

JOURNEY OF A MILITARY WIFE

Devoted

Steps of Love
Toward Healthy Relationships

SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE

(JOURNEY 1)



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

Adam and Eve—Traveling Toward Intimacy (Week 1)

Waypoints 1–5

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or chalkboard

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)

- Ask the women to get out their keys and tell another person what each key opens.
- After a few minutes show your own keys and tell what a few of your keys open.
- Today we are going to talk about intimacy in marriage. Intimacy is much like one of these keys. Intimacy is giving someone the key to open the door of our heart and soul and see into us.
- We often think of physical sex when we hear the word intimacy, and that may be the most intimate expression of love, but intimacy is more than physical. A clever way to remember the true meaning of intimacy is the phrase, “In-to-me-see.” God designed our hearts and souls to blend with another’s, so we can “see into” who they are and they can “see into” us.¹
- This was God’s original plan for man and woman.

Read the map (15 minutes)

When God created the world, he looked at everything he created and pronounced it “good.” How does that compare with what God says in Genesis 2:18?

God stated emphatically that it was not good for the man to be alone. In other words, it was bad.² The dissimilar use of the word *good* highlights the fact that man cannot fulfill God’s plan alone.

What idea is conveyed in Genesis 2:19–22?

God would create an indispensable companion for the man.³ Her contributions as his helper would be essential. She would not only assist him in taking care of creation and having children, but together these two would experience the mutual support of companionship.

As the animals filed by for the first man Adam to name, they did not pass the test in the helper fit for him department. So God created what was missing, or who was missing. He created woman. God did not create her out of the dust like man and the animals, but from the man’s very body. What does this act of God tell you about the relationship planned for man and woman?

¹ Shana Schutte, “What is the Definition of Intimacy? What Does it Mean to be Intimate?” <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/preparing-for-marriage/what-it-means-to-be-intimate/what-it-means-to-be-intimate>, accessed May 29, 2015.

² Bruce Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 88.

³ NET Bible Notes, <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Genesis+2:18>, accessed 4/24/15.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 and Mark 10:7–9. How do these verses confirm the relationship God planned for marriage?

How would you define emotional intimacy?

What are ways you nurture emotional intimacy in your marriage?

What are some of the factors that can erode intimacy in a military marriage?

What are some of the factors that can improve intimacy in a military marriage?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

Read veteran military wife Carol's thoughts on military marriage. Underline anything that stands out to you.

"If you want to experience the truth of Genesis 2:24, just marry a soldier, sailor, airman, coastguardsman, or marine. You will then understand to the fullest what God had in mind when he gave the instruction to leave and cleave!" These words from veteran military wife Carol ring true. Cleave is an old-fashioned sounding word packed with meaning that needs to stick in the minds and hearts of every married couple. In fact, that is exactly the translation of cleave: to stick with. The word describes the "inseparable relationship between the man and the woman in marriage as God intended."⁴

Carol recalls the emotions she experienced when after nine months of marriage her husband received military orders to Germany. She said, "The idea of going to another country made me think I might never see my parents again." She questioned whether the love she and her husband had for each other would be strong enough to withstand the adjustment of life without having her mom and dad close.

How might Carol's experience encourage or discourage emotional intimacy in her marriage?

Pack your bags (5–10 minutes)

In the space below, write one thing you will put into practice because of today's study.

⁴ NET Notes on Genesis 2:24, <https://lumina.bible.org/bible/Genesis+2>, accessed 4/27/15.

Joseph and Mary—A Journey of Trust (Week 2)

Waypoints 6–10

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Poster with George MacDonald quote

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)

- Display a poster with the quote: “Few delights can equal the mere presence of one whom we trust utterly.” —George MacDonald
- Invite the group to read the quote and discuss their thoughts with another person.
- What role does trust play in marriage?

Read the map (15 minutes)

If your group is large enough divide in pairs or groups of three.

Read the passages below and note the ways Mary and Joseph exhibited trust in one another. What role did their trust in God play in their relationship? Be ready to report your findings to the group.

- Luke 1:26–38
- Luke 2:1–6
- Matthew 1:19–25
- Matthew 2:13–15

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

What unique areas of trust do you find challenged by military marriage?

How can you combat these challenges?

How do you build trust with your words?

Examine the last things you shared about your husband with someone else. How safe would he say his name is in your mouth?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

Read the story below and underline anything that stands out to you.

Karen, a veteran military wife, recalls a PCS move from Texas to Georgia. She had an energetic toddler and was pregnant with her second child. Her family was more than ready to move from Texas, but there was no hurrying the process. Karen recollects, “It took forever! My husband’s out-processing was delayed. We had car trouble. My sister was coming to help me, and her flight was late. We did not even

make it out of Texas when our car threw a rod. We had to buy a new vehicle en route. I describe that day as they day we made it to Waco, but I was wacko!”

Pack your bags (5–10 minutes)

In the space below, write one thing you will put into practice because of today’s study.

Isaac and Rebekah—Failure to Communicate (Week 3)

Waypoints 11–15

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or chalkboard

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)

- Participants in an educational study on communication in military marriage perceived themselves as having more intentional communication than non-military couples.⁵ Why do you think this may be true?

Read the map (15 minutes)

The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah is a study in the challenge of relational communication. Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac. God had promised to bless Abraham and make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the shore (Genesis 15:5; 22:17).⁶ God purposed for the blessing to continue through Isaac, and on through the family line. The servant returned with beautiful Rebekah. Isaac loved her and they were married, but she could not conceive, which caused a glitch in the promise to build a nation.

Describe the scene in Genesis 25:21–28.

What important information did God share with Rebekah?

Why do you think she did not tell Isaac?

What were the results of the poor communication between Isaac and Rebekah as seen in Genesis 27:41–44?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

What are some of the unique communication challenges that can arise in a military marriage? How do you combat these challenges?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

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

Military wives learn to withhold information—for good reason. For instance, consider the important practice of OPSEC (Operation Security). OPSEC is the process to protect unclassified information

⁵ Jessica N. Modrell, “Relationship Maintenance of Military Couples” 8–1-2014. Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) program at George Fox University, Thesis and Dissertation. <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1154&context=psyd>, 46, accessed May 18, 2015.

⁶ Journey 1, A Journey of Faith—The Journey of a Dedicated Wife chronicles the story of Abraham and Sarah.

that an adversary can use to harm us. There are safety measures we must consistently observe to keep our military husband and our family from risk.

A military wife may also purposely withhold detailed information from her husband during a deployment in order for him to stay focused on his military mission. In daily normal life however, withholding information from a spouse is not the best practice for a successful marriage.

What are your thoughts?

Pack your bags (5–10 minutes)

Relationship specialist John Gottman instructs couples to learn the ratio of five positive interactions to every one negative. Positive interactions include such relationship builders as a smile, a touch, changing the course of negative conversation, and positive, affectionate, encouraging comments.⁷ How will you put these into practice in your marriage this week?

⁷ Hara Estroff Marano, "Marriage Math," *www.psychologytoday.com*, March 16, 2004. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200403/marriage-math>, accessed May 18, 2015.

Jacob and Rachel—You Marry a Family (Week 4)

Waypoints 16–20

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or chalkboard

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)

- Share with another person a few of the positive characteristics of your husband's family (your in-laws).

Read the map (15 minutes)

Genesis 29 is the love story of Jacob and Rachel, with a few challenges thrown in thanks to Rachel's dad. At his mother's urging Jacob fled in fear of his brother Esau's retribution. He went to his uncle Laban's home where he agreed to work for seven years in exchange for Rachel's hand in marriage. After seven years, Laban deceived Jacob at the wedding and replaced his older daughter Leah for Rachel. Jacob found himself with two wives—and a challenging father-in-law. What's a fellow to do?

Marriage issues with extended family can wreak havoc. A wise couple will set boundaries for healthy interactions. It took Jacob twenty years to get to this point with Laban. He finally left the home of his father-in-law, but Laban chased him down. Read Genesis 31:44–55 and describe the scene.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

In their book *Loving Your Relatives: Even When You Don't See Eye-to-Eye*, David and Claudia Arp suggest ways to navigate the often complicated in-law relationship:

- Be proactive and look for ways to connect.
- Don't compete with other family members.
- Refocus your perspective by looking for the positive.
- Accept reality.⁸

Military families often find it challenging to navigate how and when to include in-laws in deployment, R&R, or reintegration. How have you managed this situations?

What boundaries have you set or do you see the need to set with your extended family?

⁸ David and Claudia Arp, John and Margaret Bell, *Loving Your Relatives: Even When You Don't See Eye-to-Eye* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 2003), 50.

Travelogue (10 minutes)

A navy wife wrote the following on an online forum for military spouses:

“This is our first homecoming and my husband’s family wants to come and then stay at our house for a week. I don’t mind them coming, I just prefer they stay at a hotel. My husband would rather we go on a long weekend away. Any ideas on how to make them both happy?”

How would you respond?

Pack your bags (5–10 minutes)

In the space below, write one thing you will put into practice because of today’s study.

Proverbs 31—Stewardship in Marriage (Week 5)

Waypoints 21–25

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Poster board and markers for small group Read the Map activity

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)

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), where would you rate money as a stressor in marriage?

Among the top stressors of marriage is the availability and stewardship of a couple's financial resources. Stress related to finances can affect every other area of married life. You do not have to be wealthy financially to be healthy financially. You only have to have a unified view of the way you will steward your resources.

Read the map (15 minutes)

In a pair or small group of three, read the following Scriptures and develop a biblically based financial strategy. Create a poster to “advertise” your strategy.

- Hebrews 13:5
- Matthew 6:19–21
- Matthew 6:24
- Matthew 6:31–33
- Proverbs 13:11
- Proverbs 13:22
- Proverbs 22:7
- Malachi 3:10
- Proverbs 11:25

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

The wise woman in Proverbs 31:16 planted a vineyard, which communicates she had a long-term goal and did not expect immediate gratification. How do you combat the craving for immediate gratification?

What is your family plan for major purchases?

What do you think about the statement, “Research confirms that generosity within a marriage begets generosity outside of marriage. Couples who are generous to one another will in turn be generous to others.”

Travelogue (10 minutes)

An article posted on Military.com names three money challenges for military families.

- Spouse employment
- Uncertainty in military life
- Potential benefits changes⁹

How do you deal with these challenges?

Pack your bags (5–10 minutes)

In the space below, write one thing you will put into practice this week because of this study.

⁹ J.J. Montanaro, “3 Money Challenges for Military Families,” www.military.com, <http://www.military.com/money/personal-finance/3-money-challenges-for-military-families.html>, accessed May 29, 2015.

Aquila and Pricilla—The Roles We Play (Week 6)

Waypoints 26–30

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Poster board and markers for Where Shall We Go activity

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)

With a partner, create a poster with two columns. Write the word MOTHER atop one column and FATHER atop the other column. List the things your parents did in your home under their respective column. When you are finished, hang your posters around the room.

Do you see patterns? Are there specific and definite roles that emerge?

Read the map (15 minutes)

Join with one or two other people and read the following references to Priscilla and Aquila. List all the things you learn about them.

- Acts 18:1–3
- Acts 18:18
- Acts 18:24–26
- Romans 16:3–4
- 1 Corinthians 16:19
- 2 Timothy 4:19

What do you discover about their marriage roles?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

In what ways do you and your spouse demonstrate partnership and teamwork?

Who might you consider as marriage mentors?

What questions would you want to ask a marriage mentor?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

Read the stories of Stephanie and Jennifer below. Underline anything that stands out to you.

Stephanie had a mentor who showed her and her husband what it was like to work as a team in the military. “She and her husband took us under their wing. Despite their busy schedules, they made time for others as a team, always supporting one another. I thank God for her friendship and sisterhood.”

Jennifer credits author and military wife Judy Rossi as a mentor. Through Judy's bible study, *Enhancing Your Marriage*, Jennifer realized it was not her job to be her husband's personal Holy Spirit.

Pack your bags (5–10 minutes)

In the space below, write one thing you will put into practice this week because of this study.