

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

Dedicated Steps of Faith in God's Plan

SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE

(JOURNEY 2)

A Calling and a Mission (Week 1)

Waypoints 1–5

Materials needed

- Whiteboard/markers
- Object to represent your “mission”

Stop and get your bearings (5 minutes)

- Begin the class with prayer.
- Ask if anyone would like to share a highlight from the readings of the past week.

Where shall we go? (10 minutes)

- *Instruct the group:* Choose an object nearby (something in your purse, on your person, in the room) that represents your “mission.” Find a partner and share with her what you chose and why you chose the object.
- Invite a few people to share the objects that represent their mission.
- What did you learn this week in the Gospel according to Mark about being *on mission*?

Read the map (15 minutes)

Mark is a book of action. The author, believed to be John Mark, was not concerned so much with chronology as with the actions of Jesus. Most biblical scholars agree that Mark was the first New Testament Gospel written. The book reads like an eyewitness account, most likely that of the apostle Peter, transcribed by Mark. Scholars believe Matthew and Luke used Mark’s writing as a source when they wrote their own Gospels.¹

The journey theme is evident in Mark as Jesus and his disciples are constantly on the move. The scene changes frequently as we follow Jesus’s expedition from his baptism to the cross.

Mark wrote his Gospel during a time of dramatic social turmoil throughout the Jewish world. Life was especially tough for those who chose to follow Christ. Suffering and martyrdom were characteristic of the era.² Mark’s focus on the identity of Jesus as the Son of God fortified believers who were suffering. The Gospel strengthened their faith, made clear the dangers and pitfalls that would come along the way, and also reminded a scattered and transient audience of the hope Jesus offers in the coming of the kingdom of heaven.

How does the occasion and purpose of the Gospel according to Mark make a study of this book relevant today? Does anything make it especially relevant to a military spouse?

Mark’s Gospel focuses on who Jesus is, and how we should respond to him.³ The message of the book is that we are not just to hear about the kingdom of God, Jesus also calls us to respond to his message. Mark shows Jesus and the disciples on a mission. They went from place to place with determination

¹ Mary Ann Beavis, *Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament: Mark* (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI, 2011), 4.

² Clinton E. Garland, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Commentary: Mark* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 2007), 3.

³ Donald English, *The Message of Mark: The Bible Speaks Today* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 1992), 17.

and purpose. Along the way, Jesus trained his disciples and others on what it meant to follow him. Over time, the disciples learned that following Jesus was not about shows of great power, but in daily—sometimes costly—obedience.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

What do these three passages teach about calling and discipleship? (Assign one passage to a small group and have each group report their discovery.)

- Mark 1:16–20
- Mark 3:13–19
- Mark 6:7–13

What is the connection between *calling* and *mission*?

Read Janna’s story and underline anything that stands out to you.

At 19 years of age, Janna married Billy, her high school sweetheart. Soon after the wedding, Billy’s employer laid him off from work and he could not find another job. One day, in desperation, Billy found the recruiting office and signed up to join the military. Billy’s first assignment, following his initial training, was to a unit that deployed almost immediately after signing in to his duty station. Now, Janna lives in a state far away from home as she navigates a strange culture called the military. Janna is on her own to find her way. She does not have a church background, so church is not a place she will likely look to fill the void of her life.

Who will be the hands, feet, and voice for Jesus to the Jannas that make up the U.S. military population? If you are a Christ-follower, *you* are the hands, feet, and voice for Jesus wherever you find yourself.

What statements in this story resonate with you? Why?

What does it mean to you to be *called by God*?

Read the following quote by Os Guinness from his book *The Call*:

“Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.”⁴

What are your thoughts on this definition of calling?

People often think of calling only as something we do for God. A person’s “calling” is attached to a title like pastor or missionary. The message of Mark’s Gospel is that our calling is not to do something or to go somewhere; rather we are called to Someone.

“We are not called first to special work, but to God.”

Travelogue (5 minutes)

When asked if Audrey viewed military life as a calling she said: “You bet! The military has truly been my mission field. When I came to the Lord in junior high school, I thought I had to be a foreign

4 Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003).

missionary. However, when I earned a full ROTC scholarship for college, I realized that God was pointing me towards the very specific mission field of the military. That only continued to hold true when I transitioned from active duty personnel to active duty military wife!”

Shellie was not so quick to view military life with a sense of calling. “I did not see being a military spouse as a calling in the beginning. That sense grew over time as the burden or weight (in a good sense) for my family and women associated with the military increased. As I grew in the knowledge of The Lord, the weight of the calling—to serve my husband, my children, soldiers, spouses, and families grew. What an incredible privilege and I am deeply grateful.”

Pack your bags (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes to discuss the following:

- What difference might it make in your attitude if you saw military life as a “calling”?
- What difference might it make in your service in your military community if you viewed each assignment as your mission field?

On Mission in Ordinary Time (Week 2)

Waypoints 6–10

Materials needed

- Whiteboard/marker

Stop and get your bearings (5 minutes)

- Begin class with prayer.
- Ask if anyone would like to share a highlight from the readings of the past week.

Where shall we go? (10 minutes)

- Instruct the group: Turn to a partner and in 30 seconds describe an ordinary day in your life.
- Allow time for a few people to share their response.

Read the map (15 minutes)

Take time to discuss:

- What makes a day ordinary?
- How do we minimize ordinary days, or places?
- Who were the ordinary people you read about this week?
- How did God use these ordinary people?
- Read Acts 4:13. Why did Peter and John surprise people?
- What did the people recognize about Peter and John?
- How can we apply this experience to our own ordinary lives?
- What does 2 Corinthians 4:7 have to say about being ordinary?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

How do people use ordinary as an excuse for not serving God?

The disciples were socially insignificant—ordinary folks who would fail and disappoint Jesus, but their role was crucial to the success of his mission. How was this so?

What are your thoughts or emotions when you hear that your role is no less crucial to the mission of Jesus than that of the disciples?

The Bible highlights stories of God using ordinary people in extraordinary ways as a testimony of his grace and power. To be on mission for God is to allow this grace and power to be evident in the ordinary and mundane events of life. Ours is not a faith to pull out during trials and struggles. Ours is a faith that is fashioned in the daily, ordinary events of life.

What might it look like to allow God’s “grace and power to be evident in the ordinary and mundane events of life?”

Travelogue (5 minutes)

Veteran military wife Merial says military life was an extraordinary adventure. “For me the military was an unexpected fulfillment of a desire I harbored since childhood. My life was very ordinary. I didn’t realize how much I longed to be ‘special’ until I had the privileges that accompanied a military ID card. Military life gave me a sense of belonging to something special. Our family viewed the military journey as more than just my husband’s calling—this was a family calling. The ‘we’re all in this together’ really helped the children understand and accept the sacrifices we all made. For us, the Lord entwined military, ministry, and mission to make a great life!”

What can you learn from Merial’s story?

Pack your bags (10 minutes)

Read this paraphrase of Romans 12:1–2.

So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. (Romans 12:1–2, *The Message*)

From this passage, what do you see as the dangers of “ordinary” days? What are the opportunities? What is one thing you look at as a part of your ordinary day that could become an opportunity for God to use you?

To Choose or Not to Choose God's Mission (Week 3)

Waypoints 11–15

Materials needed

- Whiteboard/markers
- Two different types of candy

Stop and get your bearings (5 minutes)

- Begin class with prayer.
- Ask if anyone would like to share a highlight from the readings of the past week

Where shall we go? (5 minutes)

- Provide two different types of candy and ask each woman to choose one piece.
- Instruct the women to turn to another person and explain why they chose the candy they picked. After a few minutes, invite a few volunteers to share their response.

Read the map (15 minutes)

What kind of choices did you read about this week?

- Matthew chose to follow Jesus (Waypoint 11)
- Jesus chose to eat and fellowship with sinners (Waypoint 12)
- Listeners chose to be challenged or changed (Waypoint 13)
- The disciples chose to fear instead of trust (Waypoint 14)
- Bystanders chose to laugh or serve (Waypoint 15)

Did any one of these stories of choice resonate with you? Why?

We are going to look at a passage you did not cover in a Waypoint. It is foundational to a study of being dedicated to God's mission. Read Mark 3:13–19.

What do you see happening?

The word “call” in verse 13 means to summons or to select.

How did those Jesus called respond?

The phrase “came to him” literally means to come away and indicates these followers chose to leave their former way of life. They chose to make Jesus their single focus.

Jesus purpose for calling the Twelve was two-fold:

- They were to be with Jesus.
- They were to be sent on mission for Jesus

Jesus chose his disciples not just to hang out with him, but also to follow him and share in the challenges that came with ministry. Jesus then commissioned them to extend his ministry. They were to preach the message of reconciliation with God through Christ and fight against the power of evil.

Jesus did not choose them for this mission because of their strength and perfection. The disciples sometimes made poor choices and showed weak faith as they set out on the mission to follow Christ. What can we learn about following Christ from this story?

Take time to explore (20 minutes)

The most important choice you can make is to say yes when Jesus calls your name.

In small groups of no more than four people, read the following Scriptures and discuss what you discover. After 5–7 minutes, invite the groups to share their findings.

- John 15:16
- 1 Corinthians 1:26–31
- 2 Corinthians 12:9

Ask one or two women to be prepared to share a three-minute testimony about how they became a Christ follower.

Why is being able to tell your story about following Christ important?

Think about what you would say if you were to tell your story. A simple outline to follow is:

- What was your life before you knew Christ?
- How did you come to know Christ?
- What changes has Christ made in your life?

Travelogue (5 minutes)

God used military wives to draw Martha's heart back to Jesus. "I was a lonely, stressed out young mom, far away from home. I wandered into a chapel Bible study that advertised free childcare. There I heard stories of God's faithfulness. There I watched women encourage one another in their struggles. There I encountered a personal Savior who cared about me, invited me on mission, and I said yes!"

What can we learn from Martha's story?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul."

(Psalm 66:16)

Read this psalm and invite the women to speak out short phrases of "what he has done" for them.

Rest and Training for the Mission (Week 4)

Waypoints 16–20

Materials needed

- Whiteboard/marker
- Alarm clock
- Cell phone
- Package of coffee or anything that might symbolize lack of sleep/rest

Stop and get your bearings (5 minutes)

- Begin class with prayer.
- Ask if anyone would like to share a highlight from the readings of the past week.

Where shall we go? (10 minutes)

- Instruct the group: What is your idea of a restful morning? Share your thoughts with one other person.
- Invite a few responses from the group.
- Point to items you have brought that symbolize lack of rest.
- What do all these things have in common?
- What are the challenges you have in making time to rest?

Read the map (10 minutes)

Jesus called twelve disciples to receive personal instruction and training. In spite of their limitations, Jesus gave them the opportunity to put their training into practice.

Describe the situation in Mark 6:7–13.

Read the follow-up of this story in Mark 6:30–31.

The phrase “to rest for awhile” implies the need the disciples had to recuperate from their mission. This call to rest is unique to Mark’s gospel and expresses his concern for his disciples who had been so preoccupied with the coming and going of the people that they could not even find time to eat.

Learning to rest was part of the training for being a disciple of Jesus. They were weary from their mission trip. No doubt, there were people who needed them, but now they were in need.

Read the following quote and underline anything that stands out to you:

Jesus reminded them of their frailty and humanity. They had been used. They were excited. They were also probably tired. Jesus helped them to face their humanity without being ashamed of it. He seemed to have resources hidden from them, as the feeding of the crowd and the walking on the water were to show. They were not to imagine that they could keep going endlessly. They needed quiet, and re-creation, and more opportunities to learn. So do we.

Ask: What did you underline and why?

In small groups of no more than four people look up these Scriptures and discuss what you glean about mission and rest.

- Matthew 14:13
- Matthew 15:21
- Mark 3:7
- Mark 3:20
- Luke 5:16

Allow time for the groups to briefly share their discoveries.

Take time to explore (20 minutes)

What do you learn about rest from Isaiah 28:12? Rest is a choice.

Margaret Feinberg writes in her book *Finding Rest in Him*:

“Rest does something powerful within our souls. When we stop, we are in a better position to allow God to move in our lives. Rest is a physical reminder that we are not in control of everything and, at the end of the day; we are not the ones who have to hold it all together. That is God’s job. Rest reminds us of our place, not just in life, but in him.”

Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

What are unhealthy choices people make when they do not get enough rest?

What are the benefits of rest?

What might make rest a problem for military wives?

What do rest and training have to do with the effectiveness of living on mission for God?

Travelogue (5 minutes)

During her husband’s deployment, Patti struggled with being able to rest. “My greatest challenge was taking time for myself. For some reason I could hardly get in bed before midnight no matter what, but had to still get up very early. I got very little sleep, ate a lot of chocolate, drank a lot of coffee, and always felt tired.”

Patti was open to learning a lesson about rest. She reports, “I started going to the gym. I got involved in a Bible study with other wives in the unit. I took more time to rest. I found when I made time to get the rest I needed it affected every other area of my life. I realized that the self-care I incorporated into my routine is something that was my responsibility, not a luxury.”

Do you relate to Patti’s story?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

In Mark 6:31 Jesus told his disciples to “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.”

What makes this a challenge for you?

What is one thing you can do to make it happen this week?

Mission Interrupted (Week 5)

Waypoints 21–25

Materials needed

- Whiteboard/markers

Stop and get your bearings (10 minutes)

- Begin class with prayer.
- Ask if anyone would like to share a highlight from the readings of the past week

Where shall we go? (10 minutes)

Begin the session by playing the “Interruption Game.” One woman begins by standing up and introducing herself to the group. The moment one of the other women has something in common with the speaker, she stands up, interrupts the speaker, and begins introducing herself. The interruptions continue until everyone in the room has had a chance to speak.

- What is your usual response to interruptions?
- How did you feel when someone interrupted you during your introduction?
- What are the typical emotions you feel when someone or something interrupts your schedule?

Read the map (15 minutes)

The journeys of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark almost read like the Interruption Game.

What were some of the interruptions you read about this week in chapter 10?

- A man who wanted eternal life (Mark 10:17–22)
- Two brothers who wanted status in Jesus’ coming kingdom (Mark 10:35–45)
- A blind beggar who asked for mercy (Mark 10:46–52)

Those interruptions were in one chapter alone!

In small groups of no more than four people look at a few of the interruptions to Jesus’s schedule found in Mark’s Gospel and note your observations.

- Mark 1:35–39
- Mark 2:1–12
- Mark 5:22–24
- Mark 5:25–34
- Mark 6:33–37

What did you observe about the interruptions that Jesus experienced?

In all of these situations, Jesus responded with compassion and patience. He looked at each circumstance as an opportunity to demonstrate God’s power.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

What might be the most visible symbol of interruption in our culture today? *Cell phones!*

How has the invention of the cell phone made interruptions acceptable?

Read the following quote by Mark Buchanan from his article “A Theology of Interruption.” Underline anything that stands out to you.

We have placed such a high value on convenience and efficiency that any interruption—a traffic obstruction, a bad Internet connection, a sick child, a flat tire, a phone call when you’re in the middle of something—is seen almost as a personal affront. My habitual thought at such moments—and sometimes what rushes from my lips—is “Why me? Why this? Why now?”

Another word for that is whining...

It happens so often in the Bible, it starts to look like interruptions are anything but. They bear uncanny resemblance to God-appointments, holy ambushes. The mess of human efforts and schemes, it appears, is continually overridden by divine choreography. God hides in the seeming randomness of things. God lurks in the inconvenience of the unplanned. God skulks in the surprise of the unexpected.⁵

What are your thoughts?

Travelogue (5 minutes)

In Waypoint 24 you read about the sign hanging in Gwen’s kitchen: Interruptions *are* my ministry!

Gwen does not hang a sign, she lives the message. Gwen is a retired military wife who is still active in mentoring young military wives to be disciples of Jesus. Her life is one of availability as she seeks to meet the needs of those around her.

The sign in her kitchen has roots in a story told by theologian Henri Nouwen.

A few years ago, I met an old professor at the University of Notre Dame. Looking back on his long life of teaching, he said with a funny twinkle in his eyes: ‘I have always been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I slowly discovered that my interruptions were my work.’ This is the great conversation in life: to recognize and believe that the many unexpected events are not just disturbing interruptions of our projects, but the way in which God molds our hearts and prepares us for his return.⁶

Do you see interruptions as a tool God uses to mold our hearts and prepare us for his return?

Pack your bags

How would your view of military life change if you viewed the interruptions it brought as part of God’s mission for you?

5 <http://markbuchanan.net/2012/10/13/a-theology-of-interruptions/>

6 Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Ave Maria Press: Notre Dame, IN, 1974), 56.

The Two Sides of Mission (Week 6)

Waypoints 26–30

Materials needed

- White chart/markers
- Large chart paper for T-chart/Markers for chart
- Tape to affix charts to wall

Stop and get your bearings (10 minutes)

- Begin class with prayer.
- Ask if anyone would like to share a highlight from the readings of the past week

Where shall we go? (10 minutes)

- Instruct the group: Turn to someone close by and answer this question: What would you say is your main mission to accomplish today?
- Allow time for a few people to share their mission for today.
- For the past six weeks, we have been discussing what it means when God calls us to carry out his mission in the world. What are some of the things you have learned about mission and calling from the personal Waypoint readings and the group Bible study?

Read the map (15 minutes)

Read Mark 12:28–34

What are the details you notice about this encounter? A scribe approached Jesus individually. The man is not sarcastic or hostile. He was listening to what Jesus was saying to the other scribes. He was truly interested in what Jesus had to say.

The word the scribe used to ask Jesus about the most important commandment is the Hebrew word *protos*, the root for the English word protocol. What does protocol mean in the military? The scribe asked Jesus which commandment he thought would take precedence over the others. He was not asking Jesus to rank the commandments in order, but which one carried more weight.

Jesus response linked two passages from the Old Testament law in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18. In his response, Jesus did not minimize any of the Ten Commandments; rather, he summarized them. The first four commandments have to do with loving God and the next six correspond to loving others.

Read Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18.

In the Jewish religion Deuteronomy 6:4–5 is called the Shema. Shema is the Hebrew word for hear. In the biblical context, it means to hear in such a way that you follow through with action. It is a prayer that was and is still prayed daily by faithful Jews.

Leviticus 19:18 is the source of the second commandment Jesus gave to the scribe. What word ties this scripture to Deuteronomy 6:4–5? The word love.

How do these scriptures from 1 John affirm the connection of loving God and loving our neighbor?

- 1 John 2:9–11
- 1 John 3:15
- 1 John 4:20

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

In a small group of three or four people, create a T-chart with the label LOVE for GOD on one side and LOVE for NEIGHBOR on the other side. List the ways you see these two missions carried out in these scriptures: Mark 10:13–16; Mark 10:32–34; Mark 10:41–45; Mark 11:22–25; Mark 12:41–44; Mark 14:3–9.

Invite the women to post their charts and share their findings. Under LOVE for GOD, the answers may include: the widow who gave her coins, the woman who poured perfume on the feet of Jesus. Under LOVE for NEIGHBOR, the answers may include: show compassion to all as Jesus showed compassion to children; everyone has value no matter their age; forgive others; serve others (the death of Jesus is the ultimate act of service for neighbor).

In what way does love for our neighbor exemplify our love for God? It is impossible to love God and hate those made in his image. How we treat others reveals our true dedication to Christ. If we love God that love will show up in the way we love and serve others. Our love for others will show the world that we love God.

Travelogue (5 minutes)

Lisa believes being a military wife has helped her live out the two commandments to love God and love others. “My love for God has grown as I have trusted him to hold our family in the palm of his hand through each transition. My love of neighbor has grown as I have watched the way the military family cares for one another. The opportunities to serve the people in my military community are abundant.”

How can you relate to Lisa’s experience?

Pack your bags (10 minutes)

After going on this journey through the daily readings and weekly Bible studies, what are some of your thoughts about living on mission for God?

As a dedicated follower of Christ, what opportunities do you see for living on mission for God in the military?

For personal reflection: Is there anything you need to adjust in order to live out the mission to love God and to love others in your current situation?