given us help in our marriages? (*Possible answer: It focuses us on what He has given us and therefore, takes the focus off of the ways our husbands fall short or don't meet our needs. It inspires an attitude of gratitude rather than one of expectation and entitlement.*)

So often we as women have gripe sessions about our men. Let's have a praise session. Shout out some of the best things about your husbands. (*Allow for participants to share.*)

If only the story could have stopped there, we could have moved on and there wouldn't have been a sister cat fight. In Genesis 30, the focus turns from Leah to her beautiful, albeit green

with envy, sister, Rachel. What demand does Rachel put onto her husband in the very first verse of this chapter? (*"Give me children, or I'll die!"*)

Now it is very easy from our advanced cultural perspective to look at Rachel and laugh at her foolish demand. In our WebMD era, we know that a man cannot simply give a woman a child on a whim. Yet, let us not be too quick to judge our dear sister! We may be much more progressive in our understanding of the miracle of life, but we are right there next to Rachel in our lack of understanding that our husbands do not have the key to unlock our joy. We all have Rachel sized demands on our men. "Give me _____ or I'll die!" It may not be a baby, but it is something! Think about some general demands you place on your husbands. What are some of them? (*Possible answers: time, happiness, joy, money, "stuff", emotional support, "girlfriendship"-that is, expecting him to be like your best gal pal and getting upset when you find out he is not, etc.*)

What are some ways military life can complicate these demands? (*Possible answers: it can make them virtually impossible for him to fulfill, it can show us how far from fulfilling them he is, etc.*)

I wish this war of sisters ended, but as we have already read in Genesis 30:2-24, it doesn't. The sisters go back and forth, dragging in a few maidservants as collateral damage in their all out babygeddon. Jacob ended up with 13 children and 4 very bitter and angry women. More proof as to why marriage was meant to be between just one woman and one man. But, there are lessons to be learned from this story that go beyond that obvious one.

Look at Leah first. What are some things we can glean from her story in these verses? (*Allow for answers.*) One of the greatest lessons is to watch where we are looking. Throughout the story, we see Leah, thinking "if I just have one more son, then he will love me," while the whole time she was giving birth, her God was building the nation of Israel. The 12 sons that were bore from Leah, Rachel and the maidservants went on to become the nation through which Christ was to come! How much emotional turmoil would have been saved in Leah's life if she looked to her God as to what He was doing through her instead of what her man wasn't doing for her.

Now, let's look at Rachel. What can we learn from her? (*Allow for answers*) Rachel's life just shows the harm of unmet expectations in a marriage. She demanded her husband give her children, which he of course had no control in. Her unfulfilled commands created strife between her and her husband. It also created a very desperate move on her part, the giving of her maidservant to her husband. While we might not be throwing a maidservant into our marital bed, we may have our own desperate moves to get our needs met from our husband's. Add on to that a deployment or an intense training session and our marriages can be heading down a dangerous road.

Conclusion:

We all have a little bit of Leah or Rachel in us. Some of us are doing things in order to get the love or attention we so desire from our husbands. Some of us are demanding things that he will simply never be able to do for us. Either way, our focus is off. We are putting a human into a position that only the heavenly can hold. Start looking at your own marriage this week and how your Leah expectations or Rachel demands are causing your relationship to stumble.

Lifework

Unmet Demands and Expectations

From "Intimate Allies: Protecting your Military Marriage"

Scripture Memory Verse:

"This is what the LORD says: Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD." –Jeremiah 17:5 NIV

- (1) Take an honest inventory of yourself. How are you placing Leah expectations on your husband? What are you doing that says, "If I just do _____, then my husband will love me/pay attention to me/be what I need, etc? What kind of Rachel demands are you shouting at your spouse? How are you saying, "Give me _____ or I'll die"? If you get really brave, ask him what kinds of demands and expectations he feels as though you place on him. Just be ready to listen *calmly* and accept his feelings without becoming defensive.
- (2) Read, "Perfection in Marriage" on page 52 in *Faith Deployed...Again*. How might you be expecting or demanding perfection in your husband? In your marriage? In yourself? And how is that impacting your relationship? Do you need to repent and ask for forgiveness from your spouse? Do you need to take responsibility, like the author did, in your own life? How might you need to better demonstrate love?
- (3) Need to know how you *should* be acting in love and in marriage? Check out 1 Corinthians 13.

Week Three: More than Surviving

From "Tour of Duty: Overcoming Deployments and Other Separations"

Introduction:

Have participants break into small groups. Give each group a large sheet of paper and markers. Instruct them to list all the ways they might "survive" during a deployment. Have group members write ways they tend to just subsist. (Examples might be: "I never go to the grocery store, we just eat out," "I let kids watch a lot more TV than usual," etc.)

Discussion:

Have a volunteer read, "More than Surviving," on page 78 in Faith Deployed...Again. After reading, ask the following questions:

What is the difference between surviving and living? (Allow for answers. Possible answer: surviving is doing the minimum to remain alive whereas living has a depth and richness to it.)

Why do we often end up in "survival mode" during deployments? What are some things that can lead up to us getting into a cycle of merely surviving? (Allow for answers. Possible answers: fatigue, having to do everything on our own, loneliness, depression, isolation, weariness, etc.)

What keeps us in survival mode? (Allow for answers. Possible answers: not having enough time to recover between deployments or trainings, not having a support system in place, feeling as though we have to look and act strong, etc.)

The true root of "survival mode" deployments is distraction. Distraction has three definitions that all apply to us in our deployments. Listen to these defining words:

- To draw away or divert, as the mind or attention
- To disturb or trouble greatly in mind
- To provide a pleasant diversion for; amuse, entertain

Think about these definitions. So often, we find ourselves merely surviving because we are so distracted. The first definition says "to draw away or divert, as the mind or attention." How can

that kind of distraction lead to survival mode operating? (*Allow for answers. Possible answers: when we allow the "distraction" of deployment draw away or divert our mind and attention to things other than God, it is very easy to go into a mode of mere survival.*)

What about the next definition? How can distraction that "disturb[s] or trouble[s] in mind" cause survival mode mentalities? (*Allow for answers. Possible answer: when we allow the fears or troubling thoughts to take over, it can completely deplete us of our strength and energy and focus on God.*)

And finally, how can the last definition lead to survival mode? How can distractions that "provide a pleasant diversion for; amuse, entertain" lead us astray? (*Allow for answers. Possible answer: we can allow that temporary "fix" of amusement or entertainment in the form of shopping, mindless television, constant use of social network sites instead of real relationships with a support network or other "junk" to become a slow leak in our living.*)

We are going to look at a story of two women, whom we all have probably heard of. One was merely surviving and the other was truly living. Let's read Luke 10:38-42.

Many of us have heard this story over and over again. Perhaps some of you have even read books on how to become more like Mary instead of like her sister, Martha. But, let's look at this story with a fresh set of eyes and ears. Let's see if God has something new to reveal to us as to how this story can apply to our own lives during deployments.

Before we have a Martha bashing session, take a look at who was the one to actually open up her home for Jesus. (Martha, v. 38) So, the Son of God is coming over. Naturally, what would you all do to prepare for his arrival? (*Allow for answers. Possible answers: Cook, clean, light some candles, etc.*) We can't blame Martha. If Christ was coming over to my house in the flesh, I can't say that I too wouldn't be scrubbing my floors on my hands and knees. Look closely at verse 40. Someone reread those words: **But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.**

Think back to our three definitions. What kind of distracted was Martha? (*Allow for answers. She was mostly drawn away or diverted in mind or attention, but one could argue that she also was disturbed or troubled greatly in mind.*) She was diverted and drawn away by her "to do" list. Where was Mary's mind and attention? (*Focused on Jesus.*) Look at verse 41. What is Christ's response to Martha's annoyance that her sister won't help her? (*"You are worried and upset about many things,*

but only one thing is needed.”) What was that one thing that was needed? (To just sit and be in the presence of the Lord.)

Here is the fresh application just for us as military wives. Can someone please read Romans 8:28? Jesus has purpose in everything He does. There is no thing, big or small, that is without purpose from your creator. Deployments have just as much purpose for us as military wives, left on the home front, as they do for our husbands. God allowed the timing of deployment to not only be for our husband’s personal and spiritual growth and dependence on Him but also for ours. We get to have a season without our earthly bridegroom constantly in our presence. Lord willing, this allows us a time for us to cling even closer to our heavenly one. Deployment is an invitation for Jesus to come into your living room, your kitchen, your bedroom and to become, if He’s not already, your everything. He is giving you the chance to focus on the one thing. The only thing. Him.

Conclusion:

So here we are ladies. At a crossroads. The Son of Man is in our living room. We now have to choose. Do we sit at His feet and hear everything He has to say? Or do we busy ourselves with distractions? Do we live or do we survive? Think about this. How can we start looking at deployments in a new light? How can we allow God’s purpose for us in time of separation be revealed? How could that take us from survival mode into true living? *(Allow for ladies to reflect on these questions and share any thoughts they might have. If time permits, brainstorm what some possible general and specific purposes God might have for them during their current or upcoming deployment.)*

Lifework

More than Surviving

From "Tour of Duty: Overcoming Deployments and Other Separations"

Scripture Memory Verse:

"You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." – Luke 10:41 NIV

- (1) Look at your current deployment or past deployment. How are/have you been distracted? What is keeping you from focusing on the one thing Christ has for you? How is distraction keeping you in survival mode?
- (2) Read, "Buying Coffee" on page 84 of *Faith Deployed...Again*. What are some ways you can take shortcuts in order to focus on God's purpose for you during this deployment?
- (3) "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) So often, we can find ourselves in such a loss of life because we are not giving, only taking from those around us. Pray about how God may be calling you to *serve others* during deployment. Taking the focus off ourselves and our own situation can be a great remedy to mere survival and will give us a sense of purpose during separations.
- (4) Learn to sit at Jesus' feet. Find a quiet spot that will be the place you do that. Carve time out of your day where you get alone with Him and His word. Hire a babysitter for an hour if you cannot find the time. Look at your schedule and all the "distractions." Remove some of them if you need to!

Week Four: Do Not Fear

From "Soul Armor: Guarding against Spiritual Attacks"

Introduction:

Give each participant a small piece of paper. Have them write down their "craziest or funniest" fear. Have participants sit in a circle and pass the paper to their left. Take a few volunteers to act out the fear and have the rest of the group guess what the fear is.

Discussion:

The words, "Do not fear" or some variation of those words appear over and over again throughout the pages of scripture. Some say there are 365 instances, one for every day. It is one of the most oft repeated commands God gives. Do. NOT. Fear. Yet, the truth is, we do. And military life certainly gives us plenty of reasons to be afraid. While our civilian friends can pretend they have some sort of control over their life: in where they work, where they live, where they move; we military types KNOW we don't have any control in our lives.

Have a volunteer read, "Do Not Fear" on page 114 in Faith Deployed...Again. Ask the following:

What are some common fears we have as military wives? (Allow for answers.)

What are some ways we tend to deal with our fears? (Allow for answers.)

How can fear consume us? (Allow for answers.)

Today, we are going to learn about how Jesus faced and dealt with fear. For many of us, this will be a point of freedom. A chance to release our fears.

We are going to read Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. Gethsemane was an olive grove and its name literally means, "Olive press". Jesus was in His final hours. His death was looming just ahead of him. He is and was all God and all man, so he inevitably felt the emotions we might feel in that same situation: fear.

Have a volunteer read Mark 14:32-42. Ask the following:

Jesus was facing death shortly. What was his plan of action in verse 32? (Prayer)

How was Jesus feeling according to verse 33-34? (Distressed, troubled, overwhelmed, sorrowful)

So often, Christians seem to think that they cannot feel the emotions that come with scary situations. Yet, Christ did. However, he didn't allow His emotions to simply multiply into despair. What did He do in verse 35-36? *(He went further into the garden, fell on the ground and prayed to God to take this cup from him, if it was God's will. He also acknowledged God's strength and power.)*

What did Christ do yet again in verse 39? *(Prayed the same prayer)*

Look at what Christ did with His fears:

1. He shared them with God.
2. He asked God to not allow the circumstance that caused His fear to happen.
3. He gave a caveat: "yet not what I will, but what you will."

This is a great way for us as military spouses to approach God with our fears. We can share them with Him. "God, I am so afraid of losing my husband." We can ask God to keep our fear from happening. "Lord, please don't let him die during this deployment." But then, we have to give a caveat: "Yet not what I will, but what you will."

The truth is most of us stop at number two. We share our fears and then pray for God to help us avoid them at all costs. But since our original fall in another garden, pain and suffering has been a real part of life on this earth. This shouldn't propel us into more fear, but rather prove to us that we weren't meant for this place. God has something better, something perfect awaiting us and whatever pain or suffering we might endure here is just preparing us for the glorious riches of that life.

Is this a scary thing to pray? What makes adding, "Yet not what I will, but what you will" to our prayers about our fears so scary at times? *(Allow for answers. Possible answer: We fear God's will does not match with our will.)* What does that reveal to us about our ultimate thoughts about God? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: we don't fully trust Him, we think He is not in control, we don't truly grasp His goodness.)* Read Romans 8:28. How can this verse give us boldness in praying, "Yet not what I will, but what you will"? *(Allow for answers.)*

Fear is a natural part of life. Some fear is healthy, it alerts us of danger, it can give us awe and reverence for a Holy God. But, so often we as military wives get stuck in a rut of being consumed by the unhealthy fears. And rather than following Christ's example of sharing our

emotions with our Creator, asking for deliverance from the situation while also praying for God's will, not our own to be accomplished, we allow anxiety to overtake us.

Have the following verse references printed out on strips of paper. Break participants into smaller groups or partners. Have each group look up the Bible verses and ask the question, The Psalms include the entire breadth of human emotion. In them, we can find great solace from generations past whose feelings are still relevant. There is great information to be gained through these words. Based on these Psalms, what are some practical ways we can deal with our fears?

- Psalm 55:16-19 (*Possible answer: Be in continual prayer- "evening, morning, and noon I cry out in distress."*)
- Psalm 56 (*Possible answer: Trust in Him, turn to praise instead of fret- may include listening to praise music instead of the news, thanking God for the blessings instead of fearing the disasters, etc.*)
- Psalm 77:11-15 (*Possible answer: Make a list of all the ways God has worked in my life already*)
- Psalm 3 (*Possible answer: Know with confidence who your God is and how powerful He is through meditating on scripture*)
- Psalm 4 (*Possible answer: Find joy in your current circumstance. Find joy in being a child of the Most Holy of Holies.*)
- Psalm 42 (*Possible answer: Again, praising God during the storms of life. Also, sharing with God all your emotions, even those that may not fit into the "good Christian" mold.*)
- Psalm 27 (*Possible answer: Learn to focus on God, our "light and salvation", rather than our fears. Seek Him through our quiet time and prayer time.*)

Conclusion:

So often we forget the humanity of Christ. He experienced emotions, like we do. He experienced fear, like we do. Yet He was perfect in all His ways so we can seek to become more like Him through our example of how He handled his own humanity. What do you need to work on with your fears? Are you not sharing them with God? Are you not asking for His help? Are you not asking for His will? What are your fears revealing about your true thoughts towards God? These are some difficult questions but the answers will allow for freedom from the stronghold fear has in our lives!

Lifework

Do Not Fear

from "Soul Armor: Guarding Against Spiritual Attacks"

Scripture Memory Verse:

"Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." - Mark 14:36 NIV

- (1) Take a look at the prayers Christ made in Gethsemane again in Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46 and Matthew 26:46. What areas do you need to handle your fears more like Christ? Do you even share them with God or just with those around you? Have you asked for God to deliver you from your worst fears? Do you trust His will enough to ask Him to allow it to happen in your life? Get honest with Him.
- (2) Read, "Nightmares" on page 118 of *Faith Deployed...Again*. What are some practical things you need to do?
- (3) Create a ring of fear stoppers. Get a binding ring and some 3x5 cards. Start looking through scripture for verses that talk about fear and how to handle them. Do a search on a site like Biblegateway. Write the verses out completely on your cards with references. Punch a hole in the left hand corner and put the cards on a ring. Keep them in your purse or in a place you can access them easily.
- (4) Listen to one or all of these sermons about fear:
John Piper, Bethlehem Baptist:
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/fear-not-i-am-with-you-i-am-your-god>
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/anxieties-to-be-cast-not-carried>
Mark Driscoll, Mars Hill Church:
<http://marshill.com/media/pray-like-jesus/the-gethsemane-prayer>
Steven Furtick, Elevation Church:
<http://www.elevationchurch.org/sermons/treatment/part1>
Craig Groeschel, Life Church:
<http://www.lifechurch.tv/watch/hostage/2>

Week Five: Finding Roots

From "Stationed in Christ: Dwelling in the Lord, Near and Far"

Introduction:

Have participants make a list of every place they have ever lived (City, State/Country). Let ladies share how many places they have lived. Give a small prize to the most moves such as an address book or a set of blank note cards and stamps. Ask, What is the hardest part about moving in the military lifestyle? (Allow for answers.)

Discussion:

Have a volunteer read, "To be Rooted," on page 142 of Faith Deployed...Again. Ask the following:

How many of you desire to be "rooted" in a physical place?

How can that longing cause problems in our lives? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: it can make us want for something that we don't have or covet what others have, it can make us feel "in transition"-not plugging into a community or neighborhood because we don't feel as though we will be there long, it can make us feel unsettled, etc.)*

How can a focus on our earthly home keep us from focusing on our heavenly one? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: we can start to believe and live as though this place is the only one that matters.)*

If there was any Biblical example of dealing with moving around a lot, it can be seen in the story of the Israelites. Who can give us a recap of the Israelites story in Egypt and their search for "roots"? *(The Israelites were God's chosen people. They were captured by Egypt and held as slaves. Eventually, through Moses, God released the people from the hold of their captors. They were promised a land of "milk and honey." However, their own stubbornness and disobedience, led them on a wild goose chase through a dry desert land.)*

Today, we are going to look at what words God gave a new leader, Joshua, who was taking over after Moses death. Joshua was to lead the new generation of Israelites into the land their forefathers were promised. Finally, these wanderers would have a place to lay down roots. Finally, they could have a place to call home.

Have a volunteer read Joshua 1:1-18. Ask the following:

What emotions do you think the Israelites had about going to this new place? What fears might they have had? *(Allow for answers.)*

What does God say to Joshua as he prepares to go to a new home in verses 5-9? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: I will be with you. I will never leave or forsake you. Be strong and courageous. Meditate on my words. Don't be terrified. Don't be discouraged. I will be with you wherever you go.)*

How many times does God tell Joshua to be strong and courageous? *(3 times)* Why do you think God told Joshua to be strong and courageous so many times? *(Allow for answers. Possible answer: as humans, our natural tendency is fear when we face going to a new situation or place. God was trying to remind Joshua that he had nothing to fear because the God of the universe was going with him.)*

Let's reread verses 7-9 aloud again. What are some practical things we can take from this as we face a new land? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: Focus on God's word and His promises as we face a new place. Meditate on it, meaning commit His words not only to our mental memory but our heart's memory. Do not be fearful but rather courageous and remind ourselves constantly that God goes with us no matter where we go.)*

Here is a very important part to this story. What is Joshua's response in verse 16? *(Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.)*

Is that an easy or hard attitude to have? Why? *(Allow for answers.)*

So often, we look at the military as being in charge of our destiny and in control of our life. Yet, who is truly in charge? *(God.)* How could viewing an upcoming move as being the will of God change our heart and attitude towards it? *(Allow for answers.)*

The truth is that the Israelites didn't just enter the Promised Land without a fight. Because they had wandered so long and gotten so far off track, the land they were preparing to enter was already occupied. So many battles were required to finally be in

their land that God had for them. What might be some battles we might face as we enter the new lands God calls us into? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: not letting go of the land before it, comparing the two lands, refusing to get involved or meet new people, focusing on what you had before, being negative in thoughts or words about the new land, refusing to give the new place a chance, etc.)*

Read Joshua 13:1-7. Joshua spent his life battling for the Promised Land. Did he conquer every piece of property that was promised according to these verses? *(No.)* Was God done with him yet? *(No.)* Even though Joshua was aging, God still had areas for him to conquer. The same can be true for us. With each year that passes or each new move, we may think that we have conquered the things that keep us from entering our promised land: insecurities, fears, or walls of defense that we have created. Yet, each move is an opportunity to see some areas in our life that we need to conquer. How have you seen this to be true in your own experiences? *(Allow for answers.)*

What does the story of the Israelites tell us about the pursuit of “roots”? How easy is it going to be in this life? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: finding our “roots” may seem impossible because our true home, our true Promised Land is not in this life, but rather in our life after this place.)*

Conclusion:

So often our focus is set upon finding roots in this world that we can forget that our true home is not in this place. This is just a temporary home. Our true Promised Land awaits us after we leave this place. Everything here is “but a vapor.” How can that change our outlook in our moves? What opportunities to conquer things inside of us that are not of God does each new place afford us? Think about those things as you prepare to move to your next place!

Lifework

Finding Roots

From "Stationed in Christ: Dwelling in the Lord, Near and Far"

Scripture Memory Verse:

"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." - Joshua 1:7-9 NIV

- (1) Read, "Remember Me," on page 154 of *Faith Deployed...Again*. How has God been faithful to you in your past moves? Make a list of all the ways He has proven Himself faithful. How can that provide hope and promise for upcoming change of duty stations?
- (2) Take an honest look at your focus. Do you see this world as your permanent place of being or do you look to God's promise of the perfect home? Is your sense of stability, peace, and faith in a place that will disappear or in one that is eternal? How can this change in focus, change your life?
- (3) Look over God's words to Joshua again. *Be strong and very courageous. Obey my law. Meditate on it. Do what it says.* THEN, He says, they will be successful and prosperous wherever they go. Which of those areas do you need to work on in your own life? Strength and courage in Him? Obeying His commands? Meditating and studying His word? Or doing what it says? Focus on the areas you need improvement on and ask God to help you in them.

Week Six: Finding your Ministry

From "In God's Service: Living for the Lord"

Introduction:

Ask participants to define the word, "ministry." Have them shout out various ministries either in their local church or other ones they are familiar with. Ask the following:

What are some things that formal, organized ministries have or how are they organized? (*Allow for answers. Possible answers: leadership, volunteers, a mission or purpose, etc.*)

Discussion:

Have a volunteer read, "Finding your Ministry," on page 172 of Faith Deployed...Again. Ask the following:

What keeps us from ministering to others? (*Allow for answers. Possible answers: time restraints, feeling that we are not competent or that we lack the necessary skills, having children or other obligations, etc.*)

So often we think that we cannot be involved in ministry for a variety of reasons. Today, we are going to examine how Christ went about His ministry. *Have a volunteer read Matthew 4:12-25. Ask the following:*

Here is the beginning of Christ's ministry. Many of us assume his ministry was going on throughout his lifetime, and while he certainly ministered to people throughout his earthly days, this was the "official beginning." Christ wasn't exactly a spring chicken either. He was in his thirties before he began his actual calling. How can that give us hope when we feel as though we cannot get involved ministry because we've never done it before or we think we are too old or some other excuse? (*Allow for answers. Possible answer: It should encourage us that we can be used in our adulthood at any time.*)

What are the first words Jesus preaches in His ministry? (*Verse 17: Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is near.*) Why do you think these are the first recorded words of Christ's ministry? (*Allow for answers. Possible answers: These are the first words because they summarize Christ's entire mission*

and purpose in His ministry: to bring those who hear into repentance so that they can commune with their Creator.)

Look at verses 18-22, why do you think Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John were so quick to follow Jesus? *(Allow for answers. Answer: While we can't tell from these verses, in John 1:35-42 we see that Jesus had built a relationship with the men. They knew him. They had probably shared a meal with him.)*

Relationship is key to ministry. Jesus was all about building relationships. How might thinking about ministry as building relationships instead of something more traditional as serving in the nursery or teaching Bible study, change the perspective of someone who feels fearful or inadequate about "doing ministry"? *(Allow for answers. Possible answer: When we understand that ministry is building relationships, we can lift the burden of having to be "equipped" or "trained" in a certain way to be a part of the ministry of Christ. We just have to "be" with another.)*

According to verses 23-25, when did Jesus actually do his ministry? *(Answer: Along his journey. He didn't have a set of objectives and programs, He merely went to places where people were and shared the good news with them. He gave them his time, his ear to listen to their heartaches and concerns.)* What does this mean in terms of our own ministry? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: our ministry is all around us.)*

These are important things to consider when we look for our own special ministry that God has in store for us! First, our mission is the same as Christ's was: to bring people into the kingdom of God. Second, we cannot get others to follow Christ without building a relationship first. Finally, our ministry is done in our comings and goings.

Those are some "general" guidelines in regards to our ministry. Let's start finding some specifics. *Have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Ask the following:*

Who comforts us in all our troubles? *(God.)*

What are we supposed to do with that comfort? *(Comfort others.)*

Just by a show of hands, how many of you have endured some kind of suffering in your lifetime? *(Allow participants to raise hands.)* And how many of you found comfort in God during that time? *(Allow participants to raise hands.)*

Part of our life on earth involves suffering and troubles. We all experience them at some point. But, a life in Christ lets no suffering or pain go to waste. All things are used for the good of those who love Him. What are some troubles or sufferings you have endured that can point you to God's specific ministry He has for you? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: Military wife- the difficulties we face are opportunities to minister to other wives, Miscarriages/infertility, loss of a loved one or child, motherhood, wifeness, marital problems, etc.)*

Your experiences are your first clues as to how God wants to use you! But He doesn't stop there, He also gifted us in a unique way. Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:4-31.

According to these verses, which of the gifts are most important? *(They are all equally important and serve a unique purpose for the kingdom.)* What does that tell us about wishing we had another's gifting or not feeling as though God has gifted us as much as someone else? *(We shouldn't. We should realize that God uses us all in a special and unique way for His glory.)*

Who are our gifts meant for according to these verses? *(Others.)*

What are some unique gifts that you have that could be used in ministering for others or ways you've seen someone use a different gifting? *(Allow for answers.)*

Conclusion:

Our ministry is found in our day to day living. As military wives, as mothers, as daughters, as wives, as friends we are called to show Christ to those around us. God has allowed us to experience certain things so that we could provide comfort to others, either specifically in the way He comforted us or generally in just the fact that we have experienced pain and have experienced the comfort of our God. He also has uniquely gifted us to share that piece of ourselves for the common good. How can this take away our excuses for not being in "ministry"? How can this change our view of what "ministry" is?

Lifework

Finding your Ministry

From "In God's Service: Living for the Lord"

Scripture Memory Verse:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." – 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 NIV

- (1) Read, "An Ordinary Military Wife," on page 176 of *Faith Deployed...Again*. Take a look around you. Who is in need of your time and listening ear? Who may need a word of encouragement? How can you use your own struggles to bless another's life?
- (2) Do you ever wonder how exactly God has gifted you? Take a Spiritual Gifts assessment! Go to a search engine and look for a spiritual gifts test. Once you get the results, share them with a leader in your church or Bible study and ask them if there is a way you can use your gifts to serve others!
- (3) God reveals our ministry not only through our experiences and gifting but also in our passions. Make a list of things or causes that excite you. How might you be able to serve in those areas?
- (4) There is one often forgotten way God reveals to us when and where He wants us to serve...in our weaknesses! Sometimes, God calls us to serve in a way that takes us out of our comfort zone so that His power may be revealed. Have you been asked to take on a task in your group or church that scares you a bit? Pray and ask God if He is revealing a way He desires you to serve that will show others His strength!

Week Seven: Band of Sisters

From "Hope Front Hope: Moving Forward in God's Strength"

Introduction:

Have participants break into groups of two or three. If possible, create groups where people do not know one another as well. Give each group a sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Instruct the groups to write down everything they have in common. Give a time limit (5-10 minutes). Encourage the groups to go beyond the superficial (we are women, we are military wives, etc.) and go into the deep.

Discussion:

Have a volunteer read, "Band of Sisters" on page 228 of Faith Deployed...Again. Ask the following:

How do you feel when you meet a new military spouse? (Allow for answers.)

Do you feel as though your connections with fellow military wives are made more quickly or less quickly than when you were just a "civilian"? Why do you think that is? (Allow for answers.)

What keeps us from connecting to one another at times? (Allow for answers.) What are some barriers we might create that keeps us from authentic relationships with other military wives? (Allow for answers.)

There is no better example of the kind of community and relationships we are called to strive for than in the book of Acts. This book was written by Luke as an early record of the beginning Christian church. The way they lived should be such a model for us, especially in our military communities, where our needs are much more pronounced. Have a volunteer read Acts 2:42-47. Ask the following:

What were some of the things the beginning church did together according to verse 42? (Devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to breaking of bread, and to prayer.)

What were the results of their actions? (Everyone was filled with awe, many wonders and miraculous signs were done.)

What do the verses continue on to tell us about how they lived in community? (They sold possessions and gave to one another when they were in need, they met together daily, they ate and fellowshiped together gladly, praised God together.)

What was the greatest reward of their behavior in verse 47? *(The Lord added to the number daily of those being saved.)*

There is a lot we can take away from these verses. First of all, we need to devote ourselves as individuals and as a group, a community of believer, to the same things the church in Acts did:

The apostles' teaching: what was the apostles' teaching? *(Jesus' words, the story of Christ-his death and resurrection, the promises of God, etc.)* From a practical standpoint, how would devoting ourselves to the apostles' teaching look like in our own lives and in our own group? *(Allow for answers. Possible answers: personal quiet time-digging deeper in scripture, becoming a student of His word, as a group- Bible study together, holding one another accountable for going more in depth into scripture and in memorizing of scripture, etc.)*

They also fellowshiped together. What does this mean? *(Allow for answers. Fellowship is more than simply socializing. It has the purpose of deepening relationships. It allows for those in the group to grow together in a unique and special way. It involves more than surface "How are you"? and goes deep inside the heart of each member of the group.)* Practically, what does this mean for us as a group? How can we fellowship more or how do we already? *(Allow for answers.)*

The Acts Church also broke bread. What do you think this means? *(Allow for answers. Answer: "Breaking of bread" refers to communion, which is the remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection.)* How could we show remembrance of what Christ did for us as a group? *(Allow for answers.)*

Finally, they dedicated themselves to prayer. How can we as a group do that? *(Allow for answers. Suggestions: take prayer requests at each meeting, break into small groups and pray for one another, have prayer partners that check on one another throughout the week and pray, etc.)*

We also see that they took care of one another's practical needs. What are some ways we can do that or have done that in the past? *(Allow for answers. Suggestions: If your group is part of a local body of believers, see if you can organize a group to help military wives with practical needs during husband's deployment such as mowing the lawn, basic home repairs, car help, etc. Or ask the husbands that are not currently deployed to help.)*

How often did they meet together? (*Daily.*) What are some things they did together? (*Ate meals, met in the temple courts, praised God together.*) In our busy lives, this can seem like an impossibility-to meet together daily, but what are some ways we could meet together more often and what are some things that we could do together to be like the Acts church? (*Allow for answers.*)

Do you think they ever fought or do you think they worked together? How could they meet together daily without bickering or complaining? (*Allow for answers. Possible answer: They were focused on something bigger than themselves, which probably led to more unity and peace than we find in our communities today. So often our focus is: what am I going to get out of this group? However, the church in Acts was much more focused on what they could give to one another.*)

How many of you long for a community like this? One that meets the needs of those within it. One that is dedicated to praying for one another, learning more about God's word, fellowshiping together. The reward is great. A community that grows in believers. The kingdom of God glorified. However, in our broken, sinful world, this kind of community can be hard to find. Why do you think that is true? (*Allow for answers. Possible answers: people's sins and failures often come into the group, we can betray one another or hurt one another which can lead to walls being built around our hearts, etc.*)

Have a volunteer read Psalm 41:9. What was David feeling in this moment? (*Alone and betrayed by a close friend.*) It is true that we can be betrayed or hurt at times by others. But if we allow ourselves to show grace and forgiveness to one another in the same way Christ has shown it to us, we will see that we can enjoy fellowship and friendship in a new way. What did Solomon discover about the purpose of friendship in Ecclesiastes 4:8-12? (*Have a volunteer read those verses. Allow for answers. Two are better than one because we can help one another when we are down. It is harder to break more than one. Together, we can strengthen one another.*)

Conclusion:

What an incredible community of believers that beginning church in the book of Acts must have been! What is even more incredible is that we, thousands of years later, have the opportunity to recreate such an awesome group. Let's focus on that this week. Let's look for ways we can devote ourselves to studying God's word alone and together, how we can fellowship more,

how we can reflect on what Christ did for us, how we can pray for one another and how we can meet one another's practical needs. What do you think this would do for our group? How might it change our weekly attendance? What types of wonders might we see?

Lifework

Band of Sisters

From "Hope Front Hope: Moving forward in God's Strength"

Scripture Memory Verse:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NIV

- (1) Read, "Turtle Shells" on page 202 of *Faith Deployed...Again*. How have you been living in a turtle shell? Or do you know someone who is? What can you do to encourage yourself or someone else to come out of the shell and into community?
- (2) Reread Acts 2:42-47. What role do you need to play in creating an Acts like environment with your group? Have you devoted yourself to the study of God's word? To fellowshiping with other ladies? To remembering what Christ has done for you? To prayer? Which areas do you need to work on as an individual? What about your group?
- (3) Plan an "Acts" meal. Pick a date. Gather your group. Spend the time talking about the things they might have talked about in the book of Acts: prayer requests, testimonies of God's goodness or ways He has been acting in your life, joys and blessings, what members are learning in God's word, etc. If your Acts meal is a success, make it a regular occurrence!
- (4) If you haven't already, start having an "Acts" mentality when it comes to this group. Look for ways you can *serve* rather than ways you need to be served. Volunteer to do something for the group or head up an area. See how that deepens your sense of feeling a part of the group and how it creates a stronger community!

About the Author



Catherine Fitzgerald has been married to her husband, Rick, a U.S. Marine pilot, for six years. She has a bachelor of arts in psychology from North Carolina State University and teaching certification from Meredith College, both in Raleigh, N.C. They currently reside outside of Wilmington, N.C., with their four-year-old daughter, Grace.

Catherine has a heart for military spouses and currently leads a ministry at her church to serve the needs of those women and their families in her community. When she is not chasing Grace around, she works from home part-time and writes for her blog and other sites, including www.faithdeployed.com. Her writing has also been published in *P31 Woman Magazine*. God is continuing to reveal to her both the challenges and blessings of being married to a man in uniform and how He can use the least of us for His work! [*For more about Catherine, read an interview with her here.*](#)