

J O U R N E Y O F A M I L I T A R Y W I F E

Deployed Steps of Hope
in Times of Uncertainty

**SMALL GROUP
STUDY GUIDE**

(JOURNEY 2)

He's Home! Time for Grateful Celebration (Week 1)

Waypoints 1–5

Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

Where shall we go?

Turn to a friend and describe the last “celebration” you planned or attended.

Read the map

What are some of the reasons for celebration found in the first three chapters of Ezra?

Take time to explore

Why would the returning Jews celebrate before the temple was finished?

How can celebrating along the way aid in the process of reintegration?

What are some ways you can incorporate joy and gratitude into your reintegration process to celebrate steps in the right direction?

What positive results can come from such celebrations?

Travelogue

Read and underline anything that stands out to you.

Shawna described how her family celebrated R&R and reintegration in this manner: “Nothing sweeter for us than the ‘reintegration.’ The kids went to school but dad showed up during lunchtime. Of course, he was the hero! For R&R we shared him one night and had all his friends come by the house for a catered drop in. It was so fun having our friends come by to see him and cheer us on for the last stretch. Sweet memories!”

For Rachel, observing everyday things became celebratory for her and her husband during their reintegration. She told us, “Keep the extended family and big vacation plans on hold for a little while. All my guy wanted was to be home and get back to the normal, everyday things of life.”

Also, if you do more than one deployment, don't expect each time to be the same. Deployment number 1 reintegration was totally different from deployment number 2 reintegration ... one was easy breezy, and one was a little tougher."

Pack your bags

What is one thing you can do this week to celebrate your progress during your reintegration? Write it in the space below.

He's Home! Time for Realistic Expectation (Week 2)

Waypoints 6–10

Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

Where shall we go?

Listen to the story “That’s Not What I Expected!”

Have you ever experienced something beyond your expectations? Describe.

Read the map

What emotions are evident in Ezra 3:12–13 as the returning Jews looked upon the completed foundation?

What was the reason for the weeping?

What brought discouragement and led to unmet expectations in Ezra 4:21?

Take time to explore

Combining elements from contrasting sources creates a “mash-up.” How would you describe reintegration “mash-up?”

- In what ways have you experienced reintegration mash-up?
- What do such conflicting emotions have to do with expectations?
- How can you prepare yourself for or manage such conflicting emotions?

Travelogue

Read these comments from fellow military wives about expectations. Underline anything that stands out to you.

Amanda offered this advice on communication after deployment: “Make sure you communicate your expectations about everything and anything you can think of! Make a list if need be and really just be honest! There is nothing worse than all the unspoken expectations ruining a reunion blessing!”

Monica said, “Don’t expect too much right away. Give yourself a few weeks to reacquaint.”

Michele shared that reintegration “can be a slow process. Give you, him, and the kids a little extra grace for as long as necessary. Everyone changes when the soldier is absent and those changes occurred over time. It will take time to change back or adjust to the new norm.”

What are your observations?

Pack your bags

Can you identify an unrealistic expectation for reintegration that you will relinquish? Write it in the space below.

He's Home! Time for Careful Observation (Week 3)

Waypoints 11–15

Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

Where shall we go?

Have fun with the Powers of Observation Game!

Read the map

Describe the scene in Ezra 9:5.

If you were observing Ezra, what might you think?

What was the cause of Ezra's behavior?

What does Ezra's posture communicate?

Take time to explore

Generally, how do you see military families dealing with "heavy" reintegration issues?

Do you feel there is a stigma attached to seeking help for deployment/reintegration issues? Why or why not?

Combat Trauma is a "heavy" issue military families may face. If this is you, do not minimize or ignore the need for help. God wants to help you and your husband find help and healing.*

What were positive things Ezra did to aid a successful return to Jerusalem (reintegration)?

* For more in-depth study on the topic of trauma from war *When War Comes Home: Christ-Centered Healing for Wives of Combat Veterans* by Chris Adsit, Rahnella Adsit, and Marshelle Carter Wadell (Newport News, VA: Military Ministry Press, 2008).

Travelogue

Read and underline anything that stands out to you:

On the topic of seeking help, Aimee reported, “The best advice I got following our first deployment was from a military chaplain who said, ‘The first few days and weeks are a glorious honeymoon but then the work of finding your new normal begins and that can be challenging. If you are six to eight weeks into reintegration and still do not feel like you’re finding common ground again, seek out help.’ So thankful for that Chaplain’s advice—with a timeline!”

Rachel also commented, “Understand that it takes a while to find your relationship “norm” again. Also, depending on what your spouse may have experienced during deployment, there will be an emotional and psychological transition period for them. It’s normal. Don’t overreact—be gracious and open to communication without being forceful. Try to understand the trauma.”

What are your thoughts?

Pack your bags

List your top three concerns about your family’s reintegration. What is one action step you can take for each concern?

He's Home! Time for Honest Communication (Week 4)

Waypoints 16–20

Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

Where shall we go?

You'll get instructions from your facilitator. Will you be a talker or a listener?

Read the map

What characteristics of healthy communication do you see in Nehemiah 1:1–4?

What characteristics of healthy communication do you see in Nehemiah 2:1–5?

What characteristics of healthy communication do you see in Nehemiah 2:11–16?

Take time to explore

What do these Scriptures teach about discretion and communication?

- Proverbs 11:22
- Proverbs 2:11
- Proverbs 21:23
- 1 Corinthians 13:11
- Psalm 19:14

Travelogue

When asked about communication and reintegration, a military wife responded: “It really is a different process for each person, and for each time. After the first deployment, we just picked up right where we left off. The second deployment, I was surprised, was not so easy. My husband had many temper flare-ups. He seemed impatient with our kids and me. That is so unlike my kind, easygoing husband. *We kept talking, and that was the key.* After several months, things fell back into their natural rhythm.”

Can you relate? How?

Pack your bags

How would you rate your communication in these areas?

(1) poor (2) fair, (3) good (4) very good (5) excellent

- I am careful to listen.
- I listen with empathy.
- I respond with honesty.
- I use discretion with others and on social media.

What is one step you can take this week to improve communication in one of these areas?

He's Home! Time for Focused Determination (Week 5)

Waypoints 21–25

Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

Where shall we go?

Share with a partner something you are determined to do in your lifetime.

Read the map

Join with a partner and look at the following verses in Nehemiah. Report what you discover about the perseverance and dedication of Nehemiah, the builders, or the enemies.

- Nehemiah 4:6
- Nehemiah 4:15–17
- Nehemiah 4:21
- Nehemiah 5:16
- Nehemiah 6:1–4

Take time to explore

What can you learn from Nehemiah's strategy for completing God's work in Nehemiah 4:9, 14, and 20?

What do you learn about priorities from Nehemiah's example?

What are things that can weaken your determination to have a successful reintegration?

What lesson on determination do you find in Colossians 1:11?

Travelogue

Katie is a determined military wife. When reflecting on reintegration she wrote: “Don’t box yourself into a timeline for reintegration. There are times when it goes quickly and smoothly and then there are times that it can be quite long and unpredictable. It is *not* a linear process. It can be quite messy. It is okay to ask for outside help when things just do not seem to be progressing. Prayer, patience, and perseverance!”

Pack your bags

Write one word to describe how you see God’s power working in your life to help you persevere and remain dedicated to finding a new normal after deployment.

What challenges your determination to have a successful reintegration?

Finish this sentence: With God’s help I determine to _____!

He's Home! Time for Joyful Dedication (Week 6)

Waypoints 26–30

Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

Where shall we go?

What are items you consider symbols of dedication?

Read the map

What commitment did the residents of Jerusalem make to God?

- Nehemiah 10:28, 30
- Nehemiah 10:29
- Nehemiah 10:31
- Nehemiah 10:39

Take time to explore

What are the benefits of signing a covenant agreement?

In a small group or pair, create a list of activities or actions you and/or your family can do to demonstrate your dedication to one another and to God.

Travelogue

What word of advice and wisdom from your reintegration journey would you offer another military wife?

Pack your bags

Dedication starts in the heart, but we carry it out with action. Consider an activity or action that will be symbolic of your renewed dedication to your marriage, your family, and God in this season of reintegration. Choose one thing from the list of ideas created by the group to incorporate into your family this week.