

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 STUDY GUIDE

(JOURNEY 2)



Lessons from Noah (Week 1)

Waypoints 1–5

Where shall we go?

Discuss with a partner what you believe to be the top five concerns about rearing children in a military family.

Read the map

Read Genesis 6:11–13.

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

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

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

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?

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

A discussion on the website, militaryspouse.com, 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.

Pack your bags

Write a prayer request on the note provided and exchange with another person. Commit to pray for the request you receive.

Lessons from Moses (Week 2)

Waypoints 6–10

Where shall we go?

Can you guess who? Match the baby pictures to their owner.

Read the map

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

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

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.)

Take time to explore

How important is it for families to worship together?

What strategies do you use to make sure this happens in your home?

Travelogue

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 meet-

ing 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.”*

What are your thoughts?

Pack your bags

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?

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

Lessons from Hannah (Week 3)

Waypoints 11–15

Where shall we go?

What childhood prayers do you remember?

Read the map

What do the words of Judges 21:25 tell you about the context and background of Hannah's story?

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.

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

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

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 bag

Read together Psalm 127:3.

Lessons from Mary/Part 1 (Week 4)

Waypoints 16–20

Where shall we go?

Describe to a partner someone who models trust to you.

Read the map

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

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?

Travelogue

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.

Pack your bags

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

Where shall we go?

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

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

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

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.’”

What are your thoughts?

Pack your bags

Read 1 Peter 2:9–10 as a closing prayer to remind yourself of who you are in Christ.

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

Lessons from Jesus (Week 6)

Waypoints 26–30

Where shall we go?

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

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 17:14–21
- 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

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?

Travelogue

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

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?