

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

Devoted

Steps of Love
Toward Healthy Relationships

SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE

(JOURNEY 2)



Lessons From Noah (Week 1)

Waypoints 1–5

Materials needed

- Whiteboard/markers
- Noah’s ark toys or collectibles (optional)
- Index cards or sticky notes for prayer request

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)

- Discuss with a partner what you believe to be the top five concerns about rearing children in a military family.
- After 3–4 minutes of discussion invite participants to share their concerns as you list on whiteboard.

Read the map (15 minutes)

Read Genesis 6:11–13.

How many times do you see the words corrupt and violence in this passage?

Society in Noah’s day was morally corrupt, on a scale we cannot comprehend. The repeated use of those words tells us the corruption was not limited to a local area, but was widespread. Scripture informs us that sin was both extensive and intensive. The depravity of man was evident in both action and thought, so much so that God was grieved that he made man.¹

What concerns do you think Noah and his wife might have had for their family during this time?

Through it all, Noah and his family stood against the rising tide of cultural immorality and committed to keep their family values anchored in what was pleasing to God.

Read Luke 17:26: “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.”

What similarities do you see between today’s culture and the culture of Noah’s day?

How is it relevant for us today to follow the course Noah’s family took in navigating the culture?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

Read 2 Peter 2:5–9. How does the story of God’s care for Noah’s family encourage you as a parent rearing children in a military environment?

Noah made an investment of time, resources, and energy to protect his children physically and spiritually. What do spiritual investments into the lives of our children look like?

¹ Victor Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 273–274.

How has military life made you more aware of your responsibility to make emotional and spiritual deposits into your family?

In what ways is military life strengthening your family legacy of faith?

Travelogue (5 minutes)

A discussion on the militaryspouse.com website highlighted some of the issues military moms struggle with concerning the need to be perfect. How can you relate to these struggles? What do you do to combat these concerns?

- My kids see me worrying about the next big change.
- I have a hard time being positive around the kids.
- I rely on my kids too much when my husband is deployed.
- I hate to cook family meals, especially during deployments.
- I try to be the perfect parent, and then burn out.²

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

Have participants write down a request for the week on a note card or sticky note. Have participants exchange cards with another member of the group. Encourage participants to pray for the request on the card throughout the week.

For next week: Invite participants to bring a baby picture (their own), and resources they use for family devotions. Be sure to send an email reminder later in the week.

² Kariah Church, "Perfect Parents...?" Military Spouse Forum, April 3, 2015. <http://community.militaryspouse.com/threads/perfect-parents.1600/> (accessed June 3, 2015).

Lessons From Moses (Week 2)

Waypoints 6–10

Materials needed

- Whiteboard
- Bulletin board or table to display baby pictures
- Samples of books and resources for family devotions

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 the baby pictures brought by participants. Ask the women to match the pictures to the adult owner.

Read the map (15 minutes)

Read Deuteronomy 34:10–12 and list what you learn about Moses.

Moses became one of the greatest leaders in all of history. God used him to deliver the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. Through Moses God delivered the Ten Commandments that became the governing law for the nation of Israel.

What do you learn about the parents of Moses in the New Testament book of Hebrews 11:23?

What does this tell you about the role the parents of Moses played in his development?

Read Acts 7:17–20 and describe the conditions under which Moses was born.

Read the story of the birth of Moses in Exodus 2:1–10. What character traits can you detect in the mother of Moses from this passage? (Note: The names of Moses' parents are given in Exodus 6:20, Amram and Jochebed.)

The contract Pharaoh's daughter made with Jochebed meant that Moses would be taken to Jochebed's home until he was three to four years of age.³ Jochebed's plan not only saved the life of Moses, but allowed her to be reunited with him during his formative years. However, after she weaned Moses she returned him to Pharaoh's daughter where he grew up in Pharaoh's court.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

There comes a time when we can no longer shield our children within the confines of our home. As much as we want to shelter them, at some point they must make their way in the world. We have no bulrush to weave into an ark, and no pitch to seal the ark tight. However, we do have the truth of God's Word to seal their minds from the deceptions of the world.

3 Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 93.

- How important is it for families to worship together?
- What strategies do you use to make sure this happens in your home?
- If you have a plan for family devotions, how do you see it making a difference in the lives of your family members?

Share samples of family devotion materials and invite the women to share their ideas for creating meaningful family devotion times.

Travelogue (5 minutes)

Read the words of military wife Eileen and underline anything that stands out to you:

“In our eighteen-year marriage, we have moved seven times and lived in eleven houses. . . . We have called eight churches “home” within five distinct denominations. We have been part of a body of believers as small as a dozen and as large as two thousand. We have gone where the Lord has led and our children have walked there with us.

Yes, we have cried our share of tears and looked back longingly a few times, but the kids have always put one foot in front of the other and made the best of the situation God has placed them in.

Because our lives only make sense when viewed as God-ordered, they have seen the hand of God repeatedly upon their lives. They have faced scary situations and personally witnessed God meeting their needs in exciting and wonderful ways. Through varying circumstances, they have had the unique opportunity of allowing God to mold and refine them. They have seen God answer the big prayers and answer the ones only spoken in their hearts.”⁴

What are your thoughts?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

Jochebed displayed faithfulness in God through her courageous and sacrificial actions for her child. In what ways do you display your faith in God as you parent your child/children? In what areas do you need to exercise your faith when it comes to trusting God with your child/children?

4 Ellen K. Fant, “God’s Children,” <http://www.ocfusa.org/articles/gods-children/#.VbtQKUufE4Y> (accessed July 31, 2015).

Lessons From Hannah (Week 3)

Waypoints 11–15

Materials needed

- Whiteboard
- Chart with headings: Hannah's Trouble/Hannah's Actions/Hannah's Emotions/Hannah's Faith

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 if anyone can remember and recite childhood prayers for meals or bedtime.
- Introduce the Five Finger Prayer as a way to teach children to pray.
- Fold hands in prayer and use each finger as a guide:
 - Thumb—Say a prayer for family members.
 - Pointer—Say a prayer for teachers.
 - Middle—Say a prayer for the president.
 - Ring—Say a prayer for the sick.
 - Pinky—Say a prayer for yourself.

Read the map (15 minutes)

What do the words of Judges 21:25 tell you about the context and background of Hannah's story? (Chronologically, Judges precedes 1 Samuel.) God would use Hannah's son to anoint the first two kings of Israel. She was a godly influence on her son Samuel, who became a major prophet for God.

Work in pairs and list everything you learn about Hannah when you read 1 Samuel 1:1–7, 1:9–11, and 1:15–16.

When conversations look complete, guide participants in filling out the chart with the headings:

- Hannah's Troubles
- Hannah's Actions
- Hannah's Emotions
- Hannah's Faith

In her desperation, Hannah turned to God instead of away from him. What does that tell you about her?

What parenting principles can be applied from Hannah's words and attitude in 1 Samuel 1:21–28?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

Hannah turned to God in prayer in her time of disappointment. What are some of the things you have seen military women turn to in their disappointment?

To whom or what do you turn when you feel disappointment?

What do these choices have to do with parenting?

The robes Hannah made for Samuel were a symbol of answered prayer. What might be a symbol of answered prayer for you as a parent?

Travelogue (5 minutes)

Military mom Cyndi uses this creative way to encourage her kids to pray during her husband's deployments: "I post a prayer in the bathroom for the kids so they start the day brushing teeth and covering Daddy and his Unit in prayer. We also do a 'worry' book to focus our prayers. We write down any anxiety that we feel—while we feel it. We leave the anxiety on the pages and return to the daily duties of our day."

Rebecca takes full advantage of sticky notes to encourage prayer in her family. She writes Scriptures and puts them under the kids' plates at meal time. The family shares the encouraging words and scriptural prayers at the end of supper. She also writes thank you notes, prayers, and words of encouragement and places them on her kids' bathroom mirror. Rebecca says, "The cool part is they've started posting ones for me!"

What ideas do you use to encourage prayer in your home?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

Read together Psalm 127:3. Invite participants to pray sentence prayers affirming their children as a gift from God.

Lessons From Mary/Part 1 (Week 4)

Waypoints 16–20

Materials needed

- Whiteboard

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)

- Describe to a partner someone who models trust to you.

Read the map (15 minutes)

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is a model of trust. Read Luke 1:26–33 and list everything you learn about Mary.

Read the paragraphs below and mark anything that stands out to you:

An angel's journey from God's heavenly realm to inform Mary of her destiny began her unprecedented pilgrimage of obedience. She had the choice to respond with "Why me?" or "How can this be?" I have thought long and hard about the difference between the two responses, and I conclude that asking "Why me?" makes me a victim, but asking, "How can this be?" makes me a participant in God's plan.

As a military mom, I can choose to ask, "Why me?" when challenges of military life seem overwhelming. I confess, at times I make that choice and I must tell you it does not get me anywhere but into a hole of self-pity. However, when I choose to ask, "How can this be?" I become energized by the challenge of trusting God with the possibilities of the future. Mary's situation had the component of God's divine will as she fulfilled her part of the plan in birthing the Savior of the world. Sister, God has a will and plan for your family. He has a plan, but we must be willing to participate. Are you willing to say, "How can this be?"

What are your thoughts?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

Consider the "Why me?" vs. the "How can this be?" attitudes. How might each response have an effect on parenting?

What do you teach your children when you respond to circumstances as a victim?

What comfort do you find in knowing God's plan for your husband's military service includes you and your children?

What concerns do you have about your child being a Military BRAT?

Travelogue (5 minutes)

Can you relate to these words about military kids? Underline anything that stands out to you.

Overseas assignments can be bittersweet events for a military family. On the sweet side are opportunities to broaden experiences. My own children became more adaptable, empathetic, supportive, and creative because they lived in other countries. On the bitter side, we spent several years far away from family and dealt with the stressful unknown expectations that come with living in a foreign culture.

My family adjusted to life on the other side of each ocean. My husband had accompanied tours of duty in both Germany and Korea. I know what it means to drive through streets and think, “This is a nice place to visit,” only to remember it would be my home for several years. I am still not crazy about calling my children military brats, but I am grateful for the experience the military afforded our family to travel abroad as we fulfilled God’s plan for our lives.

What are your thoughts?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

What do you see in Mary’s response to God that you would like to imitate in your own life?

Lessons from mary/part 2 (Week 5)

Waypoints 21–25

Materials needed

- Whiteboard

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)

- Discuss the following questions with a partner:
- How was your experience when you left home for the first time?
- In what ways would you want it to be the same or different for your child/children?

Read the map (15 minutes)

Read John 2:1–5 and Matthew 12:46–50 and discuss the shifts you discover in Mary’s role as the mother of Jesus.

What kind of adjustment do you notice Mary had to make?

How can you identify with Mary’s adjustment as you think of your child/children growing up and leaving home?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

What difference does it make to think of your role as rearing adults as opposed to rearing children?

In what ways are you preparing your child/children to leave the nest?

What unique challenges might military families have when kids leave the nest?

How important is it to teach your child/children their identity in Christ? In what ways are you doing this in your home?

Travelogue (5 minutes)

Read the following paragraph from Waypoint 23 and underline anything that stands out to you:

“Ask either of my boys where they are from and the answer will be, ‘Nowhere.’ I know this will be their response, because I posed the question to each of them. I also asked them if they resented the day they had to turn in their military ID card after they reached the age of ineligibility. My guilt was assuaged when they both answered, ‘No.’

“Time spent on a Military BRAT web forum informed me that many adults who grew up in a military family struggle with a sense of belonging well after they relinquish their ID card. One woman wrote of her experience, ‘We no longer carry a Military ID, and we are no longer welcomed on a military installation. In fact, the military does not even recognize our existence. They

have taken our privileges, and we are left to ourselves to adapt to a foreign, civilian world. The second we resign our ID card, we resign our identity.”⁵

What are your thoughts?

What can you do now to combat such negative attitudes concerning a child’s identity?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

Believe what God says about you. He created you in his image. “He has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 1:22a, NLT).

Read 1 Peter 2:9–10 as a closing prayer and be reminded of who you are in Christ.

⁵ Dawn Risas, “The Lost Ones,” *Military Brat Life*. <http://www.militarybratlife.com/articles/the-lost-ones.html> (accessed July 7, 2015).

Lessons From Jesus (Week 6)

Waypoints 26–30

Materials needed

- Whiteboard

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 a partner the farthest distance you've traveled to intentionally see or meet someone. Why were you willing to make the journey?

Read the map (15 minutes)

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, parents intentionally sought him to bless or heal a child.

Divide your group into pairs or small groups to read and discuss the following Scriptures. Assign two or three Scriptures to each group according to the number of participants:

- John 4:46–54
- Luke 7:11–17
- Matthew 9:18–19
- Matthew 15:21–28
- Matthew 17:14–20
- Mark 10:13–16

What do these Scriptures teach you that can be applied to parenting?

What do you learn from these Scriptures concerning the way Jesus felt about children?

How did the parents who brought their children to Jesus model faith to their kids?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

Research indicates that up to 50 percent of children who attend church and youth groups today will leave their church and faith after they go to college.⁶

How might military life help or hinder your child/children maintaining their faith after leaving home?

How can faith become an afterthought in families?

How are you providing opportunities for your child/children to encounter Jesus?

In what ways does your chapel or church make children welcome?

⁶ Kara Eckmann Powell, *The Sticky Faith Guide for Your Family* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 18.

Travelogue (5 minutes)

Military wife Kim, offers this advice for raising kids in a military family:

“Respect your husband’s choice of a career and teach your children to respect it. Do not complain to your children about inconveniences surrounding your husband’s absence; you will only be modeling and breeding bitterness in them. Teach instead that the sacrifices they are making make them part of a mission team. From the onset insure that they understand that while other people’s dads may work 9–5 and deliver the mail, or scrunch numbers, their dad is a defender of freedom and that is a *noble* calling.”

What are your thoughts?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

How do your kids observe you living out your faith at home and in your neighborhood?

How would you rank the priority you place on cultivating your faith?

What is one change you can make to intentionally bring your child to Jesus?