

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

Directed

Steps of Peace
in Times of Transition

SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE

(JOURNEY 2)



Peter: Stages of Transition (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? (5 minutes)

In the space below, write the first word that comes to mind when you read the word “transition.”

What word did you write? How many of you wrote the word “change”?

The common response is change. However, change and transition are not necessarily one and the same. In the book *Transitions* William H. Bridges suggests that change is an event and transition is a process. Some may see this as splitting semantic hairs, but the distinction in application is valuable to help us make transitions in life. When making a personal application, we can view change as the events that occur in life and transition as the process of adapting to those changes.

Read the map (15 minutes)

The basis of our study this week is in the book of Acts, chapter 10. God is getting ready to make a big change in who is included in his kingdom. Up to this point only Jews who believed in Jesus made up the Church. The expectation for joining the Christ-followers was to make the commitment to follow the Jewish religion in addition to following Christ, but change was coming. Gentiles would be welcomed into the body of Christ without the requirement to also follow Jewish rituals. Peter, and the other believers, would need to go through a big transition.

Peter went through stages of transition before he fully embraced the change God was making. In a small group or pair, discuss how you see the stages of transition represented in the Scriptures below.

Fear → Resistance → Disorientation → Anticipation → Acceptance

- Acts 10:4
- Acts 10:14
- Acts 10:17
- Acts 10:28
- Acts 10:47–48

What can you learn from the stages of transition illustrated in Acts 10 that can be applied to your own times of transition? How does Peter’s transition encourage you?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

What fears have you experienced when faced with transition?

What connection to spiritual growth do you find with a physical transition (PCS, deployment, reintegration, etc.)?

One danger during transition is to “grow numb by avoidance and denial”¹ during the resistance and disorientation stages of transition. Has this happened to you? What have you done to get past avoidance and denial during transition?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

On the topic of going through transition, military wife Sandy wrote,

“During the many transitions we faced as a military family we had the attitude: If we cannot do anything about this—and evidently we cannot—then we are going to embrace this and make the very best of it. So, we will find the best of whatever and wherever God places us and find Him in the midst. Those times were treasures in hidden places that became lifelong jewels.”

Can you relate to Sandy’s experience? How?

In what ways do you agree or disagree?

Pack your bags (5–10 minutes)

What is one action step you will take because of this study?

¹ Walter Brueggeman, *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 22.

Esther: Seasons of Transition (Week 2)

Waypoints 6–10

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? (5 minutes)

- Share with a partner the ways you acknowledge a new season on the calendar.
- All of the things you mentioned make it easy to see when a new season begins in nature. What are some situations that can introduce a new season of life?
- A single event can initiate a transition into a new season of life. Life seasons do not necessarily have to do with age as much as they have to do with circumstance.

Read the map (15 minutes)

This week we will look at the life of Esther and discuss her journey through seasons of transition. Just as we cannot control the seasons of our life, Esther was not in control of the circumstances that marked her seasons.

As a young Jewish woman, she ended up in the harem of the King of Persia. Through a type of ancient beauty pageant the king chose her to be his new queen without knowing her nationality. Esther's presence in the palace thwarted two evil plots, one that would have killed the king and another that would have annihilated the Jewish people. Her seasons in the palace were not by chance, and her purpose there would become clear.²

If you have enough participants divide the following between small groups of 2–3.

- Read and report what you learn about Esther in Esther 2:5–7. What title would you give to this season of Esther's life? Why?
- Read and report what you learn about Esther in Esther 2:8–14. What title would you give to this season of Esther's life? Why?
- Read and report what you learn about Esther in Esther 2:15–20. What title would you give to this season of Esther's life? Why?
- Read and report what you learn about Esther in Esther 4:12–17. What title would you give to this season of Esther's life? Why?

What we cannot see in this story is the obvious presence of God. In fact, the book of Esther does not mention God. Yet, he set the divine metronome beating out the rhythm for all the events in the book.

² Karen H. Jobes, *NIV Application Commentary: Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 55.

What looked like coincidence in the life of Esther was God working to save a people—the Jewish nation—who generations later would birth the Savior of the world.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

Consider Esther’s journey from an orphan to a queen. How do you think she may have struggled with discontent?

What indicators from Esther’s story make you believe she learned to thrive in her situation?

When has thinking “I thought things would be different” fueled discontent in your life?

How did you navigate that season of life?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

Military wife Claire Wood in her book *Mission Ready Marriage* writes, “I am a firm believer that when we walk through difficult seasons, there is purpose behind it. I think there is wisdom in reflection and looking to see how God is present in our times of trouble and difficulty. He uses our circumstances to draw us into a closer relationship with and dependence upon Him. It is through Christ we can walk in hope.”³

How has your experience in times of transition drawn you into a closer relationship with and dependence upon God?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

In the space below, write one action step you will take because of this study.

³ Claire Wood, *Mission Ready Marriage* (Portland, OR: BookBaby Publishers, 2015), location 96 of 2483.

Naomi and Ruth: Unwelcome Transition (Week 3)

Waypoints 11–15

Materials needed

- Whiteboard or chalkboard
- Gift bag for each participant filled with something unpleasant (i.e., trash, one sock, toilet paper tube, etc.)

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)

- Consider placing something unpleasant (i.e., trash, one sock, toilet paper tube, etc.) in a nice gift bag. Give each person a “gift” with the instructions to wait until you give the okay. Everyone will open the “gifts” together.
- How did you feel when you opened the “gift?” Transition can be an unwelcome gift as we will see in the lives of Naomi and Ruth.

Read the map (15 minutes)

What caused the unwelcomed transition Naomi and Ruth faced in Ruth 1:1–5?

How does Naomi describe herself in Ruth 1:20–21? How do her circumstances justify this description?

How can her attitude negatively impact outcomes?

What do you learn about Ruth in chapters 1:15–18 and 2:1–3?

An interesting phrase is used to describe the scene in Ruth 2:3 – Ruth “happened to come to the part of the field” of a distant wealthy relative. Before we jump to the end of the story, we need to pause and note that the conception of fate, luck, or chance cannot be read into this verse since that was not in an Old Testament mindset of God’s sovereignty.⁴ The writer of Ruth emphasized that the human initiative of Ruth or Boaz did not orchestrate this event. Rather, the hand of God was working behind the scenes.⁵

What steps forward did Naomi and Ruth take in chapter 3:1–5?

What words would you use to describe the ending of the story in Ruth 4:13–22?

What do you learn about God and his involvement in unwelcomed transitions from the journey of Naomi and Ruth?

⁴ Frederic Bush, 106.

⁵ Ibid.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

- When have you experienced unexpected and unwanted transition?
- How did you get through the difficult time of transition?
- Ruth and Naomi had no idea how their story would end, yet they kept taking steps forward. What keeps you moving forward during times when it would be easier to quit?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

Retired military wife Kim offers this advice about transition:

A unique “sisterhood” is available amongst military spouses, and many very deep friendships develop. You have to dispense with civilian paradigms about developing friendships however. You no longer earn trust over time because time is short at a duty assignment, and trust must be a gift you give on the front end of a relationship. Lean on other women and rely on each other’s strengths during transitions.

How difficult is it for you to accept help during difficult times?

How has God used military sisters to help you thrive in transition?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

In the space below, write one action step you will take because of this study.

Caleb: Transitioning to Retirement (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? (5 minutes)

- In a pair, discuss the following question:
- If you have attended a military retirement ceremony, what were the elements that made it meaningful?
- Caleb is a man in Scripture who exemplifies how to make a positive transition in retirement.

Read the map (15 minutes)

We find the context of Caleb's story in the Old Testament book of Joshua. The children of Israel have made it into the Promised Land. Moses is no longer with them and Joshua is now the leader. Joshua is responsible to assign the twelve tribes of Israel a portion of land in which to settle.

What do you learn about Caleb in Joshua 14:6–10?

Caleb's recounting of his service was not only to remind Joshua, but also to remind the Israelites that God is faithful to those who determine to serve him.⁶

Join with one or two other people and discuss the following:

- What is Caleb's request in Joshua 14:12?
- What challenges will he face?
- How did Caleb's past experiences give him courage to face the future? (Caleb is present during the events described in these Scriptures: Exodus 14:21–22; Exodus 16:13–14; Exodus 19:18.)
- How is Caleb described in Joshua 14:13–14 and Numbers 14:24?
- What does wholly following the Lord look like to you?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

How does Caleb's example challenge and encourage you as you look toward retirement?

Caleb's retirement centered on God's plan for his life. He looked to the future with enthusiasm and optimism.

What unique challenges do military families face upon military retirement?

⁶ Richard Nelson, *The Old Testament Library: Joshua* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 180.

Travelogue (10 minutes)

Retired military spouse, Bev writes about her journey:

“From a grateful nation, we salute you.” It was official—military retirement was an end to a journey. I have the type of personality that does not embrace change easy. So, you can imagine I came into military life kicking and screaming. I went out silently kicking and screaming just as I did on the way in. The transition and change of military retirement has brought many challenges. Grieving over the loss of community, the military family, and its cultural lifestyle takes time. Adaptation to a civilian culture is ongoing. There is no going back. I have a patriotic sign that reads, *Home is where the Army sends you*, but I think it really needs to read, *Home is where God sends you!* I am learning to live “from a grateful heart . . .” God just happened to use the military and now military retirement to accomplish the change He was working in me (even in this change-resistant gal!).

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

In the space below, write one action step you will take because of this study.

Encounters on the Road: Heart Transitions (Week 5)

Waypoints 21–25

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)

- In a pair, share the most exciting, frightening, or interesting thing that has happened to you on a road trip.
- Your experiences have been exciting, but nothing compares to the road trip excitement of our study today. Let's start in the New Testament book of Luke, chapter 24.

Read the map (15 minutes)

The disciples had watched as Jesus died on a cross. Three days after the crucifixion, some of the women who followed Christ said his tomb was empty.

Describe the scene in Luke 24:13–17.

What did Jesus say was the reason for their sadness, in Luke 24:25?

As they journeyed, Jesus taught them a systematic Bible study: “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

Jesus not only spoke truth to the disciples, but he brought hope to them as well. How has God's Word brought you hope in times of transition?

How did the disciples finally recognize Jesus?

The familiarity of sharing a meal with Jesus opened their eyes. When they gathered around the table to eat, Jesus did something that was out of the ordinary. As the invited guest, he assumed the role of the host by taking the bread, blessing it, breaking it, and giving it to the men.⁷ His action caused a light to turn on in the minds of these men. Suddenly, they recognized Jesus. From Scripture, Jesus had revealed to them the truth of the plan, now he revealed to them the truth of his resurrected self.⁸

In the New Testament book of Acts we find another dramatic road trip encounter.

- What do you learn about Saul in Acts 7:58--8:3?
- Describe the scene in Acts 9:3–8.
- Why do you think Saul's conversion experience was so dramatic?

⁷ C.F. Evans, *TPI New Testament Commentaries: Saint Luke* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 912.

⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Luke* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 385.

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

In both of these road trip encounters Jesus revealed himself to people and changed their hearts and the direction of their lives.

What was your life like before you encountered Christ? How have you changed?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

God used military life to transition Alicia's heart toward him. She writes:

"I can come up with hundreds of daily life events that happened while my husband served 23 years in the Army, three deployments, countless TDYs, and nine PCSs to give example of God's love for me and strengthening my relationship with him. When I take a step back and add all those things together, I get one big clear message: God loves me, *he* is my portion, *he* is enough.

"My husband left for his second deployment and we knew it would be at least 12–15 months long. I stood in the bathroom one morning getting ready for my day. As I evaluated all that was going on, I became acutely aware that God had set into motion a series of events that would make this deployment different from the last. We recently moved, found a church home, and had friends in a wonderful neighborhood. Our children settled easily into a good school. We even had a great new rescue puppy, a pet I wanted for a long time. All was good, yet I could not shake the feeling of waiting for the other shoe to drop. My husband was in Iraq, the surge was ramping up, and I was scared. I was scared he would not come home. The time apart did not scare me, the separation was not the hard part. The hard part was the waiting for that dreaded knock on the door. As I stared at my reflection in the mirror that morning, I asked God why he set up the support around me, what was going to happen that I would need such support? His answer came with clarity: "Because I love you, and isn't that enough?"

"My husband came home safely but we knew there would be more deployments and TDY's. I began to anticipate how God would grow me in him. Times of separation are still difficult, but I learned that God would not separate me from my husband unless *he* needed us apart to do good work in us, individually and as a couple."

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

In the space below, write one action step you will take because of this study.

Daniel: Tips to Thrive in Transition (Week 6)

Waypoints 26–30

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? (5 minutes)

- In a pair, share your best household tip.
- Allow time for a few examples.
- Tips are useful pieces of practical advice usually offered by someone who has learned from experience. Today we will look at some scenes from the Old Testament book of Daniel to learn some tips to thrive in transition.

Read the map (15 minutes)

Caught up in a forced transition from freedom in Judah to captivity in Babylon, Daniel became a servant in a foreign king's palace. In that new and different place, Daniel did not just survive—he thrived!

With one or two other people, read the passages below that illustrate how Daniel dealt with transition. Compare Daniel's actions to the New Testament Scriptures listed. Use these Scriptures to develop a list of tips to thrive in transition. (Participant responses may vary, but give groups time to respond before offering any suggestions/answers.)

Tips to thrive in transition

- Maintain your values (Daniel 1:3–8/Ephesians 6:13)
- Don't go it alone (Daniel 1:17–19; 2:17–18; 2:48–49/Ephesians 4:16)
- Take care of your health (Daniel 1:12–14/Romans 12:1)
- Offer praise and thanksgiving (Daniel 2:20–23/1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- Make prayer a priority (Daniel 2:18; 6:10/Colossians 4:2)

What do you learn about Daniel's transition in Daniel 6:28?

Take time to explore (15 minutes)

What challenges do you find/have you found in consistently practicing tips like those listed above during a transition?

Share a time when one of the tips listed above helped you navigate a successful transition.

“Our tendency when facing today's battles is to wonder why God is abandoning us to such difficulty. Instead, Daniel helps us to understand that the Lord is not abandoning but preparing us for greater work in the future.” —Bryan Chapell, *The Gospel according to Daniel*

How have you seen this to be true in your life?

Travelogue (10 minutes)

Veteran military wife Cathy offers this tip on transition:

“Military wives must learn the art of *flexibility*—not just flexibility in adjusting long-range planning, but flexibility in daily living! No matter how prepared you are or how well you have planned for the future the future will always surprise you. The second most important art to develop is *resilience*. Let those well-prepared plans roll off your back and greet that new change with a smile!”

How have military transitions helped you develop a flexible and resilient spirit?

Pack your bags (5 minutes)

What “tip to thrive in transition” would you like to integrate with more consistency into your life? Write it in the space below.

Close the session by reading Daniel 6:26–27:

“...people are to tremble and fear
before the God of Daniel,
for he is the living God,
enduring forever;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be to the end.
He delivers and rescues;
he works signs and wonders
in heaven and on earth,
He who has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions.”

The God who delivered, rescued, and saved Daniel is the same God who will help you!