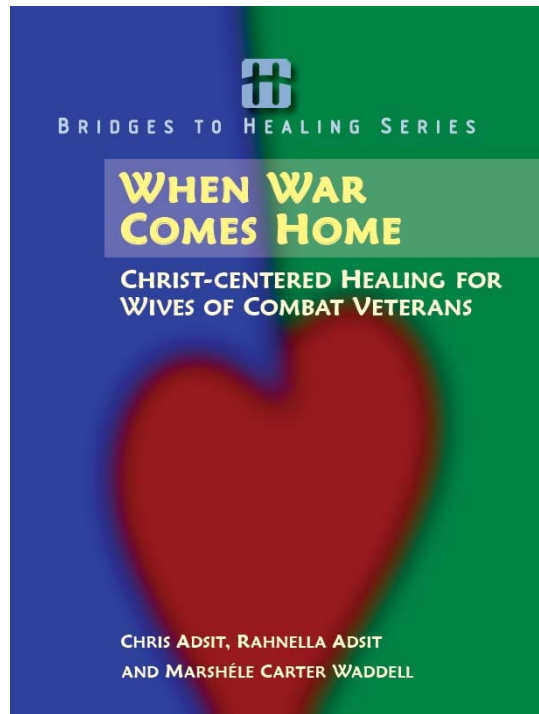


# When War Comes Home

## Leader's Guide



Chris & Rahnella Adsit  
Marshéle Carter Waddell  
Cru Military



*“Bear one another’s burdens  
and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

– Galatians 6:2

*“And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men.  
And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven . . .  
Get up, pick up your pallet and go home.’”*

– Mark 2:1-12

**Observation:** The wounded one might lack the strength and faith to go on, but God will honor the love and determination of those around him or her who come to help. But think about this: it only takes *one person* to make the difference, to call the other three and say, “I’ve got a mission. Join me.”  
*You, Group Leader, can be that one.*

~ *Chris*



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**John & Karen Blehm** are Associate Staff Members of Military Ministry, Campus Crusade for Christ, living near Phoenix, AZ. Sergeant First Class John Blehm served in Vietnam from January 1969 to August 1970 with the Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary Division and later with a Special Forces unit as part of the Army Reserves. He and Karen co-wrote *Angel of Death* about his experiences in Vietnam and their battle with John's Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the years following. Both are ordained ministers. Together they have led several small groups using *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* and *When War Comes Home*. John and Karen have three sons who have served honorably in the US Army, another son who is a firefighter, and a daughter who was involved in ROTC in high school.

**Brad & Alexandra Pressley** are also Associate Staff Members of Military Ministry, Campus Crusade for Christ living in Williamsburg, VA. Brad served in the US Army from November of 1987 to November 2007 when he retired with a rank of Master Sergeant. During his hitch, Brad served in every conflict from Desert Shield in 1990 to the present (except Somalia and Bosnia) including Afghanistan and two tours in Iraq. Brad currently works for Cruz Associates Inc. as a Logistics Manager in support of the Department of Defense. Brad and Alexandra have led and hosted several small groups composed of both men and women through *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual*.

In addition . . .

We would like to thank **Sue McLain** for her valuable help in editing and contributing her insights for the Leader's Guide for *Bridges To Healing – Africa*, a condensation of *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* for use in Africa, where so much of the population has been deeply traumatized by war, genocide and atrocity for decades. Sue worked with Wycliffe International and Global Teams for eight years in Rwanda, Zaire (now Congo) and Kenya. She currently works for BEE World, training church leaders in closed and restricted-access countries in discipleship, editing courses, managing translation and facilitating adult literacy. Much of what is in *this* Leader's Guide came from *that* Leader's Guide.

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# General Principles for Leading a Band of Sisters Care Group Using *When War Comes Home*

## 1. FIRST OF ALL, THANK YOU.

Thank you for being willing to take on the leadership of a Band of Sisters Care Group. Just as serving in the military is a high calling, this too is a high – and holy – calling, and we appreciate your courage, faith and servant’s heart in answering the call.

When our husbands came home from war, every one of them was changed in small or great ways. *Every one.* As one woman laments, “I sent my husband off to Iraq, but I don’t know who this man is who came back in his place.” Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has been called a “wound of the identity,” and as such it alters many of the actions, reactions and the self-image of those it afflicts. In many ways, he *is* a different person than the one that was sent off, and the adjustments that a wife is forced to make to accommodate these differences can be overwhelming.

It’s bad enough that the wife of a veteran struggling with Combat Trauma often has to deal with his moodiness, anger, lack of affection, hypervigilance, jumpiness, nightmares, flashbacks, phobias and many other debilitating behaviors he didn’t have before he deployed. These can produce Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) in her, adding to her burden. But if he also becomes violent and abusive to her and her children, life can become a question of physical, emotional and spiritual *survival*. How could this happen to this man she was once desperately in love with?

Now she feels desperation of a different sort, feeling utterly alone and hopeless. But as you draw her into a Band of Sister’s Care Group, she discovers that she *is not* alone, there *is* hope, and as she makes deep connections with God and with other women who are encountering similar trials, she finds strength, camaraderie, and healing.

A woman attempting to work her way through this manual “solo” will have some difficulties, due to the nature of her stress-filled environment, her physical and emotional exhaustion and her need for “battle buddies” to pick her up and drag her along from time to time. But if she can join with a group of like-minded women, she’ll find it much easier to proceed.

In this environment, the group members can identify with each other, watch each other’s back, help each other through the difficult parts, experience the joy of not being judged and misunderstood, and learn how invigorating and strengthening it is to help each other. They teach and share helpful insights with each other, which improves their positive self-image and sense of worth. They learn important principles about how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and how to help others become disciples too – which is the core of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

So we thank *you*, because you’re the one that God will be using to provide that place of discipleship, camaraderie, safety, encouragement, cross-training and healing. You may be married to a combat vet yourself – which will help your group members identify with someone who has struggled as they have and come out on top (or, at least, closer to the top than they currently are). But even if you’ve never been “married to the military” God can and *will* use you to accomplish this ministry. A person doesn’t need to experience a heart attack to become an effective heart surgeon. As long as the doctor applies the principles that have been shown to work, many lives can be saved.

In the same way, as long as you look to God as *your* leader in this ministry, and teach and apply the principles found in this Leader’s Guide and *When War Comes Home* (drawn from the Bible and from experts in the fields of medicine and mental health), great good will come of your labor.

The camaraderie and support of a “Band of Brothers” kept our men safe, focused and encouraged while they were at war. May your “Band of Sisters” provide the same advantages for each other while the war continues in their homes.

## 2. MAIN PHILOSOPHY OF THE “BRIDGES TO HEALING” APPROACH.

- God is the Healer (Exodus 15:26) and you are NOT. Don't put pressure on yourself thinking that you must try to figure out a way to “heal” those in your group or their husbands. *You* cannot do it!
- But God wants to partner with you to construct an environment that will enable His Holy Spirit to have optimal access to your Care Group Sisters' body, soul and spirit for healing, direction, insight and strength. He *can* do it! So you are like a **Bridge** to the Healer. You can't heal, but you can help transport them to the One who *can*.
- Or, to use another analogy, it's like in agriculture: the farmer makes sure that the seed's environment is the best it can be (proper soil, fertilizer, irrigation, pesticides, herbicides, sun, scarecrows, etc.) but he can't do anything to *make* the seed grow. That's God's job. Nevertheless, if the farmer does his or her job well, the seed will grow well. Conversely, if they do a poor job, the seed will grow poorly. It is a crucial relationship with true consequences. The farmer takes it seriously, and we should too as group leaders. We are spiritual farmers. This manual will give you suggestions and insights about how to do an excellent job of creating that optimal environment for your group members.

## 3. WHY YOU ARE SUCH AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THIS MINISTRY.

Whenever someone experiences an event in which they fear they may suffer severe physical injury or death (such as what the husbands of your Care Group Sisters' may have encountered while they were deployed), or when they witness atrocity or horror, God enables their brain to react in a way that will help them stay functional and alive during the crisis. The brain does two things simultaneously. First, it suppresses the person's normal emotional and analytical response so they can focus on the threat at hand. Secondly, it coordinates all of the body's abilities in such a way that he or she can either fight the attacker with uncommon strength, quickness and endurance, or run like a gazelle to escape (the “fight or flight” response).

When the crisis is over and the almost-victim has escaped and is in a safe place, these suppressed emotions and analysis need to be addressed and “processed.” They need to allow the memories of the traumatic event to come back into their conscious mind and be thought about, evaluated and expressed. This allows their normal emotions about the event to be experienced. They may become angry, sad, depressed, weepy, fearful or indignant, but that's *good*. They may need to consider the injustice of what they saw or experienced. They may even need to express deep disappointment or anger at God over the incident(s). This is all part of processing the trauma. If it isn't done, and the person tries to continue suppressing his or her emotional responses, or tries to act as if what happened wasn't very significant, the symptoms of PTSD will show up before long.

These PTSD symptoms can make life at home a “living hell” for the wives and children of combat vets. In fact, it can become so difficult that they also begin to experience PTSD or STS due to the domestic stress, trauma and violence they may have had to endure.

In the same way that it's not enough for the traumatized veteran to merely *think* about his or her traumatic event, their wives also must be proactive and intentional about processing their trauma. It is *crucial* for them to put those thoughts into words (either written or spoken) and to share them with someone or with a group who understands and can supply sympathetic, compassionate responses. This significantly opens a person up to God's healing influence. As long-time trauma and abuse expert Dr. Judith Herman wrote:

The “action of telling a story” in the safety of a protected relationship can actually produce a change in the abnormal processing of the traumatic memory. With this transformation of memory comes relief of many of the major symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The “physioneurosis” induced by terror can apparently be reversed through the use of words.”<sup>1</sup>

As you lead a small group through *When War Comes Home*, you are giving them that safe place where they can talk about and gain an understanding of what happened to their husbands and what is currently happening to *them* physically, mentally and spiritually. You're helping them to share their experience and thereby process their traumatic event(s) and stressors. You're showing them that they are not alone, that there are others they can count on. Most importantly, you are showing them how they can make and maintain a strong connection to their Creator and Healer.

#### 4. TEN THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE WIFE OF A RETURNING VETERAN (FROM MARSHÉLE):

1. The troops have been fighting two wars: Iraq and Afghanistan. Every vet's wife is fighting **four**:
  - a) **For her marriage:** to understand the man who has come home to her, to know how to help him, to know how to love him and how to help him heal and to *truly* come home to her.
  - b) **For her family:** fighting to protect her children emotionally and/or physically, fighting to find the right words and the right way to explain to them why Daddy is so different, that none of this is their fault, that they must learn to forgive adult offenses with only a child's heart.
  - c) **For her own health:** mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health, fighting to learn what it means to care for herself, not *apart* from her most important relationships, but how to care for herself *in and through* these relationships.
  - d) **For her own faith:** fighting to find God's hand in all of this, His hand that offers her the love she so desperately craves and which guides her through this dark place to the light on the other side.
2. There are three things you should *never* say to a veteran's wife:
  - a) "Well, you signed up for this when you married him. You knew he was/is a military man. You knew that this was the life ahead of you."
  - b) "Why do you stay with that man? You deserve better. Why don't you just leave him?"
  - c) "I know how you feel." (If you haven't lived it, you really *can't* know.)
3. There are four things you *should* say to a veteran's wife:
  - a) "Thank YOU (say her name), for YOUR service and sacrifices."
  - b) "I am sorry for the pain you are experiencing right now."
  - c) "Tell me how your children are doing with all this."
  - d) "I'm here. I want to listen."
4. A veteran's wife doesn't expect you to have all the answers. She probably doesn't want to hear information or pat answers she has already heard or read. More than anything, she wants you to listen, to hug her, to be there.
5. Every vet's wife is exhausted – physically, mentally and spiritually – by the time her warrior returns. Don't expect too much; don't overburden her; expect diminished capacities.
6. Every vet's wife has been courageous. While she is relieved her husband is home in body, she is realizing that a war still rages in his soul. A vet's wife experiences the full spectrum of grief for the man who deployed many months ago. While he was gone she courageously faced the possibility that he would not return. Now she courageously faces the challenges that have resulted because he *did* return.
7. There are no medals or shadowboxes to tell of her courage, her achievements, her personal bests, her battles. This affects her soul. See and honor her invisible medals.



8. Every vet's wife has mixed emotions about his homecoming. They are not 100% sweet – they are bittersweet. She has learned much about herself while he was away – about her weaknesses, but more importantly about her strengths, her core, her own opinions, her own dreams. She has begun to spread her wings and has flown successfully and has enjoyed the view from that higher place of independence, courage and faith. His return may signal a curtailing or an end to all that.
9. Every vet's wife has been part of something much larger than herself. This can feel inspiring, but it can also feel overwhelming.
10. The returning warrior is never the same person after a combat deployment. The warrior's wife is never the same again either. Her lifestyle, her personal goals, her self-image, her capacities, her mindset, and her faith have all been dramatically altered – for better or worse. It isn't a comfortable feeling.

## **5. WHAT ARE THE MAIN NEEDS OF THE WIVES OF COMBAT TRAUMA SUFFERERS WHO ATTEND?**

- Love – to feel it coming not only from her husband (which may not be happening) but also from God, from her friends, from her adult relatives and from her children. She also needs to be receiving the supernatural ability to love her husband despite the current difficulties in their relationship.
- Forgiveness – forgiving herself, forgiving her husband, forgiving friends and family who have let her down, and seeking forgiveness from God for her own mistakes and shortcomings.
- To understand what happened to her husband – physically, mentally and spiritually.
- To understand what is happening to her as she tries to deal with her husbands' symptomology.
- A place and a way to process her stress, trauma, grief and loss.
- To understand and to experience the filling of the Holy Spirit – His controlling, empowering and guiding influence day-by-day and moment-by-moment.
- Control of her STS or PTSD symptoms – recognizing what “triggers” her and helping her responses to these triggers decrease in severity.
- To gain hope for the future.
- Friends who understand her condition and know how to help her construct her environment of healing.
- Respect and honor for the sacrifices she has made and for the struggles she is currently experiencing.

## **6. WHAT SHOULD YOUR MAIN OBJECTIVES BE?**

- To deliver some helpful material regarding the stresses they are currently experiencing. The more they understand their condition, the less anxious they will be, and the more they can concentrate on their healing.
- To provide an environment where the Holy Spirit can work on them directly. It is the Holy Spirit who can truly *heal* them and bring them once again to that place of strength, stability and safety, so we want to help them focus on *Him* as their primary avenue of support – not on you.
- To provide an environment where they can feel safe to verbalize their difficulties and traumatic experiences to people who know, love and accept them unconditionally. In this setting they need not fear being misunderstood or judged.

- To help them become involved in helping and serving others. Their own needs will seem smaller as they shift their attention to the needs of others. They will learn that “the more you give, the more you will receive.” (*It is more blessed to give than to receive* – Acts 20:35; *Give and it shall be given to you . . .* Luke 6:38)

## 7. WHO ARE YOU? WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

- Even though the title of this manual refers to “leading” a Band of Sisters Care Group, you are not truly the “Leader” – a better term would be the “Facilitator.” God is the Leader. Your role is to facilitate what God wants to accomplish, and you must seek His counsel as to what that is each meeting. You are His assistant. Expect *Him* to lead you and the group.
- When we were in school, we were rewarded for solving problems and participating in class discussions. We were *driven* toward these behaviors in order to accomplish greater goals. But you can’t solve the problem of Secondary Traumatic Stress, or talk a PTSD sufferer out of her symptoms. You must come as a listener and observer of how *God* will accomplish the healing. Don’t let yourself be “driven” someplace you shouldn’t go!
- Requirements of a Facilitator:
  - ♦ A heart to love, care and listen, and not to judge.
  - ♦ Willingness to look to God and move in response to His leading.
  - ♦ Humility. A prideful heart will make you less effective as God’s partner. (I Peter 5:5 – *God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.*)
  - ♦ Willingness to “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2) and “weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15). This may cost you some emotional capital – are you willing?
  - ♦ The ability to resist the urge to “preach.” Instead, motivate group members to share *their* thoughts. (Good educational maxim: “She who is talking the most is learning the most.”)
- **To be the most resourceful Facilitator you can be:** before beginning your Band of Sisters Care Group, read *all* of *When War Comes Home* ahead of time so that you’ll know what to anticipate. You may run into an issue of concern early with your group, but if you know it will be covered in depth later in the manual, you can reassure the group members that it will be dealt with – or you can skip right to it then-and-there. Reading ahead in the manual will give you useful insights as you lead. For instance, you’ll learn how you can partner with God to create the optimal healing environment for your group if you have first read Chapter 6, and you’ll know how to be a better “Bridge Person” if you have first read Chapter 8. If you know where the manual is headed chapter by chapter, you’ll be in a better position to lead your group there. It’s your map: know where it’s taking you.

To gain even more insight, read *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* as well. You will be a much better resource and advisor for them if you’re aware of the needs and struggles of their husbands who are dealing with Combat Trauma.

## 8. HOW MANY WEEKS SHOULD YOU MEET?

- How long do you think it’s going to take for them to experience healing? No one can say for sure, but it won’t happen overnight or all at once. Even though the book is only thirteen chapters long, don’t think that you will get through it at a pace of one chapter per week. It *may* take as long as six months or even longer. The point is: “getting through the material” isn’t the objective. “Getting the material into the group members” *is*. Allow God and the group members to set the pace.
- However, most people don’t like to commit to something without knowing how long their commitment will be. So ask people to commit to a definite period – perhaps eight or ten weeks. Tell

them that at the end of the period they can re-evaluate and decide if they want to keep coming for an additional eight or ten weeks. After only a few weeks, most of them will see how much they are being helped, and will want to stay with the group indefinitely.

## 9. HOW LONG SHOULD EACH CLASS BE?

- An hour isn't really enough time to get a good discussion going and to make much progress through the lesson – but if you have no other options, take it.
- An hour and a half would be better. Two hours even better – but not everyone likes a meeting that lasts that long, especially someone struggling with STS, PTSD, household demands, childcare, work schedules, exhaustion, etc. So once again, let the Holy Spirit (and the wishes of the group members) guide you.
- Whatever you decide, show respect to your group members by starting and ending on time.

## 10. GROUP DYNAMIC ISSUES

- Three basic approaches:
  - ♦ **Solo** (a person going through *When War Comes Home* alone) – This is **OK**. But – as we mentioned earlier – there is a difficulty. In order to help bring about healing for someone suffering from Secondary Traumatic Stress or PTSD, it will be necessary for him or her to work through the painful memories and issues associated with the trauma they have experienced (or are still experiencing). *When War Comes Home* seeks to facilitate this. Therefore, many people would rather abandon the manual than to engage those memories. So it may *not* be the best thing to give the manual to the wife of a Combat Trauma sufferer and simply say, “Here – I hope this helps.” Most people need someone to encourage them and walk with them down such a difficult road; otherwise they may become discouraged and give up. However, there are some wives who are so motivated, are good self-starters, and are so desperate to find help and healing that they will not be put-off by the difficult things the manual (and God) asks them to do.
  - ♦ **One-to-one** (a person acting as a mentor to the wife of a Combat Trauma sufferer and helping her progress through the manual) – This is **better**. When the manual asks her to go to those difficult places, the mentor can be there for encouragement, prayer, strengthening and assurance. In addition, while the Solo approach doesn't provide the STS or PTSD sufferer with anyone to share his or her stories with, the one-to-one approach does.
  - ♦ **Small group** – This is **best**. There are many benefits to this approach:
    - ▲ There will be several women present with similar experiences to listen to each other's stories – with great interest and compassion. This motivates them to want to *tell* their stories.
    - ▲ Each one will feel encouraged by the fact that the other group members understand at least some of what they are experiencing. This will also prompt them to share more deeply and honestly without fear of judgment, which helps them in the processing of their trauma.
    - ▲ Each one will learn more from other group members through the rich cross-talk and discussions that are generated. They will probably learn more than an individual would in the one-to-one approach.
    - ▲ As one group member shares their insights with another, and they counsel and encourage each other, each will feel more useful and gain self-esteem and confidence as they see how their words helped someone else. It goes back to the need these women have to *serve others* in order to help themselves heal. This is one important way of doing that.

- Group Size
  - ♦ It should be big enough for good interaction and discussion . . .
  - ♦ . . . and yet small enough so no one will feel too shy about speaking up. People can get lost in a big group. If there are too many, it's easier to stay quiet and not be noticed. Staying quiet will *not* be helpful for any group member.
  - ♦ Minimum: 3 group members plus you.
  - ♦ Maximum: 10 to 12 group members plus you and at least one assistant (suggestion: one leader can normally handle a group of up to six members, but add an assistant if there are seven or more).
- Group Makeup. Here are some things to think about as you consider a few qualifiers that could (and perhaps should) govern the group's makeup:

- ♦ **Singles/Married-no-kids/Married-with-kids.** Should it be all wives, or should we allow girlfriends and fiancées to be mixed in too? Should we keep wives with kids separate from wives without kids? There are issues that are not relevant to singles, and some might think that time spent in the group on those subjects is a waste of time for them. Same for the non-kidded. On the other hand, there are issues that singles need to discuss that are no longer relevant to couples. So for these reasons, you might want to segregate singles and marrieds, with and without kids.

But others would observe that many – if not most – of those singles will someday be married, and most will have kids. The things they could learn from the “more experienced” women could be of great benefit to them. And the enthusiasm and energy of those who have never been married or had kids could add a lot of life and fun to the group.

So again, seek God's guidance on this issue. What do you and the Lord think would be best?

- ♦ **Christians/non-Christians.** Both *When War Comes Home* and *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* take a definite Christ-oriented approach to dealing with the effects of Combat Trauma on a troop and on a household. It makes no apologies about presenting God as the One who made us and who can heal us, and urges the reader to pursue a deepening relationship with Christ. If we try to back off from that stance, then we really have nothing new to share with those who suffer from STS or PTSD. So, many would say that it would be a bad idea to include non-Christians – they may distract the group with theological arguments that the Christians have already settled in their own minds.

On the other hand, many would say that it would be *great* to include the non-Christians, because they might find Christ during the meetings! This is true, but it would be important to let the non-Christians know right from the beginning that this study is being presented from a Christian point of view. They don't have to be Christians to attend the study, but the study will present God as the most vital element of a healing environment. If they're OK with that, they are welcome to attend.

- ♦ **Wives/care givers/friends/family.** Would it be alright if those who provide care for someone whose husband is suffering from Combat Trauma also to attend? The presence of care-givers, friends and family members *may* make the wife reluctant to share all of the difficult details of what they are experiencing – out of a desire to protect them from the gory details of their domestic struggles, or not wanting to put their husband in a bad light.

But if he or she felt comfortable sharing openly and honestly, friends, family and care-givers could gain a great deal of insight into what the wife is going through. It would be very important in this case for the care-givers to communicate that they don't want their loved-one holding back for their sake. They need to lovingly urge him or her to share their pain openly and honestly, so that they can be more supportive.

♦ **Basic principles to use regarding these qualifiers:**

- ▲ Be creative and innovative in how you lead the group, but trust God to direct you.
- ▲ A group made up of similar people with similar experiences may generate more relaxed, honest, and deeper sharing, but a diverse group may accomplish more extensive healing as they consider issues that might not have occurred to the less-diverse group.
- ▲ If you facilitate a mixed group of singles, wives without kids and wives with kids, consider having a few sessions where they are separated for part of the study, and then come back together later. In these separated groups, you (and an assistant) could address issues that are more applicable to them and which may be hindered if they were all together.

**11. FIRST SESSION – THINGS TO GET ACROSS . . . AND REVIEW FREQUENTLY.**

- Emphasize Jesus as the Healer. (Exodus 15:26 – *For I, the Lord, am your Healer.*) Their healing, strengthening and stabilizing won't come from you, from a doctor, from a manual or from one of the other group members – *God* is the one they need to be looking to for help. (*I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.* – Psalm 121:1,2.) You might say something like, “I’m not going to be able to fix you or your husband; no one here could; this manual can’t. God is the only One capable of helping you at all.”
- Make it clear that this group will be approaching the difficulties of being married to a Combat Trauma sufferer from a Biblical perspective. Help them understand that, “The purpose of this group is to try to provide an environment in your life where God has the best possible access to your body, mind and spirit for the purpose of healing, coping and strengthening – and we want to help you build that environment.”
- If a group member hasn't yet made that decision to connect with God, let them know that the group will be looking at that important issue in one of the earlier sessions and in connection with Appendix A. Help them feel relaxed and *not judged* about not being a Christian. Our objective is to let our lights shine and to *love* them into the kingdom. Our objective is *not* to force them into the kingdom through guilt or intimidation just so they will feel more comfortable around us.
- Let them know that, “If you'd like to talk with me more in depth about this issue [of becoming a Christian], let me know.”
- Ask them a few questions about their **expectations**. “What do you hope to get out of these meetings? What are your expectations for me? For yourself? For that person sitting next to you?” Make sure their expectations are realistic.
- Help them understand the concept of “New Normal,” and that positive growth can result from negative experiences. By “New Normal” we mean that, if a person – whether a soldier or his wife – has experienced an event or series of events so traumatic that they end up with PTSD or STS, it is probably not possible for their lives to go back to exactly how things were before the traumatic event(s) – even though they probably want this more than anything in the world. But God will help them come to a *new* normal, where they are once again strong and stable and reconciled with their trauma and the changes it brought to their lives. The “New Normal” could even be better than their “Old Normal,” because God frequently uses trials to build good things into us. (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 5:10)
- Help them understand that progress may be slow, but persistence and consistency will carry them along.
- Nothing happens by accident for the Christian – God has brought you here for a reason. You might share, “If you are here today and not yet a Christian, it may very well be that God has brought you to this group so that he can make you one of His own, and heal you. This, too, is not an accident.”

## 12. SESSION FORMAT.

- **Homework or No-homework?**

Which would be best – to require your group members to read a few pages ahead before each meeting, filling in the blanks and doing the various exercises that the manual instructs them to? Or would it be better *not* to require them to do anything between meetings, and go through the pages together?

The old learning principle will always apply: “You’ll get out of it what you put into it.” If a person will take the time and effort to do homework before each session, think through each principle on her own, interact with the questions, with the Scriptures and with God, she will get much more out of it when everyone comes together and discusses the lesson.

But many people who are struggling with Secondary Traumatic Stress or PTSD simply don’t have the patience and focus to sit down and *do* the homework. Simple lack of time can be an issue too. We certainly don’t want to exclude them because of these difficulties. So once again we would encourage *you* to make the decision about this. At the beginning of your series of group meetings, you might encourage the group to work through the next couple of pages before the next session and just see how it goes. Never assign more than three or four pages – even two is OK if the group is progressing slowly. If the majority of the group members keep coming to the study without having looked at their manuals, don’t require them to do so.

It would still be a good idea to let them know at the end of each session what you plan to cover next – in case any *do* want to work ahead.

- **Have a plan, but be willing to depart from it.** Below we will be giving you a suggested format for your meetings. But don’t let this be carved in stone! Allow the Holy Spirit to change your plans along the way! Achieving your written objectives for each chapter or session is not nearly as important as allowing the Spirit to achieve *His* objectives!
- **Preparation.** First, spend some time in prayer asking God to prepare your heart and the hearts and minds of those in your group. Ask God to help each person to remember the meeting time and place and to make it there with no problems. Ask God to help them come with attentive and learning attitudes.

Next, go over the Chapter Objectives in the section of this manual entitled “**Discussion Questions – Chapter-by-Chapter**” (starting on page 24) so you’ll get the main idea of what each chapter will be trying to help them with.

Then, read through the suggested discussion questions. **By no means should you try to discuss all of the questions that are suggested!** We have provided many more than you will need to generate good discussions. Just pick out the ones that seem the most interesting to you, and which will connect best with your group members. It works best if you write the questions you choose right into your manual. This way you won’t have to keep flipping back and forth between the manual and this guide, and your questions will flow better as you ask a variety of Opening, Content, Follow-up and Application questions in each section (more on these types of questions later). Of course, you may think of many other questions that could be even better than the ones that are suggested in this manual. Please use the questions that God gives you!

- **Suggested format:**

1. **Welcome any newcomers.** Once the study series has started, some people don’t like to admit any newcomers because they have to continue bringing them up to date on what has been discussed to that point. Others do allow newcomers, to add new energy and perspective along the way. Again, it’s up to you.

2. **Tell them what's on the agenda for that day.** Those who have experienced traumatic wounding have more anxiety if they don't know what is coming next. Give them a general idea of what you have planned for them.
3. **Opening prayer** (one person – asking for God's guidance and praying for special needs that are already known). Call attention to – and thank Him for – His presence in your midst. Don't throw it open to prayer requests from the group at this time – you might never get around to the study! Either you lead the opening prayer or ask someone else ahead of time to do it.
4. **Warm-up sharing.** Rather than jump right into the lesson, share something of interest to the group. Don't make it too heavy or time-consuming – just something to catch their attention. It might be late-breaking news that's relevant to them, an interesting article you found, or other resources or books you might be aware of. You could ask someone (ahead of time) to share their testimony. Perhaps you could bring in a special speaker, play some kind of an interesting game, show a video clip, share insights from your personal study time in the Bible, etc.
5. **Reiterate the rules** which you will read about below (especially "Respect members' privacy."). Don't go over *all* the rules every time – just review and remind them about a few of them as needed.
6. **Quick review of last week's study** (five minute maximum).
7. **Start into this week's content.** See below to receive some suggestion about how to do that.
8. **Pray through the rough spots.** From time to time, someone may have a difficulty with some of the content, memories or discussions. They may become very angry or sad or stop participating or emotionally "leave the building." When those times come, stop right then and pray as a group for that person. This will really aid in your group becoming a "Band of Sisters!"
9. **Preview of next week.** Share your objectives for next session (pages to read, what the topic will be).
10. **Close in prayer.** Now would be a good time to ask the group if they have any prayer requests they'd like to share.

### 13. HOW TO COVER THE CONTENT.

- Unless you have already agreed otherwise, assume they have all read ahead. But feel free to read (or have someone else read) a section before you start to discuss it.
- **Opening question.** Come up with a question designed to engage them with the topic of that section or chapter. Some of each kind of question mentioned below will be suggested later in this guide.

For instance, with Chapter 3 on Grief . . . "Outside of your current trials relative to your husband's war experience, what is something that you have grieved about in the past?" This would be a wide-open question that they could answer from their personal experiences or observations, even if they haven't read the chapter.

- **Content question.** Ask a question that can be answered by the content they read (or which you just read to them).

For instance: "What triggers grief?" What you're looking for is found in the first paragraph of Page 37: LOSS triggers grief. This kind of question ensures they're paying attention to the content.

Think of a couple of Content questions for each section in the study ahead of time (or choose a few from the ones that are suggested later in this guide).

- **Follow-up questions.** Build on that answer with a Follow-up question:

“As a result of your traumatic experiences due to your husband’s Combat Trauma, what are some of the things that you have lost?”

Note: the *content* of the study will lead into this Follow-up question. It will help the members start looking inward – moving from the theoretical to the personal, specific and practical.

You could then follow the Follow-up question with more Follow-up questions, depending on what was shared, such as:

- ▲ “How were you able to handle that loss?”
- ▲ “How did it affect you?”
- ▲ “Think back. Can you think of any ways that God helped you through that difficult time?”
- ▲ “Do you think you’ll ever receive back what you lost, or be able to replace it? How does that make you feel? What do you think you should do about those feelings?”

**Redirect.** A very useful tool for follow-up is a practice known as “redirecting.” After someone has responded to one of your questions, redirect it to the group in general. “What do some of the rest of you think about what Joan just shared?” Or to a specific individual, “Brenda, would you agree with what Joan shared?” Or, “Sheila, how about you? What do you think about what Joan shared?”

- **Application questions.** Try to compose a few questions for each chapter (not necessarily each section) that will prompt the group to make some kind of a personal, practical response to the issues that are being brought up. Examples:
  - ◆ “Does this suggest any course of action that you ought to take?”
  - ◆ “What could you do about this? When?”
  - ◆ “Can any of you think of a practical way to respond to this issue within the next 48 hours?”
  - ◆ “Is this something we just need to think about and be aware of, or do you think we’re actually supposed to DO something about it?”
  - ◆ “When you’ve encountered this issue in the past, how have you dealt with it? Did that work for you? Could you do it again now?”
  - ◆ “What do you think it would take to integrate this concept into your life?”

By the way, you **don’t** have to ask discussion questions in the order in which you find them here, as in: asking all the Opening Questions first, then asking all the Content Questions, then all the Follow-up Questions, etc. It’s best if you mix them in section-by-section, page-by-page, point-by-point according to the flow of the chapter. For instance, in the section entitled “The Purpose of Grief” starting on page 37, you may start off with an Opening Question, then a Content Question, next two or three Follow-up Questions, then another Content Question followed by two or three Follow-up Questions, *another* Content Question with a Follow-up Question, and finally an Application Question. Then you move on to the next section, “Normal Grief – What You Can Expect To Experience” starting with an Opening Question – but this time you might skip the Content Question and go right to a Follow-up Question (following up on the Opening Question). Mix it up as God leads you.

- **Other ways to generate discussion:**
  - ◆ “What thoughts came to your mind as you read this section?”
  - ◆ “Did this raise some questions?”
  - ◆ “Could you identify with this quote (verse, paragraph, story)? How?”
  - ◆ “Here’s what I thought . . . what did you think?”
  - ◆ “How does this part affect you personally?”



- ◆ “How did this section (quote, verse, paragraph, story) make you feel? Why do you think it made you feel that way?”
- ◆ (Regarding a point made in a section) “Has anybody here ever experienced this?”
- ◆ “How has this issue changed you? Changed your opinion about God? The Church? The Military? Your husband? Yourself?”
- ◆ “What bothers you about this?”
- ◆ “How do you deal with this?”
- **Exercises or fill-in-the-blank parts**
  - ◆ When you come to a place in the manual that directs the reader to fill in some blanks or do a certain exercise, ask if anybody did them. Then ask if they would like to share their response.
  - ◆ If they haven't filled in the blanks before the study, give the group time right then to work through them, and share what they wrote afterwards. If writing is a problem for any of them, you can just ask them to respond verbally if they'd like to.

## 14. THE RULES:

As with any group meeting, there needs to be some understanding about what is appropriate and what is not. The following are a few rules that will enable the group to function effectively, efficiently, and with a minimum of interpersonal friction. We would suggest you make a separate document for these rules (and any others you might want to include) and pass them out to the group during your first session together.

1. Respect each group members' privacy. Keep everything that is shared here strictly confidential. Don't pass on what is shared to anybody – not to any superior officers, friends or even to your husbands. Don't share with non-group members about who else is in the group.
2. Since this is a faith-based trauma healing group, we will start and end each meeting with prayer.
3. Share your own thoughts, feelings and experiences, using “I” statements and not trying to speak for others.
4. Try to accept people just as they are and avoid making judgments. Respect each person's right to their own values, beliefs and perspective.
5. Look for opportunities to affirm and honor each other during the meeting. Be intentional about this.
6. Alcohol and/or drugs will not be brought into Care Group meetings.
7. Don't dominate the discussion. Avoid long, detailed descriptions of your experiences. Make your point quickly – we don't have all night!
8. Have the courage to share what's on your mind or what you're feeling: it is part of your healing process. The more you share, the safer you will feel here, and the quicker you will progress toward strength, stability and your “New Normal.”
9. But realize that you have the “right of shyness.” No one will be forced to share if they don't feel like it. It's OK to “pass” in a discussion or during prayer times. If you can overcome your reluctance to share, it will be better for you, but no one will *make* you speak.
10. Be prepared and willing to hear some difficult and distressing comments and stories. Try your best to extend grace, and not react negatively or judgmentally. Be ready to show understanding, empathy and mercy – just as God has shown them to you.
11. Don't interrupt. Listen actively and deeply. No side conversations. Honor all contributions.

12. Avoid turning the discussion sessions into a “husband-bashing free-for-all.” We all realize that our husbands are struggling due to their war-related experiences. But too much venom in your criticism will poison the whole group. Strive to honor your man as best you can and yet still be honest and straightforward in your sharing. Hate the sin, love the sinner.
13. If someone in the group has a crisis during the meeting, that person will be accompanied by another group member before walking out of the room.
14. Try not to compare yourself with others in the group. Each person is unique, and at a different place in their healing journey. Focus on how God is working in *your* life.
15. Be consistent in your attendance. Try to be there on time.
16. Share ownership of the group. We're not here to entertain you – all must be willing and hold themselves responsible to contribute to the good success of the group and its mission.

## 15. MEETING DO'S AND DON'TS

Here are a number of general principles that will prove useful no matter what kind of a small group you are leading – but especially so as you lead a Band of Sisters Care Group:

- Get there early, prepare the room, set out refreshments, perhaps put on some worship music, pray, be ready to welcome them as they come. Set the pace regarding punctuality!

- Don't be a lecturer. Encourage *discussion* among the group members. As mentioned earlier, “She who is talking the most is learning the most.” If you are lecturing the group on certain topics, you can be sure that you are *giving* the information, but you cannot be sure if they are *receiving* it. If only one or two participants dominate the discussion, the rest feel left out and don't enter into the learning process very effectively. The sessions end up being boring, and the participants learn less. A person will retain and apply only about 5% of what they hear in this manner.



- On the other hand, if you can encourage group members to interact with each other, share their insights and experiences, ask each other questions and *talk*, the group sessions will be much more productive, interesting and enjoyable for everyone involved. People learn, retain and apply new information *much* better if they can discover the answers and come up with insights on their own, rather than having someone simply tell them what they should know. Teaching experts call this, “Giving them an ‘aha!’ experience,” calling attention to the delight one feels when they figure something out. As Dr. Norman Wright, expert in trauma counseling tells us, “If you're talking more than 25 percent of the time, you're probably talking too much.”<sup>2</sup>



Remember that the manual supplies a format and some useful content, but the real healing will come through the sharing, the interaction, and the application as God works on them directly.

- If no one answers a discussion question right away, just wait a few moments. Silence isn't a bad thing – it could mean that people are thinking. If there is no response after a minute or so, you could ask the question in a different way, or call on someone who looks like they may want to say something, but needs a little encouragement. Or you could share *your* answer to the question, and ask what others

think about what you shared, or ask if there's anyone who could build on it. Dr. Norman Wright advises:

When silence occurs, just let it happen. Those in crisis have slowed reactions. Often, their ability to respond to questions is impaired. If their personality preference is introversion, they need to think quietly on their own in order to formulate their response.<sup>3</sup>

- Take every opportunity to affirm, honor and encourage each member of the group. Make a “big deal” of the fact that it takes a tremendous amount of courage for them to even show up at these meetings. Their participation shows that they are willing to do the hard work that will be required to come to a place of healing.
- Try not to correct group members who say things that are obviously wrong. Say something like, “That’s a very interesting thought (or “perspective,” “insight,” “point of view”), Jill. I hadn’t thought about it in that way before. What do some of the rest of you think about that?” (Notice the “redirect?”)
- If you ask a question that requires a number of short answers, write down their responses – either on a whiteboard, large piece of paper, or even on the notes you hold in your hand. This will help you to remember peoples’ responses so that you can go over them again with the group in summary. In addition, those who offer responses will feel affirmed that you find their contributions so valuable that you would write them down. Plus, it helps you to listen more closely if you have to condense their responses to writing.
- Experts tell us that about half of what we communicate is through “body language.” When someone is responding to your question, your body language needs to be encouraging and not dismissive. Every culture is different, but doing the following things in America expresses interest and affirmation:
  - ♦ Look at the one speaking directly, square your shoulders to them, and even lean forward a bit toward them.
  - ♦ If you are leaning back, folding your arms in front of you, looking around as they are speaking, checking your notes, etc., you are communicating, “What you are saying isn’t really very interesting to me. Would you hurry up and finish?”
  - ♦ As was just mentioned, if you take notes on what they say, this will also communicate that, “I feel that what you are saying is *so* important that I *have to* write it down so I won’t forget!”
- “Listen with your eyes as much as with your ears,” Dr. Norman Wright says. “You may pick up more information this way, or it may contradict what is being verbalized.”<sup>4</sup>
- Be sure you are praying for your group and each individual in it – daily!
- Get other people praying for your group too.
- Don’t be concerned if group members feel the need to get up and walk around the room a bit or change their seat during the study. Most people dealing with STS or PTSD feel antsy all the time, and simply *must* get up and move from time to time or they feel like they’ll explode!
- Always serve refreshments! It helps provide a comforting, relaxed and refreshing atmosphere. Jesus engaged in some of his best discipling times over a meal.
- Pay attention to the environment of the study.
  - ♦ Someone’s home is a very relaxing, comforting, non-threatening setting. Having the study in a church building is OK – especially if you have a large group and need the space. But a home is usually more welcoming.
  - ♦ Arrange the chairs in a loose circle if possible. It’s good for all group members to be able to see each other.

- ♦ Be aware of such things as the temperature of the room, lighting, comfort of the chairs, ventilation, and distractions from the neighborhood.
- Be patient – with group members, with the process, with participation, with church administration.
- Allow them to express their anger, frustration, confusion, etc. This is all part of their processing.
- But don't enter into their negativity. For example, if someone is complaining about a certain church, don't say things like, "Yeah, I know that bunch – they're so into their 'Holy Huddle' they don't care about anybody but themselves. You'll never catch *me* going there!" Develop the skill of letting them vent, being understanding of their pain, but not participating in or agreeing with their verbal attacks.
- Expect them to bring up blasphemous or taboo subjects, use profanity, express disappointment or anger with God, the Church or Christians. Again, it is a necessary part of their processing. Eventually they will calm down. In the mean time, try not to react or judge them. Show kindness, compassion and understanding.
- If someone is dominating the discussions, it's alright to gently interrupt them if necessary. A gentle "I just want to be certain I'm hearing you correctly" is appropriate. You could also talk with her afterwards: "You find it so easy to share – but I think some of the others are shy [or lack your confidence]. What can we do to try to draw them out more, and give them the opportunity to share?"
- Don't publicize names, addresses or email address lists of your group members without permission.
- If possible, recruit an assistant: she can act as a substitute, help with making arrangements, help keep discussions on track, and can be trained to eventually lead their own group.
- Most of the sessions will be pretty intense. So try to include some *positive* things whenever possible. One group leader reported a member sharing at the end of several meetings, "I learned all about PTSD and how bad it is. It would have been nice to hear something *hopeful*." You can be sure that group leader made changes by her next meeting! They need to hear success stories.
- Give the manuals to the group members without charge if possible. "You've done your service. We want to honor you for that. It's our way of affirming you for taking the first step to come here."
  - ♦ If they insist on paying, say "OK. But I'll use that money to buy a manual for someone else."
  - ♦ In your publicizing of the Care Group, note that the materials will be free – "Our gift to you."
  - ♦ Consider it a gift of healing; an investment in their healing.

## 16. RELATIONSHIP DO'S AND DON'TS

These are helpful principles you need to be aware of as you relate to each group member on an individual basis. Opportunities to apply these principles may occur in the context of the group meeting or as you get one-to-one time with them.<sup>5</sup>

- Don't tell a person suffering with Secondary Traumatic Stress or Combat Trauma to "Get over it," "Let it go," or "Forget the past." Those things are *so* much easier said than done. Don't you think they'd do those things if they could? Pushing them to "hurry up and recover" can be a secondary wounding experience and make STS and PTSD worse.
- Don't use Christian clichés such as "Just let go and let God," "What would Jesus do?" "Forgive and forget," "You just need more faith," "Have you prayed about this?" "Everything is going to turn out for the best." There is no denying the truth and spiritual power behind most of these sentiments, but if an STS or PTSD sufferer senses that you think she can be "fixed" by a few glib, obvious, one-size-fits-all religious phrases, they will think you don't appreciate the depth and complexity of their situation or value them as an individual. A wall will go up between you.

- Don't call an STS or PTSD sufferer a cry baby, psycho, sicko or whiner. Always show them respect and honor. Never mock or make fun of their symptoms – to their face *or* behind their back.
- Don't blame relationship problems between you and her on her traumatic experiences. For example, don't say, "We can't really have a good relationship because you have all these triggers," or "You and your darned STS," or "I can't trust you because you're always freaking out on me." Accept them unconditionally, just as Jesus does.
- It's not your job to make them "feel better" about things. As Dr. Larry Crab wrote:

When life kicks us in the stomach, we want someone to be with us as we are, not as he or she wishes us to be. We don't want someone trying to make us feel better. That effort, no matter how well intended, creates a pressure that adds to our distress.<sup>6</sup>
- Don't interpret emotional coolness as a sign of disinterest. It's a common symptom of STS and PTSD.
- If they have PTSD, don't expect them to react to death or illness of friends or family as others do. Part of their symptomology is a "flatness of emotions."
- Ask them how they're doing, but *mean* it. Wait for a real answer. Let them know that you want the truth – and that you can handle the truth. Listen.
- Look for opportunities to tell them about the *strengths* you see in them, their progress, their honorable character qualities, their selflessness and sacrifices.
- If they talk about horrific experiences with you personally, consider yourself blessed that they trust you enough to share these painful memories. Stay connected. It's all about staying engaged and actively listening.
- Don't *press* them to disclose details of their traumatic episodes or fights with their husbands. As trauma expert Dr. Judith Peterson says, "You don't have to dig – don't even *own* a shovel!"<sup>7</sup> No one likes to be interrogated. Respect their need to keep some things private. They'll open up when they're ready and feel safe.
- Don't *press* them to solve a problem or do something if they clearly indicate they have reached their limit and feel like exploding or shutting down.
- Teach and give advice sparingly. Sometimes you will need to "teach," but don't overdo it. Be the "professor" only when you know there is receptivity. As Dr. Norman Wright says,

Use the teaching technique when, and only when, a person needs new information that would be difficult for a person to acquire on his or her own. Find out if they already have this information or have access to it. Invite them to describe what they know. Be sure the person is ready to hear what you have to say.<sup>8</sup>
- Don't try to be your group member's therapist (unless you actually *are*), hero, rescuer or resident Wonder Woman. Get used to saying, "It's so hard to understand what you're experiencing. I wish I had a quick and easy answer for you." You can be supportive without making her your "project." People don't need a superhero – they need faithful friends who will walk along with them.
- Do whatever you can to establish a relationship of trust. But . . .
- Expect that there will be times when a group member *doesn't* trust you and needs to be distant from you. It's OK – if you continue to show yourself to be loving, non-judgmental and trustworthy, she will change.
- Always be honest with them. Admit your own struggles. Be willing to step out of your comfort zone – after all, that's what you're asking of them.
- Know the signs of impending suicide and take action immediately. As in, IMMEDIATELY!

- Don't tolerate emotional, physical or sexual abuse of yourself or others by anyone in your group.
- If your relationship with a group member is sufficiently deep, work together on an "emergency plan" for unpredictable times when she may feel out of control, extremely depressed or about to relapse into an addiction. This plan should include names and phone numbers of doctors, therapists, family members and close friends, as well as medications.

## 17. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS TO AVOID

This is a list compiled by Marshéle listing certain "touchy" subjects you should avoid when addressing a combat veteran's wife. She cautions that this is a *general guideline*, not absolutely true for every wife. How each person deals with her various stresses will depend on a variety of factors. Ask the Lord for discernment about what to say, and what *not* to say.

- **Did your husband have to kill anyone?**

First of all, she probably doesn't know the answer to this question herself. Combat veterans usually only talk openly about their war experiences with other combat veterans and not with their wives and children. Combat veterans see this withholding of certain details as a way of protecting their loved ones from the fringes of the trauma. On the other hand, the vet may eventually share these details with his wife. If she knows for a fact that he did have to take life, it is not her story to tell. She may be offended, feeling you breached the privacy wall big time. Plus, she may be struggling with the morality of it as well.

- **How can he claim to be a Christian and be willing to kill?**

If you want to shove an instant wedge between yourself and this Care Group Sister, ask this question. She will defend her husband and you will be the enemy. If this issue is a problem for you, you can consult other resources to help you gain insight on it, rather than to ask your group member to indict her husband. *God In The Military* by Pastor Tommy Nelson is a good place to start. The Bible makes a clear distinction between to *murder*, which thou shalt not, and to *kill*, which in the course of war mandated by national authorities is allowed and even enjoined. King David killed hundreds during combat, and yet we are positive we will see him in heaven.

- **Is your hubby home ALREADY?? It seems like he left just yesterday! How time flies!**

The deployment may have gone by quickly for you; but, time does *not* fly when you are apart from your best friend, lover and husband for 180 up to 450 nights in a row. Time does *not* fly with you're single-parenting 24/7 for months on end. Time does *not* fly when you are thousands of miles from your family and familiar support system. Time does *not* fly when the morning paper lists the names and hometowns of the fallen daily. It seems to drag on forever. She will see you as clueless and not plugged in to the heart condition of a vet's wife if you make this comment.

- **How can you go so long without being intimate?**

It isn't easy. How rude.

- **How can you honestly believe he was faithful to you during all those long, long months apart from you?**

This plants seeds of doubt and worry in a heart that has already gone through the hell of a combat deployment. Keep those thoughts to yourself. She's probably wrestling with that question already.

- **Are you glad he's home?**

She may or may not be glad. The deployment has changed every member of the family in one way or another. She wants to say yes, but all wives have mixed emotions because the readjustment is very trying and very exhausting. She has become very adept and independent during his absence and will have to learn to share the reins in difficult areas like finances and discipline of the children again.

- **How can you believe he truly loves you when he volunteers to be away from you and your children for so long?**

This statement clearly reveals a lack of understanding of what it means to answer the call of duty, what it means to sacrifice, and what a high price freedom demands. A thinking person would realize that the warrior is out in front in order to preserve others' freedoms, enabling them to be at home with their families, and at peace. You should honor the sacrifices he is willing to make, AND which SHE is willing to make.

- **What do you expect? Don't complain. You signed up for this. You knew what you were getting into when you married a military man.**

Yes, she did "sign up for it." She already knows this. However, in the heat of her personal battles, a military wife needs your compassion, listening ear and helping hands. Try to patient and sensitive.

- **I know just how you feel. My husband travels on business a lot, too.**

Totally different. Unless you have been a combat veteran's wife, you *can't* know. It's nice to want to commiserate with her, but this way of expressing it will fall flat.

- **Is there anything I can do to help you?**

Of course there is. What would *you* need if your husband was on the front lines of combat and you were trying to raise kids and manage a household alone? What would *you* need if you were exhausted from working 18-hour days, schizophrenic from being both mom and dad to three kids under five years old around the clock, frustrated from paying bills at midnight and filthy from changing the oil in your husband's truck in the garage by yourself? Put yourself in her place, think through what you would need, and then make a specific offer. She wants your help but doesn't know how to ask, or she doesn't want to "burden" you.

## **18. WHAT TO DO IF A GROUP MEMBER HAS A FLASHBACK DURING A MEETING**

As you touch on issues that could stir up fear, anxiety and traumatic memories, it is possible that a group member who has Secondary Traumatic Stress or PTSD might be triggered and experience a "flashback" – vivid memories of long-past or recent traumas including sounds, smells, body sensations, or feelings (or the lack of them – numbness). She may have a sense of being trapped, or feel powerless and panic-stricken. She may even experience a "psychotic break" when her present reality temporarily slips away and she thinks she is back in her place of trauma or abuse – yelling at an attacker or her husband, fighting, hiding, trying to escape, shouting for help, etc.

If someone in your group experiences a flashback during one of your times together, here are a number of helpful ideas to consider. They have been compiled by Rahnella from several authoritative sources. Please check the footnote and consult them further if you would like deeper input.<sup>9</sup>

- Things for YOU to know ahead of time:
  - ♦ In a flashback-sufferers mind, they are re-experiencing their trauma all over again – it's absolutely real to them.
  - ♦ A flashback is the mind's attempt to make sense of a very significant life-changing event. Both you and your group members need to know it's a common way of adapting and relieving pressure. Not necessarily healthy or pleasant, but common.
- Usually, someone experiences a flashback because they feel threatened in some way. Their "fight or flight" response kicks in, and their body is ready to take action. So, the first thing to do is to help the person feel safe and try to remove the perceived threat.

- Before approaching someone who is experiencing a flashback:
  - ◆ Pray. Ask the Lord to guide and protect you. Count on Him to do so.
  - ◆ Be careful how you physically approach her; never come up behind her.
  - ◆ She *can* become violent. Be ready to defend yourself and back off if she does.
- Approach them calmly:
  - ◆ Speak softly and gently, like you're waking someone out of a sound sleep.
  - ◆ Call her name and say, "Come back to me . . . come back to me . . ."
  - ◆ If you see no response, call her name a bit louder.
  - ◆ Identify yourself.
  - ◆ If you feel safe, gently touch her arm – be sure she is aware that you're there.
  - ◆ Name it – tell her she is having a flashback. People don't usually realize it.
  - ◆ Remind her where she is, and when it is: "Shawna, you're not at home [or wherever the abuse or attack took place] – you're here in my house. We're having a Bible study. You're safe here – there's no one here who wants to hurt you. That's over; it's all in the past."
  - ◆ Remind her to breathe. When a person is scared they don't breathe normally. As a result, their body begins to panic from lack of oxygen – which causes even more panic, pounding in the head, sweating, faintness, shakiness and dizziness. Have her put her hand on her stomach and breathe deeply enough that it causes her hand to rise and fall. Urge her to inhale slowly and deeply through the nose and exhale through the mouth.
  - ◆ Tell her that you know it feels real to her, but that it isn't actually happening again. Remind her that what she is sensing right now happened in the past. She survived, and she is safe.
  - ◆ Remind her that she is not alone – she is surrounded by her friends who are here to keep her safe, and Jesus Christ is here to protect her as well.
  - ◆ If she can communicate, ask her to tell you what she is seeing, smelling, touching, or hearing. Often, a person experiencing a flashback wants to know if what she is sensing is real – we can give her the feedback that it is *not*. Talking about it helps her come away from the fantasy and back to the real world.
  - ◆ **Grounding Techniques** – ways of coping that are designed to "ground" a person to the present moment using their five senses:
    - ▲ **Sound:** turn on loud music, or get her to listen to her breathing, traffic, birds, the wind, people, etc.
    - ▲ **Touch:** have her grip a piece of ice, touch her clothes, the chair or floor supporting her, stomp her feet so that she knows she *has* feet and can get away, etc.
    - ▲ **Smell:** have her sniff something strong like peppermint or perfume.
    - ▲ **Taste:** have her bite into a lemon or eat something spicy hot.
    - ▲ **Sight:** have her look around and identify colors, the shapes of things, the people nearby, etc.
  - ◆ Sometimes she may need to reestablish her boundaries. People having a flashback can lose their sense of where they leave off and the world begins, as if they have no skin. Suggestions: Have her wrap up in a blanket, hold a pillow or stuffed animal, sit in a closet – any way she can feel herself truly separate and protected from the outside.



- After the flashback is over:
  - ♦ Flashbacks are usually very powerful and debilitating. Adrenaline, noradrenaline and other “fight or flight hormones” are dumped into their system, and it may take some time for these chemicals to dissipate and transition back to “normal.” Let her know that it’s OK if she wants to go home and sleep it off (have someone drive her home), or if she would just like to relax and sit quietly during the rest of the group time. Let her lie down on the floor, the couch or a bed for a while.
  - ♦ It’s not uncommon for people to cry, weep or apologize afterwards. Let her know it’s not her fault, it’s part of her wounding, and no one blames her or thinks any less of her. If there are others in the group who experience flashbacks, they should reassure her that they also struggle with them and know just how she feels. Don’t let her beat herself up about their flashback.
  - ♦ Let her know that flashbacks are important and – in a way – *good*. They are an opportunity for her to learn and understand more about the trauma she has experienced. They are often an indication that a person is ready to remember some traumatic events, and that the body has some important information to share.
  - ♦ Suggest that she honor her flashback experience for what it is: a testimony of the fact that she went through a traumatic experience and survived.
  - ♦ Pray with her. Thank God for helping her survive (both their original trauma and the flashback); ask Him to shine His light into the darkness of her memories and flashbacks, and help her make some sense out of it all.
  - ♦ Share comforting passages of scripture with her, such as Psalm 23; Psalm 27; Psalm 71:1-6; Psalm 91; Isaiah 42:16; 45:3; John 16:33; Romans 8:26-39.
  - ♦ Assure her that she is not crazy – she is *healing*.
- Plan ahead with those that you know may be prone to flashbacks:
  - ♦ Be sure you have the names and numbers of her husband (if married), therapist (if she has one), doctor or any other friend that she feels safe with and who is aware of her condition.
  - ♦ Ask her what you should do for her if and when she has a flashback. Has anything worked for her in the past?
  - ♦ Ask her what has triggered them in the past. Obviously, try to exclude those triggers from your group times. If, despite your best efforts, a triggering event occurs you’ll be immediately clued in to the situation and can act quickly.
  - ♦ Ask her if she has any early warning signs for her flashbacks. Sometimes a person’s surroundings might begin to look and feel out of focus and fuzzy. Other times it may feel like they’re separating from or losing touch with their surroundings, other people, or even themselves
  - ♦ Ask her what gives them the greatest sense of safety. Ask her what it looks like, smells like, sounds like, etc. Refer to that image, thought or memory to help her calm down and get grounded during a future flashback.
  - ♦ Have her select an object which can be a cue for her – such as a watch, ring, necklace, cross, Bible, or something else of special significance. This item will become her symbol for her current reality, a touchstone to bring her back to the present. As she is experiencing a future episode, call her attention to the item and tell her, “Look – remember this? This is what we talked about before, to let you know when you’re having a flashback. Remember – we agreed that when you see this, you’ll be able to calm down and come back to the present.”

## **19. THINGS TO DO BETWEEN MEETINGS**

Trauma usually leads to hopelessness, silence and isolation. Sufferers are not motivated to seek out social interaction – they'd rather stay home. Alone. This will deepen their hopelessness. If you can take the initiative and reach out to them, or organize activities that will involve several group members in a non-threatening setting, you can help reverse that downward spiral. The more “touches” the better.

- ◆ Call or stop by their house or office to chat briefly, find out about a prayer request they shared, see if they need a ride next week, meet their family, etc.
- ◆ Utilize email, Facebook, Twitter, or even actual paper, envelope and stamp to send them an encouraging message.
- ◆ Find some time to spend one-to-one with individual group members.
- ◆ Plan a group outing – either a fun event or a service project.
- ◆ Plan a dinner and invite husbands.
- ◆ Plan a weekend retreat – either with or without husbands.
- ◆ It's already been mentioned, but it bears repeating: **PRAY FOR THEM!**

# DISCUSSION SUGGESTIONS – CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER

**Note:** We are offering Objectives and Discussion Questions for the opening sections of the manual: “Before You Begin,” “Introduction” and “Prologue.” You don’t *have* to cover these sections in your group meetings – but there are a lot of helpful and motivational points in those three sections. And you don’t have to spend an entire session on each one either. As has been mentioned frequently above, you and the Lord should decide what your Care Group needs, and make plans based on that.

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .** (PAGE 3)

### **Objectives:**

- To let them know that God will be a primary element in the healing environment that we are proposing.
- To be sure they understand that the “brand” of Christianity we are advocating in this manual is not “religion,” but involves a personal *relationship* with Jesus Christ.
- To get them thinking about whether or not they actually have a relationship with Jesus Christ, and if not, to direct them to “Appendix A” starting on Page 217 to learn about, confirm or begin their relationship with Christ.

### **A creative suggestion from Karen Blehm** (See Acknowledgements):

The last shall be first! Start the first meeting by reading the story about the broken vases in Italy made beautiful – chapter 13, Page 214 entitled “The Beauty of Brokenness.” It will help set the tone for your “Band of Sisters” and give them hope that God can bring something beautiful out of what they are experiencing, and that God wants to give them treasures in their darkness.

### **Discussion Questions:**

First go over the things you read about above in “**11. First Session – things to get across**” that you feel would be important. Then, get into the content of the “Before You Begin” page. Either you read it, have a group member read it, or assign one paragraph to each group member to read. Avoid asking group member to read if they have trouble doing so out loud.

Don’t use *all* of these questions; just choose the ones that you think will be best for your group. **Note:** not every section will have all four types of questions in them. You can always add some of your own, though!

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ Most of us experience trauma of one sort or another during our lives. Probably all of us. Would a few of you mind sharing some of the difficult events you’ve had to endure in your lifetime – other than what you’re currently experiencing regarding to your husband’s war-related trauma?
  - ◊ How have these events changed you?
  - ◊ How many of you have ever heard about PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or STS – Secondary Traumatic Stress? What have you heard about them? [*Let them know that we’ll be learning a lot more about them in chapters 1 and 2.*]
  - ◊ What have some of you done to this point to help yourself deal with your husband’s Combat Trauma?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ From this “Before You Begin” page, how does this manual propose to help you as you struggle with your husband’s war-related difficulties?
  - ◊ A distinction is made between Christianity as a “religion” and Christianity as a “relationship.” What do you think the differences are?

- ❖ The section says that God is many things, but that one of His primary characteristics is . . . what? *[He is our Healer.]* Have any of you ever experienced direct healing from God? Do you know of anyone who has? *[If no one has any to share, perhaps you could be prepared to share an incident that you're aware of, or be ready to read a short first-person experience, perhaps from Guideposts magazine.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ❖ How do you think a person goes about obtaining healing from God? Do you think it's possible?
- ❖ How important do you think it is to have a personal relationship with God in order to receive His healing?
- ❖ Are there some of you here who already have a personal relationship with God by asking Jesus Christ into your life as your Savior? Are there some of you here who are still "on the way," and investigating what it means to have Christ as your Savior? Are there some of you here who simply don't want to consider that idea? *[If there are some in that third category, don't condemn them or dismiss them. Just be accepting of their current opinion and assure them that "being a Christian" isn't a prerequisite to attending the Care Group meetings. No one will force them to become a Christian and they won't be looked down upon as "second class group members." But encourage them to keep an open mind, and let them know that you'd be willing to answer any additional questions they might have about the Bible and Christianity outside of the normal meeting time. Then, pray for them, love them unconditionally, be their friend, encourage them, and don't hold back sharing the Bible with them! God's Word will affect them in profound ways that you probably cannot anticipate. No need to defend a lion, just unleash it! Hebrews 4:12.]*
- *[Note to the leader: If it seems that the majority of the group doesn't have an understanding of the gospel and haven't taken that step of inviting Christ into their lives as Savior, you may want to go directly to Appendix A as a group, and read through it with them – if they're open to the idea. You can ask some Content and Follow-up questions as you go along (whatever God puts into your mind), but you won't need to do much more than to simply read through the "Four Principles" that are presented. Literally millions of people over the past sixty years have begun a relationship with Christ by simply reading and understanding this four-point presentation. At the bottom of Page 219, ask each person to consider which circle represents their life, and which circle would they like to have represent their life. They could either respond out loud or silently. Then lead them through the prayer that is presented on Page 220. If they prayed along with you, congratulate them for the step they have taken – be excited about it! A new, eternal creation has just been born! Finish by going over the points made on Pages 220 and 221.*

*If it doesn't seem like a good idea to take your whole group through Appendix A, but there are some in the group who need to and would like to, approach them separately and share it with them alone.]*

- **Application Questions**

- ❖ Take a look at the Table of Contents page. Which of the thirteen chapters do you think will be the most difficult one for you to go through? What can you begin doing *today* that will prepare you for approaching that chapter (or chapters)?
- ❖ At the bottom of Page 3, the verse (1 John 5:4,5) states that "whatever is born of God overcomes the world." What do you think the term "born of God" refers to? *[Note: the one who is "born of God" overcomes the world; "he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" overcomes the world; so "born of God" = "he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."]*
- ❖ What are you willing to do to pursue the healing, strengthening and stabilizing of your home, your life and your relationship with your husband? *[Hopefully someone will mention that they*

*see When War Comes Home as one of the tools God could use to help them experience healing, and that they will be willing to come back to future meetings.]*



## **INTRODUCTION BY MAJOR GENERAL BOB DEES** (PAGES 5 & 6)

### **Objectives:**

- To help the group members know that the ones behind this manual understand and honor the courage and sacrifices they have made as their husbands went to war.
- To reiterate that the solutions offered in this manual – just as in *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* – are Christ-centered
- To give a preview of what subjects will be addressed in this manual – to give them hope of things to come.
- To encourage group members to dive into the manual and “go for it.”

### **Discussion Questions:**

Again, don't use *all* of these questions; just pick the ones that you think will generate good discussion among your group members. Write the ones you pick right into your manual.

- **Opening Questions**
  - ❖ General Dees was expressing his respect and appreciation for the support and sacrifices you have offered while your husbands were at war – and your service to our country as a consequence (“warriors in defense of your very nation”). Do you feel that your country has held and expressed this same respect and appreciation for you? How do you think this affects the stress you struggle with?
  - ❖ General Dees mentioned how sometimes war comes home with the warrior. To what extent can you identify with this concept?
- **Content & Follow-up Questions**
  - ❖ What did General Dees mention as “The Toughest Job on Earth”? Do you agree with him? What makes it so hard?
  - ❖ Besides the obvious physical wounds, General Dees mentions three other kinds of wounds that your husbands could have sustained while “downrange” [*third paragraph – Page 5*]. What are they? Physical wounds are easy to see and describe – how would you describe emotional, psychological and spiritual wounds?
  - ❖ How have your husband's wounds – both obvious and invisible – affected your household?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ❖ As you read through the bullet points that General Dees mentioned would be covered in this manual, which of these do you feel you will need help with the most?
  - ❖ General Dees asserts that there is HOPE [*middle paragraph, page 6*] for wives of wounded warriors. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being totally hopeful, how hopeful are you *today* that that you and your husband can get back to a place of strength, stability and healing once again? Do you have hope that your “Hope Index” could be improved? [*Note: spend some time as a group praying about this, asking God to give them hope.*]

## **PROLOGUE BY MARSHÉLE CARTER WADDELL (PAGES 7 & 8)**

Consider reading this section to them as a group, and then discussing it.

### **Objectives:**

- To help the group members realize that the ones behind this manual understand the devastating effects that Combat Trauma has on a wife and her family.
- To help group members identify with someone who has experienced what they have experienced, realizing that there is hope and healing available – just as it was to Marshéle .
- To help them realize from Marshéle's story that it was God who made the difference in her life; that He knows, understands and wants to walk with the wounded warrior's wife through her valley.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Can any of you identify with Marshéle's experiences with her husband?
  - ◇ They were attending a patriotic celebration that Mark should have felt honored by – Why did he just want to leave? Do you find this difficult to understand? Do you find this kind of behavior difficult to accommodate in your husband?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Marshéle was very happy that the only injury that her husband had apparently sustained while downrange was a broken leg. Was she right about that?
  - ◇ What other injuries had he sustained?
  - ◇ Was Mark eager or reluctant to get treatment for his Combat Trauma? What effect did this have on his family?
  - ◇ Marshéle writes that “the aftermath of war is a battle fought . . .” where? [*Last paragraph, Page 7.*] How equipped are the wives of combat veterans to fight this war? What can be done about it?
  - ◇ What makes *When War Comes Home* a manual that is uniquely situated to help the wives of Combat Trauma sufferers? [*See third paragraph, Page 8.*]
  - ◇ Marshéle wrote that “Satan's lie is that a vet's wife will never get out of this darkness, that her new, permanent address is in the valley of the shadow of PTSD.” [*Fourth paragraph, page 8.*] To what extent has this been your opinion? Do you think it's a lie or the truth?
  - ◇ Do you think it's OK to have doubts about God's ability or willingness to help you and your husband to experience healing? [*Yes, it's OK. See what Marshéle wrote third-to-last paragraph, page 8. Even one of Jesus' disciples doubted, but Jesus gently turned him into a believer.*]
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What can you do – starting today – to keep your husband's Combat Trauma from defining your life?



## **CHAPTER 1: WHAT HAPPENED TO MY HUSBAND? (PAGES 9-22)**

### **UNDERSTANDING COMBAT TRAUMA**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand that their husband's traumatic experiences in combat and his current condition is a result of free will, the fall of man, Satan's objectives on earth, and man's inhumanity to man.

- To help group members understand the physical, emotional and physiological components of their husband's Combat Trauma.
- To give group members the opportunity to do an unofficial assessment of their husbands' symptoms of PTSD and TBI.
- To give them a reality check regarding the complex and difficult nature of their road ahead.

### Discussion Questions:

Again, don't use *all* of these questions; just choose the ones that you think will be best for your group. Remember to **write the questions you want to use right into your manual**, so you don't have to keep flipping back and forth between the Leader's Guide and your manual. It will make your questions flow better as you cycle between Opening, Content, Follow-up and Application questions on each page or section.

### Lauren's Journal (Page 9)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Did you pray for your husband when he was deployed? What were some of the things you prayed for him? Do you feel your prayers were answered? How would you have prayed differently for him (if you would have)?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What is Lauren thankful and glad about? [*That her husband made it home alive.*] What was she upset and disillusioned about? [*That he was OK physically, but his soul was wounded and this wound was affecting her whole household.*] Can you identify with this?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What did Lauren mean by "God protected Jason, but God didn't protect him."? [*Fourth paragraph, page 9.*]
  - ◇ [*Consider discussing this statement: "The good news is that my husband came home from the war! The bad news is that my husband came home from the war."*]
  - ◇ How has your husband's behavior disrupted your household since he came home?

### How could God have allowed this to happen? (Page 10, 11)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Since your husband came home, have you ever found yourself asking "Where was God? Why didn't He take better care of my husband when he was at war?" Did you come up with any answers?
  - ◇ Have you ever thought about the *huge* philosophical question, "If God is good, why is there pain and suffering in the world?" Have you come up with any answers? [*This is a huge question! Don't try to get to the bottom of it in this session – just get them thinking about it. Let them know that if they haven't resolved it in their minds, they are not alone! Some of the greatest philosopher and Bible scholars in history have struggled over it too.*]
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ If God is supremely good and supremely powerful, why do bad things to happen in our world? [*Short answer: God wants us to love and obey Him based on a free choice we make – not because He has coerced it. Mankind has chosen to go his own way – in opposition to what God wants. But because God is committed to let man exercise free will, He must also allow us to experience the consequences of exercising it wrongly. This leads to selfishness, war, conquest and oppression.*]
  - ◇ So where was God during your husband's deployment? [*See bottom of page 10.*]
  - ◇ Can we ever know all the reasons why one soldier was killed, and another wasn't? How one soldier ended up with PTSD, and another didn't? [*No; third paragraph, page 11.*]

- ◇ Would some of you like to share where you put your “x” on the line diagram in the middle of page 11? Would you like to expand on that some – tell us why you feel that way?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What’s the problem with wanting to be the “Captain of my soul”? *[Fourth paragraph from the bottom, page 10. See the two paragraphs following for an answer to this.]*
  - ◇ Do you agree or disagree with the statement in this section: “Your husband’s condition is due to the sinful actions of evil men – not God.” *[Bottom of page 10]?*
  - ◇ What do you think it means in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that “God put eternity in our hearts”? *[Third paragraph, page 11.]* How does this relate to your current struggle with Secondary Trauma or your husband’s Combat Trauma?
  - ◇ Is there any shame associated with putting your “x” towards the left end of the line? *[No! It’s just a statement of what currently is. No one condemns you for it, and God understands the reasons for it. Just be open to the possibility that He will give you reasons to shift that “x” to the right more before long.]*
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ Have you ever asked God to give you a “gift of faith” so that you could trust Him that the answers will eventually come? *[Fourth paragraph, page 11.]* How about if we ask the Lord for that right now?

### The past and the present (Pages 11, 12)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Why do you think it’s a good idea to sometimes remember the good times in the past when your present is so difficult? *[Read Psalm 143:5, 6 – David gives us a good example. God’s faithfulness in the past is a good indication of His continued faithfulness in the present and future.]*
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote at the bottom of page 11, about your husbands positive traits prior to deployment, and how it makes you feel now to think about them? *[Try to lead the discussion to a hopeful place: these things which were once so evident in your husbands can become evident again.]*
  - ◇ Would some of you like to share the prayer that you wrote at the top of page 12? *[After someone reads their prayer, ask someone else (warn them ahead of time) what that person was expressing as some of her deepest needs, then ask someone to pray those things for that person.]*
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What can you do to remind yourself to make the things you just wrote about a matter of regular prayer?

### How combat has affected your husband (Pages 12, 13)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Before reading this section, what did you already know about Combat Trauma and/or PTSD?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ The second paragraph mentions that your husband didn’t have to be a “trigger puller” to end up experiencing Combat Trauma. Would that describe your husband?
  - ◇ Let’s look at the spectrum of Combat Trauma in your manual. I’m going to read a description of each of the “mileposts” on that spectrum from “Mild” to “Severe,” and when I’m finished, put an “x” on the line where you think your husband is right now.
    - **Pre-Deployment, Deployment and Reintegration Issues:** Tension, frustration with spouse, children, military; normal adjustments to new circumstances.



- **Combat/Operational Stress Reactions:** Keyed up, irritable, jumpy, poor focus, anxiety due to combat.
- **Adjustment Disorders:** Depression, tearfulness, hopelessness, anger, fighting.
- **Acute Stress Disorder:** Distress, flashbacks, nightmares, self-isolating, insomnia.
- **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder:** Fear, helplessness, horror, hallucinations, amnesia, violent, suicidal, hypervigilant, drug/alcohol abuse; symptoms last four weeks to years.
- ◇ Would some of you like to share where you put your “x” on the spectrum, and why you feel that describes where your husband is right now? How long has this gone on?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ When you think about how your husband was right after he returned from war, would you say that he is experiencing more of less of those distressing feelings and symptoms? *[This will tell you whether or not her husband's Combat Trauma/PTSD is getting worse or better, or perhaps if they have delayed-onset PTSD, which can show up months or years after the traumatic event.]*

#### PTSD Isn't New (Pages 13, 14)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Were you surprised to read any of the facts in this section? Which ones? Why did it surprise you?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ From this section, what is your impression about how rare Combat Trauma/PTSD is? *[See 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph in this section. The point is: it's not rare, it's common.]*
  - ◇ Your husband may be acting very different from how he did before he was deployed. How can anybody say this is “common” or “normal”? *[For those who have experienced what he did, it is common and normal.]*
  - ◇ In what ways is PTSD similar to a physical wound? *[See top of page 14.]*
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ PTSD has been called a wound of the soul and a wound of the identity. What do you think these expressions mean?
  - ◇ Does this section give you the idea that Combat Trauma/PTSD is a disorder that can be cured quickly and easily? Does it indicate that a person just needs to have more courage or strength or faith, and they'll soon turn out just fine?
  - ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote down in the blank on page 14, about how you can describe your husband's “soul wounds”?
  - ◇ Can you think of some of your husband's friends who may be experiencing Combat Trauma?

#### What causes PTSD? (Page 14, 15)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ When you experience injustice, or when you are attacked and harmed by someone unexpectedly, how do you normally respond? How about when you encounter some kind of a natural disaster or have an accident, and it's really no one's fault? *[If any of the women in your group have experienced a trauma-producing event separate from her husband's war experience, ask her to share how she responded when it happened. Then ask the group if they could imagine their husbands responding in a similar way to combat experiences.]*
- **Content Question**
  - ◇ As you read though the various things listed in this section that can cause PTSD, do you think any of these events or factors contributed to your husband's experience of Combat Trauma/PTSD? *[Same issues asked about in blank on Page 15. You might mention that the*

*more of these traumatic events a person experiences prior to going into combat, it increases the likelihood that a person will experience PTSD after their time at war.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Why do you think that PTSD can become especially severe or long-lasting when the trauma comes from an intentional human act?
- ◊ Do you think everyone will react the same way to a traumatic event? Why or why not?

### *The Physiology, Psychology and Theology of PTSD / PTSD Persistence (Pages 15, 16)*

- **Opening Question**

- ◊ Why do you think God would make us with a special response pathway that kicks in only when we are in great danger?

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ The coverage of this issue in the manual might have been too complex for most people. But what would you say is the main way this defense mechanism works? Can anyone summarize it in just a couple of sentences?
- ◊ How does this defense mechanism keep us safe?
- *[Note to leader – you may want to spend some time clarifying some of the terms or concepts in this section.]*
- ◊ Would any of you like to share where you put your “x” on the two lines in this section (middle of page 16)?
- ◊ Have some of you asked the question that is asked here: “Why can’t I move on?” Tell us about that – why do you think you haven’t been able to move on?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ When you were experiencing one of your past traumatic events, can any of you think back and remember some of the defensive processes and reactions described in this section happening to you?
- ◊ Do you have any ideas about what may help you get “un-stuck” from the “crisis-alert mode” and move on?
- ◊ Have you ever thought that your current Combat Trauma condition proves that you are weak, defective or a coward? Since you have now learned the physiological and spiritual basis of your condition, how has that changed your opinion of yourself?

### *The Physiology, Psychology and Theology of PTSD / PTSD Persistence (Pages 15-17)*

- **Opening Question**

- ◊ Why do you think God would make us with a special response pathway that kicks in only when we are in great danger?

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ The coverage of this issue in the manual might have been too complex for most people. What would you say is the main way this defense mechanism works? Can anyone summarize it in just a couple of sentences?
- ◊ How does this defense mechanism keep us safe?
- *[Note to leader – you may want to spend some time clarifying some of the terms or concepts in this section.]*
- ◊ Would any of you like to share where you put your X on the two lines in this section (middle of page 16)?
- ◊ Have some of you asked the question that is asked in the “Persistence” section: “Why can’t he move on?” Tell us about that – why do you think he hasn’t been able to move on?

- ◇ Would any of you like to share what you wrote at the bottom of page 17? Is there anything you can do to help him feel more comfortable about talking with “the right person” about his traumatic combat experiences?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Have any of you ever heard your husband describe his traumatic events? If so, did he describe any of the defensive processes and reactions noted in this section?
  - ◇ Do you have any ideas about what may help your husband get “un-stuck” from the “crisis-alert mode” and move on?
  - ◇ Have you ever thought that your husband’s current Combat Trauma condition proves that he is weak, defective or a coward? Since you have now learned the physiological and spiritual basis of his condition, how has that changed your opinion of him?

### PTSD Symptoms (Pages 17-19)

- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ If you haven’t done it already, read over the list of symptoms and check the ones you think your husband is currently experiencing. Are there any words or concepts that you would like to ask about?
  - ◇ How would you summarize each of the three categories of symptoms?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ As you look at all of the boxes you checked, if you could pick three symptoms that are the most prominent for him, which would they be?
  - ◇ Does the number of boxes you checked make you feel hopeless, or hopeful?
  - ◇ Is it helpful to be able to see the symptoms your husband (and therefore *you*) is dealing with displayed on the paper there in front of you – and to notice that many others are dealing with similar symptoms?
  - ◇ Would any of you like to share what you wrote in the blank on page 19, about things you miss most about how your life was before your husband was deployed?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What could you begin to do right away to help lessen the influence of these symptoms on you and your family? *[Note: they may not yet have any ideas – except to pray and keep coming to these group meetings. But that’s OK. Just let them know that the main purpose of the manual and of the group meetings is to give them specific, practical things they can do to bring about their healing. So be sure to keep coming back each week!]*

### Traumatic Brain Injury (Pages 19, 20)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Did any of your husbands experience a blast or sudden blow to the head while they were in combat that could have resulted in TBI? Have any of your husbands been formally diagnosed with TBI?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Why are so many people who have TBI wrongly categorized as having had PTSD?
  - ◇ Does your husband have some of the symptoms on the list on page 18 & 19 which are unique to TBI (the non-bold ones in the list)?
- **Follow-up Question**
  - ◇ How many of you think your husbands could have *both* TBI and PTSD?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ TBI can be definitively identified by medical professionals who are trained in its detection. If your husband experienced a blast or sudden blow to the head while he was deployed, how

soon are you planning to get him checked out (if you haven't already)? *[A good opportunity to practice your gift of nagging? Do what you can to get him diagnosed – it will be better for both of you!]*

What's ahead for me . . . for us? (Pages 20, 21)

- **Opening Question**

- ◊ As you look toward the future for your husband and yourself, would you say you were mainly optimistic or pessimistic? If pessimistic, what do you think it would take to make you more optimistic? *[Stop and ask one of the group members to pray for that right after it's shared.]*

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ What do you plan to do to heal your husband's Combat Trauma? *[Trick question! The point is made in the second paragraph in this section that God is the healer, and we are not.]*
- ◊ Since you are not your husband's officially-designated healer, does that mean you are supposed to take a totally passive role? *[No – God wants to partner with you to help you become a significant "bridge" to the healer.]*
- ◊ What's one of the most important things you can do to help your husband heal? *[Take care of yourself – third paragraph in this section.]*
- ◊ Who would like to share what you wrote at the bottom of page 21, about your personal definition of how life will be when you and your husband are "healed"? What do some of the rest of you think – is this possible? *[We are hoping that the rest of the group will be enthusiastic and supportive, and give a rousing "Heck yes!"]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ The manual states at the top of page 21 that the prognosis for your marriage is not very positive. This is the reality of the situation. Does it make you despair or strengthen your resolve to do whatever it takes to help both you and your husband reach "New Normal"? *[If it's the former, take time right now – and regularly – to pray for that person's faith and determination to be strengthened.]*

- **Application Question**

- ◊ The process you are entering into will not be without setbacks and bumps. What are some ideas (from all group members) that we can employ whenever we hit those brick walls and disappointments?

Lauren's Prayer (Page 22)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Lauren's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 2: WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?** (PAGES 23-34)

### **UNDERSTANDING SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS**

**Objectives:**

- To help group members understand the basic facts about Secondary Traumatic Stress.
- To encourage them in the knowledge that what they are experiencing is not uncommon.
- To help group members be aware of the seriousness of STS, and how it can advance into PTSD if it is not dealt with in an intentional manner.
- To give group members an opportunity to assess themselves with regard to possible STS.
- To help them get a sense of how serious or benign their particular experience of STS is.

## Discussion Questions:

Again, don't use *all* of these questions; just choose the ones that you think will be best for your group.

### *Erin's Journal* (Page 23)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ You have noticed many changes in your husband since he returned home. What changes have you noticed in yourself?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ What were some of Erin's thoughts and worries about God? [*Second paragraph.*] Do you think they were legitimate?
  - ◊ What were some of Erin's strained experiences with other people? [*Fourth paragraph.*] Have any of you experienced this too?
  - ◊ How has she had to adjust her lifestyle even while living in her own home? [*Fifth paragraph.*]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Which of Erin's emotional responses could you identify with the most?
  - ◊ Why doesn't she just snap out of it, and get on with her life?

### *One trauma, two wounds* (Page 24)

- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ What are the two wounds talked about in this section?
  - ◊ How had Erin been trained to defend herself from this surprise attack? [*She hadn't.*]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Do you get the sense that Erin feels betrayed? She did her part – keeping the home fires burning, playing both her and Scott's roles, serving sacrificially. But now everything's going wrong. Who betrayed her? [*You can't place the blame on anyone – except perhaps the ones who originally started wars millennia ago. It's a series of horrible circumstances due to the fallen nature of man. Both Scott and Erin were willing to take a risk in order to serve and protect our country, but they were both wounded. It's war. But now, rather than trying to fix blame for her circumstances, Erin needs to become proactive in fighting her traumatic stress, connecting with God, and moving intentionally toward her "New Normal".*]

### *Secondary Traumatic Stress – Spousal Combat Trauma* (Pages 24-25)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ Had any of you ever heard about Secondary Traumatic Stress prior to reading this manual (or any of the other names it goes by in the second paragraph of this section)?
  - ◊ How does it make you feel to know that it has (finally) been identified, defined and therapists are trying to address it?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◊ Read Dr. Figley's definition of Secondary Traumatic Stress. Are there any portions of that definition that you feel apply to you?
  - ◊ Is it possible to experience the same sort of symptoms that your husband does, even though you have not experienced any violence? [*Yes – most of page 25 is about this.*] How have some of your stress symptoms mirrored your husband's disorder?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ How many of you in the group feel that you are experiencing *Secondary* Traumatic Stress? How many of you feel you are experiencing *Primary* Traumatic Stress? [*Take note of those who admit to this. There is a good chance that they have been (or are being) abused by their*

husbands – and might need some direct aid from you and others. Depending on the closeness of your group, you may want to ask if there are any in that second group (Primary Traumatic Stress) who would like to share the nature of the Trauma they have experienced. On the other hand, some women will be reluctant to talk about it for a variety of reasons. In that case, don't push it.]

- **Application Question**

- ◇ If you feel you are experiencing Primary Traumatic Stress, what can you do to keep future traumatic incidents from victimizing you? Do you need to take some protective measures? Do you need to take some legal action?

### Symptoms (Page 26-27)

- **Content Questions**

- *[If they haven't gone through the exercise of checking the boxes that correspond to symptoms they feel, have them do it now. If any of them don't understand some of the terms used, try your best to explain them to the group.]*
- ◇ How many of you were surprised at how many boxes you checked? How many were surprised at how few? *[Make the point that every person is different, and how each person responds to the various traumatic stressors they encounter will always vary considerably.]*
- ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote *[on page 27]* concerning the three symptoms that bother you the most?

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Look at that list of three symptoms you wrote on page 27. Have any of you been able to recognize any triggers that cause those symptoms to manifest? Would anyone like to share what some of those triggers are?

### Battle Buddy Assignment (Page 27, 28)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Have any of you been able to identify a "Battle Buddy" yet? If so, how do you and your Battle Buddy help each other?
- ◇ Why do you think it would be a good idea to have a Battle Buddy?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ Let's look at the verses on page 28. *[Read the first example (Psalm 5:1-3) and the example below it of how it can be changed to reflect words and phrases that we would normally use. Then have the group try their hand at it . . .]* Looking at the Psalm 25:15-20 passage, let's try to reword each sentence, putting it into our own words. *[Read the first sentence, and then just be silent, letting anyone in the group offer their interpretation spontaneously.]*

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ What good do you think it could do to take some of the prayers from King David and make them our own?

- **Application Question**

- *Have them pray through their list of symptoms with one or two other group members.*
- *Give them a few minutes to page through some of the Psalms in their Bibles, and pick out a few that they think would be good prayers that they'd like to pray for themselves. Then have each one share one with the group.*
- *Either as a group or paired up, spend some time praying some of these prayers of David.*

## How bad is it? (Pages 28-30)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ *[Before taking the self-assessment . . .] On a scale from 1 to 10, how serious would you say your Secondary Traumatic Stress is? Write your number somewhere in the margin of your study. [After they take the test, have them check that number again and see if they need to revise it. How many revised it up? How many down?]*

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ Why is this second assessment offered? *[See first paragraph, page 29.]*
- *[Note: If you have an early edition of the manual, some of the questions don't really fit the wording for the scale. At the upper end, it has "Very Often." Add to that "or Very Intensely or Exactly True."*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ *[When done, have them add up their scores.] Let's go around the group and share what each of our scores were. [In order to lighten the mood a bit after this exercise, you could have a little fun with this: be prepared to give a special humorous award to the one with the highest score. Idea: a baby pacifier tied by a ribbon to a giant chocolate bar. Might as well laugh about it, rather than cry!]*
- ◊ Taking note of your score, what does it mean to you personally? Does it make you feel hopeful or more hopeless? *[Be sure to read the paragraph beneath "My score is through the roof!" to give them perspective. Help them see that knowing this score will help them gain a better grasp of what they're experiencing.]*

- **Application Question**

- ◊ *[Suggest that they take this test again in three months, and see if their score has changed – and in which direction.]*

## Keeping the STRESS from becoming the DISORDER (Page 30-33)

- **Content Question**

- *[Have the group read through the nine suggestions that Dr. Scalise gives one at a time – if they haven't already done this exercise at home. Then give them a few minutes of silence to write a response in the blank. When they all seem done, ask if there's anyone who would like to read what they wrote. Not every person would have been able to write in each of the nine blanks – they don't all apply. If no one has anything to share, just go on to the next one.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- *[As people share what they wrote in the blanks, ask questions that will assure that they aren't being too ambitious, or setting the bar too low. Make sure they're concrete and practical. For instance, instead of "I want to be a happier person" guide them to discover specific ways to become happier by asking questions about it: "What kinds of activities make you happy? When have you been happiest in the past? What made you happy then? Can you construct that set of circumstances again? When? How?"]*

- **Application Question**

- ◊ *[They're ALL pretty much application questions!]*

## Wrap up (Page 33)

- **Opening Question**

- ◊ How hard was it to go through this chapter? Do you feel generally encouraged or discouraged? Why?

- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Would any of you like to share what you wrote in the blank about what you want God to do for you (bottom of page 33)?
- **Application**
  - ◇ As it says at the bottom of page 33, share what you wrote with your Battle Buddy. Become intentional about praying for it.

*Erin's Prayer* (Page 34)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Erin's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 3: WHY AM I SO SAD?** (PAGES 35-49)

### **DEALING WITH LOSS AND GRIEF ISSUES**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand the purpose of the grief mechanism that God has placed in each of us in order to cope with loss-events we experience.
- To help group members understand that grieving over what they lost in their traumatic combat experience is not only OK – it's *important*.
- To help group members understand what the normal grief process looks like.
- To give group members practical insights regarding how to grieve and how *not* to grieve.
- To give group members practical insights regarding how to mourn.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Danielle's Journal* (Pages 35)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ How does it make you feel when you look at photos of you and your husband prior to his deployment? Where those good times – better times than now?
  - ◇ Does thinking about how things were prior to his deployment make you sad for what has been lost, or hopeful about what can be regained?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ In the midst of Danielle's despair, she had some disturbing thoughts about Michael's death. What were they? [*Last paragraph.*]
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Have you ever had thoughts like those of Danielle? If you have, don't be ashamed. That's your grief, despair and desperation talking. It's your "survival mode" talking. But can you identify with Danielle's phrase: "...this death we keep dying every day"?
  - ◇ Danielle mentioned that the wives of the men that Michael trained with "have inner wounds that none of us dare to mention." [*Fourth paragraph.*] Why do you think these women were reluctant to mention their inner wounds?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What can you do to help other wives of combat veterans be more willing to open up about the inner wounds they have suffered?"



## Death, loss and grief (Page 36)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Can any of you identify with what the wife said in the text box, thinking that since her husband came home with no major physical injuries, everything would be fine? If so, how do you feel about it now?
- ◊ What was at the root of Danielle's pain? [*Love – second paragraph.*]
- ◊ If Danielle felt no grief over what she and her husband had lost, what would this indicate? [*Lack of love for her husband.*] What does this tell you about your grief?
- ◊ In the last sentence in this section “Death, loss and grief,” it says that it will be difficult to embrace the life and love that God has in mind for you if one of your hands still has a death grip on the past. What do you think about that statement? [*Expect someone to bring up the fact that it is so easy to say, “Forget the past.” You should counter with something like, “No one said it was going to be easy, by any means. And we never should ‘forget’ the past anyway. Nor will we even be able to. But we can come to the place where it doesn’t dominate us with sadness and despair, blocking everything else out. We’ll get to this place – eventually – by going through the process of grieving.”*]

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ What hope does Solomon's assertion that “Love is as strong as death” give you? [*Second paragraph – Song of Solomon 8:6.*]
- [*Look up some of the additional verses that showed how even the Son of God experienced grief on several occasions. In each verse, ask them what it was that Jesus lost. Matthew 26: 37, 38; Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41. If Jesus experienced grief, we shouldn't feel it's unusual that we would too.*]

## Understanding grief (Page 36)

- **Opening Question**

- ◊ Outside of your current trials relative to your husband's war experience, what is something that you have grieved about in the past? How does your current level of grief over your husband's situation compare to that?

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ What always triggers grief? [*A loss of some sort – paragraph at the top of page 37.*]
- ◊ What did Dr. Wright say was the real enemy? Not loss but . . . what? [*Second paragraph, page 37. Not facing the existence of the loss.*]

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ As a result of your traumatic experiences due to your husband's Combat Trauma, what are some of the things that you have lost? [*This is the same question asked in the middle of page 37. You could just ask them share what they wrote there, or – if they haven't written yet – give them the chance to think about it for a while, write, and then share what they wrote.*]
- ◊ How could grief be considered “a sacred expression of love” as Dr. May wrote? Does it seem particularly “loving” to you right now?
- ◊ Can anybody give us a modern-day interpretation of what Shakespeare wrote in the text box on page 37?

## The purpose of grief (Pages 37-38)

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ Why did God build the grief response into us when He created us? What is this supposed to help us do? *[Integrate our losses into our altered world, and move on – first paragraph in this section.]*
- ◇ What will happen to the intensity of our sadness if we refuse to engage God's grief mechanism? *[Our sadness may never lose its intensity – second paragraph.]*
- ◇ As many grief experts say, "You can't heal what you can't . . . what? *[Feel – top of page 38.]* What does this mean to you? Do you feel you are fully engaging your emotions, or possibly stuffing or denying them?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why do you think God would be so attentive to our tears? Why does He care if we are sad or not?
- ◇ Why doesn't God just take away the painful feelings of sadness in our hearts?
- *[Plan ahead a bit, and order one of the Jewish tear bottles from [www.tearbottle.com](http://www.tearbottle.com) or [www.timelesstraditionsgifts.com](http://www.timelesstraditionsgifts.com) or bring in pictures of the bottles from those web sites. They make a good object lesson. You might even consider getting one of these bottles for each of the members of your group, and presenting them with it as a reminder that God considers their tears precious, and that He weeps with them.]*
- ◇ Read through the bullet points under "When we grieve." When done, ask which point each group member identifies with the most.
- ◇ Are there any of you that identify with any of the four points under "When we refuse to grieve"? How can we as a "Band of Sisters" help you?

## "Normal" Grief – What you can expect to experience (Pages 38-39)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What great Christian leader/writer/philosopher also went through the "dark forest of grief"? How does his experience seem similar to yours?
- ◇ *[After they've gone through the exercise . . .]* In the exercise on pages 38 and 39, how many of you checked more than five boxes? How many more than ten? If you had to choose one of the boxes you checked as the one that most characterizes your current emotional state, which would it be?
- ◇ For those who checked ten or more boxes, do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing? *[See paragraph at the end of this section – could be good; engaging their grief.]* Do any of you feel you could be "hung up" in the process, as it is described in this paragraph? If you are, what do you think can be done about that?

## What about "loss of faith"? (Pages 39, 40)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Why do you think someone who goes through a traumatic experience will sometimes doubt what they once believed about God?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How many of you could identify with what C.S. Lewis wrote in this section? *[Blank on page 40].*
- ◇ If one or more of you have experienced a "crisis of faith," would you care to share with the rest of us what it was like? Where are you now in this crisis – has it been resolved, or are you still struggling?
- ◇ Read the "God's secret work" section (page 40). Can you imagine what work God might be doing right now, during your "dark night of the soul"? How might this eventually bring you joy, as Jesus' crisis of faith brought Him joy?

- **Application**

- *[Break into groups of two or three, and spend some time in prayer, sharing with God what your current crisis of faith is, and asking Him to increase your faith, give you the proper perspective, and help you to become aware of what kind of “night shift” work He’s doing for you.]*

What you can expect from others (Pages 40-42)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Why do you think people treat grievors differently?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ Would someone like to share some of the “less-than-helpful” things that people have said to you as they try to mollify your grief? *[Exercise on page 41.]* Even though they probably meant well, why would you consider this remark “less-than-helpful”?
- ◇ Share an example of a time when someone shared or did one of the “helpful” things in the second list. How did it make you feel? What was accomplished?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What do you think might be the good-hearted, compassionate attitude behind each of these “less-than-helpful” remarks?
- ◇ Would anyone like to share what they wrote in the set of three blanks on pages 41 and 42?

How NOT to grieve (Page 42)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ *[After they’ve gone through the list on page 42 and checked the boxes of behaviors they tend to engage in...]* Look at your list. Of all the behaviors you checked, which one seems to be your most common way to avoid grieving? Why do you think you tend to engage in that particular behavior? Can you think of what would be the *opposite* of that behavior? Would it be helpful for you to do that instead?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What can you do in the future to help yourself recognize when you’re engaging in one of these non-helpful coping behaviors, and go a different direction? What could you do instead of your most common behavior?
- ◇ When can you do the “Battle Buddy Assignment” mentioned at the bottom of page 42? *[How about right now?]*

How to grieve (Pages 43-44)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- If we were talking about, say, the death of a loved one, it might be fairly simple to pin-point where you are on the Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle on page 43 – because an event like that would have a very precise starting point. But the grief you are experiencing over what you and your husband have lost due to his combat experiences may not have had such a specific beginning – no single event acted as a starter’s gun. Nevertheless, read the descriptions of the seven stages of grief, and see if you can identify where you are in the cycle. Place an “x” on the line in the graphic where you think you are.
- ◇ How did some of you answer the questions at the top of page 44 – How do you feel about where you are in the process and what do you think it will take to move you beyond your present stage?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Do you think you may be experiencing some of the back-and-forth, stalled-out, loop-de-loop pathways between stages mentioned in the “A few words about the process” section? Can you think of any way to smooth out the process? *[They may not be able to think of any, but a*

*few could be mentioned: stay connected with God, look to Him for insight, engage your emotions rather than avoid them, pray, share your difficulties and despair with your Battle Buddy.]*

### How to have a good mourning (Pages 44-47)

- **Opening Question**

- ◊ What are some of the unusual ways you have seen people mourn? *[Have them think about what they've seen or heard about how other cultures mourn after a death.]*

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Remember where God is. Where is God relative to those who are brokenhearted? Why do you think you hold a special attraction to Him?
  - ♦ *[Exercise: Have everyone close their eyes and follow the instructions at the bottom of page 44.]*
- ◊ Remember the past and remain optimistic. Can any of you think of a time in the past where you went through a very difficult or traumatic time, and God brought you through it?
- ◊ What's the difference between the "Think happy thoughts" cliché and what the Bible says in Philippians 4:8?
- ◊ Put your faith in the right place. Before reading this section, how would you have answered the question: "What do I have faith in?" How would you change your answer now – what *should* you put your faith in? How could one continue to have faith in God when – as David Shepperd wrote near the bottom of page 45, we "watch every dream go down in flames"? *[If we have a strong belief that God is good and all-powerful, and that He loves us, then we can continue to look to Him for help and guidance even when things don't turn out the way we wanted. We can continue to trust that He knows best and will eventually bring us to a favorable outcome – one that has eternity in mind.]*
- ◊ Don't try to be the lone Ranger. Who do you know who is throwing you a rope?
- ◊ Do something with your anger. What are some of the (helpful!) things you do when you are especially frustrated with your current situation? What will you do the next time you become angry? *[Blank in the middle of page 46.]*
- ◊ Keep a grief journal. Are there some of you that would like to keep a Grief Journal for a while? *[Agree on a set period – try two weeks to begin with.]*
- ◊ Write a lament. *[Read the laments that are included in this section, then give the group members a chance to write their own lament. Help them to understand it's a "no holds barred" exercise, in which they can pour out their hearts to God and tell Him exactly what they think about the sad circumstances they're in.]*

### Signs that your mourning is working / Grief Memorials (Pages 47, 48)

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ What were some of the "Why?" questions that you wrote down in this section?
- ◊ How were you able to change some of those questions into "How?" questions?
- ◊ What are some of the additional "How?" questions you came up with? *[This could be a good exercise for the group to do together – a brainstorming session.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Why do you think the "How?" questions are healthier ones to ask than the "Why?" questions?
- ◊ Have you ever received many answers to your "Why?" questions?
- ◊ Why do you think making a Grief Memorial could be helpful for a person in the mourning process?

- **Application Questions**

- ◊ What kind of a “Grief Memorial” could you make that would connect with the loss you suffered? When do you plan to make it?

Danielle's Prayer (Page 49)

- Ask someone to read the “Promise from God's Word” verse and then pray Danielle's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 4: FORIVENESS: IS IT POSSIBLE? (PAGES 51-65)**

### **THE EMPOWERING NATURE OF FORGIVENESS**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand the importance of forgiving their husband who may have wounded them (physically, emotionally, spiritually), why this will benefit both of them, and how to go about it.
- To help group members understand what forgiveness is and is not.
- To give group members sufficient reasons *why* they should be motivated to extend forgiveness to their husbands.
- To give group members a practical plan which will empower them to forgive their husbands for any harm they have done them in the past, and prepare them to forgive them for sins in the future.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Christina's Journal (Page 51)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ How easy or hard is it for you to forgive your husband when he does things that hurt you?

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ What was one of the reasons Christina was so harsh with her daughter? [*Her husband Angelo had been harsh with her the previous night. It didn't make it right, but Christina's woundedness contributed to her harsh response to Maria.*]
- ◊ How did Maria show that she forgave Christina?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Has anyone ever given you a “Second Chance Card”? Would you care to share what happened?
- ◊ With regards to forgiving your husbands – do you think they make 490<sup>th</sup> chance cards? [*A reference to Matthew 18:22, where Jesus says we should forgive our brother seventy times seven.*] What happens if he sins against you 491 times? [*Still forgive him. Jesus was making the point that there shouldn't be a limit to the number of times we forgive someone. Good thing, too, because God has definitely forgiven each of us more than 490 times!*]

Putting your pain in context (Page 52)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Even though Angelo is back from the war, he and Christina are in a battle with whom?
- ◊ Although their primary enemy is Satan, who is he trying to make them *think* their enemy is? [*Each other.*]

- ❖ What should be one of the primary tactics we use to fight our enemy? [*Simply to resist him – James 4:7, 8, sixth paragraph.*]
- ❖ Rather than to fight fire with fire (and in a battle with the devil using those weapons we'll always lose), how should we fight him instead? [*Overcome evil with good – Romans 12:21*].
- ❖ What is one more weapon we can use in this battle? [*Love – second-to-last paragraph in this section.*]

- **Application Question**

- ❖ What are some ways that you can take the initiative in showing love to your husband? Where does the act of forgiving your husband fit into this?

What is forgiveness? (Pages 52, 53)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ❖ What are some of your thoughts to these forgiveness “definition components”? Some of them seem almost beyond our ability to do – for instance, to show mercy after moral injustice? How can we do that? [*A good time to begin bringing in the notion that, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). This kind of forgiving is supernatural and we need to look to Him to provide the ability.*]
- ❖ Can we be expected to forgive someone who has abused us? [*Yes, it is possible. We don't excuse or condone the abuse or submit to future abuse, but we can come to the place where we can forgive our abuser – even if it's our husband.*]

Know when to walk away, know when to run: The issue of abuse (Page 53)

- **Opening Questions**

- ❖ Do you think that a good Christian woman should be willing to submit herself to continued, chronic abuse? [*The answer we're fishing for here is an emphatic NO!*]

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ❖ Read the second paragraph in this section, which gives a good definition of “abuse.” Based on this definition, have any of you ever experienced abuse from your husband? How often has it happened? Is it on-going? [*If it is on-going, you may want to consider either taking the whole group into Chapter 5 immediately (if it's a common problem) or get some special one-to-one sessions with the individuals who are dealing with on-going abuse.*]
- ❖ Despite the abuse you may have suffered from your husband, do you think it will be possible for you to forgive him? [*We'll revisit this question at the end of this chapter, after they've had more input on biblical forgiveness.*]

Nine facts about biblical forgiveness (Pages 53-58)

- **Opening Question**

- ❖ Before diving into this section, what are some things you already know about forgiveness? [*This can be a simple brainstorming session where they give one-sentence contributions, such as, “God forgives us,” “Jesus says we should forgive those who trespass against us,” “Sometimes it's not easy to forgive someone who has hurt you,” etc.*]
- ❖ If you forgive someone who has wronged you, and don't seek vengeance, aren't you agreeing with them that what they did is OK? Won't they just keep doing that hurtful thing to others? [*By forgiving, we are not condoning the sin. We want God to deal with them directly, so we step out of the way to let Him work. When Jesus asked His Father to forgive those who were killing Him, He was in no way condoning murder and false conviction. He was showing the Father's love to them, which could eventually bring them to a place of righteousness and reconciliation to God. On the eternal scale, that is much more desirable than seeing them punished. We can forgive someone from our heart so that we no longer hold a grudge against them, but still allow for legal processes to bring about civil justice. Thieves, rapists, abusers and murderers should still pay for their crimes.*]

- 1. *Forgiveness is supernatural debt relief* (Pages 53-54)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ When a person declares bankruptcy, where does their debt go? How is this like what Christ does for the debts we owe God for our sins? What happens to the debts that others owe *us* due to their sins toward us (or, at least what *should* happen to them)?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ When people sin against you and abuse you, it's like they owe you a debt. If nothing else, they *at least* owe you an apology. But how do we go about collecting that debt if they are without any spiritual or emotional assets? How can we release them from their debt – and us from constantly seeking payment on that debt?
    - ◇ Would some of you like to share what you wrote down in the blank (middle of page 54)? Are these things that you have forgiven, or that you think you can eventually forgive?
- 2. *True forgiveness is a process, not a one-time event* (Pages 54-55)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ Have you ever been offended by someone, chose to forgive them, but then still just couldn't shake a persistent sense of animosity toward them? What did you do about it? Were you ever able to feel like you fully forgave that person?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Have you ever experienced this “onion principle” when trying to forgive someone?
    - ◇ Would anyone like to share what they wrote in the blank at the top of page 55, about which line of response you're on regarding your husband?
  - **Application Question**
    - ◇ If you're on the lower line, and want to get to the upper line, how can this be accomplished?
- 3. *True forgiveness is costly* (Page 55)
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ In your conflicts with your husband, do you have the tendency to “play the shallow forgiveness card” with him, just to avoid conflict? If so, is that helpful or ultimately harmful?
    - ◇ If you were able to forgive your husband for some of his sins against you, what would it cost you? Are you willing and able to pay that price?
- 4. *True forgiveness can help my husband* (Pages 55)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ What is your ultimate objective: to help or to harm your husband? Is forgiveness one way that you feel you can help him? How might your forgiveness help him?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Can you think of a time in the past when you offended someone (either accidentally or on purpose) and they forgave you? How was your relationship with that person after that?

- 5. True forgiveness frees me (Pages 55-56)
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Can you identify with the analogy of “debtor’s prison”? Is there some respect in which you are holding your husband in prison, and constantly “visiting” him there, wondering when he’s going to shape up and pay his debt to you?
    - ◇ Has it ever been your philosophy when you are at odds with your husband to just “keep the score even,” though you know neither of you will win?
    - ◇ On page 56, what did Dr. Flanigan say would happen to those who refuse to forgive? Who is injured most by this, the offender or the one offended?
  - **Application Question**
    - *[Do the exercise outlined in this section with the wet dishtowel. These object lessons can really be powerful and stay with the group members for a long time. Let as many try the towel-wringing exercise as want to. Then ask the questions that are offered in the manual.]*
- 6. True forgiveness empowers me (Page 56)
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ What is one of the main reasons Satan is stirring you up: to hurt your husband or to hurt you? To what degree is it working?
    - ◇ How has your anger and bitterness toward your husband been holding you back? Could you follow a more productive path if you were released from some of the bitterness you feel toward your husband?
- 7. True forgiveness keeps me and those around me spiritually healthy (Pages 56-57)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ Brainstorming session: what are some of the things that keep a person spiritually healthy? What are some of the things that keep a person spiritually unhealthy?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Is there a chance that you are harboring a root of bitterness toward your husband? *[Blank in the middle of page 57.]* If so, who is being harmed the most?
    - ◇ What is the only way you can deal with that root?
- 8. True forgiveness forgives the offender but doesn’t tolerate the offense (Page 57)
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Do any of you struggle with this notion, that if I forgive him, it will mean that I excuse his offense, or even condone it – therefore I’m reluctant to forgive him?
    - ◇ What could you say to your husband to let him know that while you don’t condone what he has done to you, you forgive him?
- 9. True forgiveness is a miracle (Pages 57-58)
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ How much can you identify with Rebecca’s struggle *[Last paragraph page 57]*?
    - ◇ Rebecca shares a number of impressive, godly intentions in this paragraph. Let’s look at each one and rank how “doable” we think each one is for us on a scale of 1 to 5. How doable is the package deal – doing *all* of them? On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you think you’ll need the Holy Spirit’s supernatural help to do them?
    - ◇ In the Galatians 2:20 passage, what did Paul mean when he wrote, “I’ve been crucified with Christ”? *[Because I have entrusted my life to God, He has put me “in Christ” when*



*He was crucified. When Christ died, I died – to my old sinful ways of living. When He paid the price for my sins by dying on the cross, the transaction applied to me.]*

- ◇ What do you think the main point of Galatians 2:20 is? *[Christ wants to live His life out through me.]*
- ◇ What did you write in the blank at the end of this section – about the greatest thing you've learned about forgiveness in this chapter so far?

What forgiveness is NOT (Pages 58, 59)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- *[Have each member read through one of the six “What forgiveness is NOT” sections. Then ask her to summarize what she read, and share any further thoughts that come to mind. Give the rest of the group a chance to comment on it too.]*
- *Following are a few Content and Follow-up questions – for each numbered section:*
  1. Do you think it's possible to “forgive and forget”?
  2. If you forgive someone (your husband) and he doesn't feel he needs forgiveness, and doesn't repent or change his behavior, have you failed at forgiving? What should you do?
  3. Have you been reluctant to forgive your husband because you've been afraid he might think you are condoning his offense? How can you communicate that you forgive him, but you don't agree with his sin?
  4. Have you ever forgiven someone because you felt you “had” to, in order to be considered a good Christian – even though in your heart, you didn't really feel like forgiving them? What should you do if that comes up again in the future?
  5. What should you say if, after forgiving your husband for an offense, he says, “So, now you can't hold that against me in the future – and I don't expect you to ever bring it up again”? *[“This isn't a pardon. If it happens again, yes, I WILL bring it up!” His offense can have future consequences in your relationship if he isn't repentant.]*
  6. Can/should you forgive someone for an offense if you don't particularly *feel* like forgiving them?

Why should I forgive? (Pages 59, 60)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- *Have them share what they wrote in the boxes in this exercise. Here are a few observations that you might want to be sure they catch from each passage: “I should be forgiving toward my husband because...”*
  - *Matthew 18:21,22 – Jesus says I should – an indefinite number of times.*
  - *Matthew 6:14,15 – There is a definite link between my willingness or unwillingness to forgive, and God's willingness or unwillingness to forgive me. [Note: this doesn't imply a loss of salvation or the loss of the Father's love; it has to do with His discipline of us, and how our unforgiveness of others strains our relationship with Him.]*
  - *Romans 12:19 – I have been instructed by God to let Him handle the situation – because He will do a much better job of it than I would.*
  - *Psalms 103:10,11 – God kept His judgment from raining down on me; instead He forgave me because He loves me.*
  - *2 Cor. 5:19 – Christ worked to reconcile the world (even me) to Himself despite their offenses, and asks me to do the same – in word and in action.*
  - *Ephesians 4:32 – God has asked me to be kind and forgiving to my husband, just as God was kind and forgiving toward me.*

## How do I forgive? Four Stages of Forgiveness (Pages 60-62)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- *[First, make sure everyone understands the “Four Contexts” listed at the beginning of this section.]*
- *[If your group hasn't read through this exercise yet, give them several minutes during group time to read through it and check each statement that is true of them. Better yet, you could read each one aloud – along with the scripture reference attached to some of them – and they can check them off (or not) as you go down the list.]*
- *[Have them look at the pattern of their check marks. Are most of them in the “Internal” sections? This would indicate fear of confrontation, and a desire to avoid it at all cost. There is nothing wrong with doing the “Internal” work – it's vital – but we don't want to stop there. Are most of them in the “Passive” sections? This would indicate reluctance to risk moving forward, and willingness to stay stuck where they are. “Passive” is a great start, but they need to get “Active.”]*
- *[Ask each group member to (1) summarize where they are in the process, (2) what their next step probably is, (3) what they plan to do and (4) how the rest of the group might be able to help.]*
- ◊ *As you look over these statements, are there any you see that seem like it will never be possible to experience? [Spend time as a group praying for this.]*

- **Application Question**

- *[Do the Battle Buddy assignment on page 62, going over the list and discussing your answers with her.]*

## Working through specific points of pain (Page 62)

- *[You have the option of giving them this exercise as a homework assignment, or doing it together in the group time.]*
  - *If as homework, go over the directions with them so they understand clearly what they are to do. Check with them sometime during the week to remind them, and see if they've done it yet. When you get together next week, have some of them give you a report on how it went. Ask if there were any actions that God impressed upon them to take in the third section.*
  - *If done during group time, let them spread out a bit throughout the room or house, and get some time alone with God. Give them at least 10 minutes. When you get back together, have them pray through the second section prayer one-by-one out loud with the group. If they've listed dozens of points of pain, just have her mention them all together at one time – or they can choose the top three or four. Ask if there were any actions that God impressed upon them to take in the third section.*

## A few special questions (Pages 62, 63)

- **Content, Follow-up and Application Questions**

- *Read the four questions and the paragraphs under each one out loud to the group. Then ask,*
  - ◊ *What is the main point they're trying to make here?*
  - ◊ *Do you agree with the answers that are offered?*
  - ◊ *Does this suggest any action you need to take, or any attitude you need to change?*

## Look in the mirror (Pages 63-64)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ *Why would it be counter-productive to only be concerned about your husband's sins, and not consider your own?*

- ◇ Would any of you like to share what you wrote at the bottom of page 64? *[Afterwards, be sure to gather around her and pray for her about what she shared.]*

*Christina's Prayer* (Page 65)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Christina's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



**CHAPTER 5: I DON'T FEEL SAFE – WHAT SHOULD I DO?** (PAGES 67-83)

**PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SECURITY FOR YOU AND YOUR KIDS**

**Objectives:**

- To help each group member recognize whether or not she is in an abusive, dangerous relationship, and to determine how serious it is.
- To help each group member understand the various types of abuse, and determine if she is experiencing any of them.
- To make it clear to each group member that they do not have to tolerate abuse from her husband.
- To instruct group members in why and how to set safe boundaries in their household.
- To help each group member who doesn't feel safe to construct an emergency escape plan.

**Discussion Questions:**

*Lauren's Journal* (Page 67)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Whenever someone struggles with PTSD, there is a very real possibility that they can become abusive or violent – but not *always* by any means. On a scale of 1 to 10, how safe do you feel at home since your husband returned?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What event occurred to turn Lauren and Jason's anniversary evening sour – and terrifying for Lauren? How do you think that event was linked to Jason's combat experience?
  - ◇ Did Lauren do the right thing in confronting Jason about his road rage when they got home? *[At the time it might have seemed like the right thing, but Lauren learned something about how Jason reacts to confrontation just after he's been triggered: she'd better let him calm down first in the future.]*
  - ◇ Was Jason's response to Lauren's logical? *[No – PTSD responses aren't logical, they're emotional, and don't have to make sense.]*
  - ◇ After Jason smashed the plate and then acted like he was on a military mission, what do you think Lauren should have done?
  - ◇ Did Lauren and Jason's experience that night remind you of a similar experience you've had with your husband? Would any of you like to share what happened?

*Who needs this chapter?* (Page 68)

- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Would you say your husband was more to the controlled end of the spectrum, or more toward the violent end?
  - ◇ Regardless of which end your husband is closer to, how might you benefit from this chapter?

### What makes spousal abuse so horrible? (Page 68)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ What did David (who wrote this psalm) say he could put up with? *[A distant desert, howling winds, raging storms, enemies.]*
  - ◊ What did he say he couldn't bear to put up with? *[The betrayal, hatred and violent intentions of his closest friend.]*
  - ◊ To what degree can you identify with David in this? What difficult conditions have you sometimes thought about putting up with if it just meant you wouldn't have to put up with your husband any more?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Would any of you like to share what you wrote in the blank near the bottom of page 68, where it asks what makes you feel afraid or not safe?

### What is abuse? (Pages 68-70)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ Before we look at this section, if you were writing a dictionary, how would you define abuse?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ What is the main objective of an abuser? *[Second paragraph, page 69: to establish his superiority and secure or maintain his power and control over the victim.]*
  - ◊ Why do you think these objectives would be so important to a troop suffering with PTSD?
  - I'm going to read through the descriptions of each of these different types of abuse. After I read each section, put a number in the margin of your manual between 1 and 5 that indicates how much you have experienced that kind of abuse from your husband. 1 = not at all, 5 = so often I'm thinking about leaving, or already have. *[After you've gone through all the types, have each member share the numbers they wrote, and ask them to tell you a little about what they've experienced in each area.]*
  - ◊ These abusive episodes that you have experienced from your husband, did they manifest only after he came back from combat, or were you experiencing them before he left?
- **Application**
  - *[If one of your group members shares serious on-going issues of abuse and physical safety during this discussion, pull her aside at the end of the meeting and see if she might be willing to stay with you rather than to go home, or if she would be willing to be taken to a women's shelter. If she has children at home, this action would need to be delayed until you can get her and her children there together.]*

### The Cycle of Abuse (Pages 70, 71)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Can any of you identify with this "Cycle"? Can anyone share a recent example of what happened to you?
  - ◊ What do you think of the statement *[Fourth paragraph down]* that your husband is control of all phases of the cycle? Do you think it's true?
  - ◊ Would anyone like to share where they put their "x" on the line at the bottom of page 71?

### Are you abused or at risk for abuse? (Pages 71-74)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - *[If they haven't already taken the PAA before coming, give them several minutes of quiet to check off the boxes that pertain to their situation. Then read through each of the bullet points on pages 73 and 74. Tell your group members ahead of time to feel free to stop you and ask questions or make comments as you proceed.]*

- ◇ Are there any of you who checked the boxes according to the pattern mentioned in the third and fourth bullet points? What do you plan to do about it? How can we help you?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Are there any of you who checked the boxes according to the pattern mentioned in the third and fourth bullet points? *[If so...]* What do you plan to do about it? How can we help you?

*What God thinks about abuse and domestic violence* (Pages 74, 75)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Have the group brainstorm this question after reading each verse out loud: How does this scripture assure me that I am in the right, and my husband – if abusive – is in the wrong?
- ◇ As a follow-up to that question, you might also ask: What does this verse say will happen to someone who abuses another?

*Setting boundaries/Anatomy of a good boundary* (Pages 75-77)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Why, in general, is it a good idea for there to be clear boundaries between two countries? What happens if there are not clear borders, or if the borders are not respected? How can these same principles be applied to a husband and wife? *[For more insight into this, see the second paragraph in this section.]*

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Will setting clear boundaries fix your husband? *[No.]* What will it accomplish instead? *[See treatment of this in last paragraph on page 75. Make sure the group members understand that it will help them most of all by helping them take ownership of their life so that they are protected, empowered and better able to love and help their husband. ]*
- ◇ What's wrong with each of the "inadequate" boundary statements in this section? *[Measure each one against the two standards listed just above them.]*
- ◇ Read each of the "good" boundary statements. What's good about each one?
- ◇ Based on what you know about how your husband reacts, how do you think he would respond to these boundary statements? If you think he wouldn't react well, how could you handle the situation differently? How else could you set boundaries?
- *[Give the group some time to work through the exercise on page 77, choosing five of the more serious abuses they checked in their Personal Abuse Assessment and writing a boundary statement for each one. When they have finished, have them share some of what they wrote. They'll probably give each other some helpful and creative ideas!]*

*When and how to deliver boundary statements* (Pages 78, 79)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- *[Go around the group with each person reading one of the bullet points in this section in turn. Suggest that each person consider the Boundary Statements they just wrote, and alter them if they don't fit some of the suggestions.]*

*Special Circumstances* (Page 79)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Do any of you have husbands who keep weapons in the house? *[Probably they all do.]* Do any of your husbands fit the criteria listed at the beginning of this section? If so, are there any reasons why you feel hesitant to set this "no weapons in the house" boundary? How can we help you?
- ◇ Do any of you have husbands that have dissociative episodes like the ones described here? Have they ever gotten violent? If so, what do you plan to do the next time he has a similar episode? If not, what do you plan to do?

- *[Recommend they sit down with their husbands if they are prone to dissociative episodes and discuss how to prepare for them, as noted in the "Teamwork" section.]*

### Making an emergency escape plan (Pages 80, 81)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◆ Have any of you already developed an emergency plan for yourself and/or your kids? If so, would you care to share it with us?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◆ Are there any of you who feel that this is too radical of a step to take presently – that your husband isn't really a danger to you or your kids at this point? *[If there are some, that's fine – but there may still be some ideas in this section that they might want to apply, just in case things change quickly in the near future. Emphasize that PTSD symptoms can be delayed, and though everything is looking fine at present, they should be prepared for the possibility of rough seas ahead.]*

- As we read through each of the items on this list, make one of three marks in the margin next to it: (1) if you feel you need to do this, place a short horizontal line next to the box, calling your attention to it; (2) if you've already done it, check the box; (3) if you don't think you need to do this, but an "x" next to the box – and be ready to explain why you don't feel it's necessary.

- **Application**

- I'd like each of you who feels that you need to construct an emergency escape plan to pair up with someone else in the group (or someone who wants to construct a plan could pair up with someone who doesn't feel the need to). *[If there is an odd number, make one three-some.]* Take a few minutes right now to go over your marked lists together and help each other make a plan to complete each of the "need to do" tasks. Some of these tasks will need to take place outside of group time. Hold each other accountable!

### If your husband is still on active duty (Pages 81, 82)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- Read this section aloud to the group, along with the footnotes that are associated with it. Make sure they understand how to access their military installation's Family Advocacy Program (FAP) or their National Guard or Reserves Family Support Office (FSO) and help each one determine if their current situation warrants that they do so.

### The escape's Objective: Restoration (Page 82)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◆ Let's do some brainstorming to finish up this subject. What are some reasons why you should carry out an emergency escape from your husband? *[Make sure that the point is made that an escape can be a crisis that forces the husband to realize the seriousness of his condition, convincing him to get help, which eventually brings about restoration of the marriage.]*

### Laurens Prayer (Page 83)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Lauren's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 6: WHERE IS MY HEALING PLACE? (PAGES 85-101)**

### **CONSTRUCTING YOUR HEALING ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Objectives:**

- To provide group members with practical input on how to build an environment that will give God optimal access to their body, mind and spirit for the purpose of healing.
- To help them understand the foundational truths about the five key elements of their healing environment: the Holy Spirit, the Bible, Prayer, the Christian Community, and their Mindset.
- To emphasize how important it is to be *intentional* about constructing their Healing Place with these five elements.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

##### *Erin's Journal* (Page 85)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How many of you can identify with Erin, in her inability to be still, and rest in the Father's arms?
  - ◇ In what other ways can you identify with Erin in this story?
  - ◇ Why do you think Abby ran from her mother when she had been hurt? Why do you think we have a tendency to run from God when *we're* hurt?
  - ◇ In what ways do we try to "push our pain further down" as Erin did?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What steps do you need to take that will give you the courage to let God have access to your wounds and cooperate with Him in the healing process?

##### *"For I, the Lord, am your Healer* (Page 86)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ What were some of the woundings you've experienced prior to your husband's deployment – perhaps going all the way back to your childhood? How has it affected you? Is this wound still affecting you today?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Do doctors actually heal anyone? [*No.*] It sure seems like they do. If they don't, what do they do? [*See points on this in the fourth paragraph: "The Essence of Healing."*]
  - ◇ When you think of a hospital, what are some of the elements of *that* healing environment? In other words, what are things that every hospital has to make sure that the people who come there will get well? How are these elements like the ones we need at home?
  - ◇ What is the main objective in setting up a healing environment for our wounded souls? [*To give God optimal access to our soul for the purpose of healing – end of fifth paragraph.*]

##### *Element #1: The Holy Spirit* (Pages 87-91)

##### *Who is the Holy Spirit? / The Indwelling / The Filling of the Holy Spirit* (Page 87)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Short answer brain-storming time. In just a sentence or two, what are some of the things you already knew about the Holy Spirit before coming to this study?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ This section uses only a few sentences to present God as a "Trinity." This is an extremely deep and vast subject, but what is your understanding about what is meant by the "Trinity"?

- *[Note: If you'd like to do a more in-depth study on what the Bible says the Holy Spirit does for us, study the following passages: John 14:16, 17, 26; John 16:13; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:26; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Ephesians 1:13,14; John 7:37-40; Galatians 5:22,23. If you take the group through these passages, ask: As you read the list of things that the Holy Spirit desires to do for us, which are the most important to you, and why?]*
- ◇ What are the two commands that God gives us in Ephesians 5:18 (the verse in the box on page 87)?
- *[Note: there is a more in-depth handling of the subject "Who Is the Holy Spirit" in the Combat Trauma Healing Manual, Step 3A, if you are interested.]*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ As you read the list of the Holy Spirit's functions (paragraph starting with "In a nutshell . . ."), which are the most important to you, and why?
- ◇ Do you understand the difference between being "indwelt" and being "filled" by the Holy Spirit? *[If not, go over the concepts again. To be "indwelt" is a "positional truth." That means it is our unchanging position before God since the time we asked Christ into our life. He will always live inside us and never leave (Hebrews 13:5b). But to be "filled" is a "conditional truth." That means that we are filled (controlled, guided, empowered) by God's Spirit as long as certain conditions are met. It has to do with desire, obedience, yielding control to Him, etc.]*
- ◇ How is the controlling influence of alcohol similar to the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit in a person? How are the two different?

### Three kinds of people (Pages 87-88)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ What do you think of the philosophy represented by the first circle: "I am the Captain of my own soul!" Is that a good principle to live by, or not? Is it even true? Can anybody really control their own life?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What do you see as the main problem in the life represented by the first circle?
- ◇ What do you see as the main problem in the life represented by the third circle?
- ◇ What do you think is the main advantages for someone who has Christ on the throne of their life?

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Which of these three circles represents a person who will most likely be able to experience healing from his or her Combat Trauma? Why do you think that?

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ As the questions in your manual ask (page 88), which circle would you say currently represents your life?
- ◇ Which circle would you *like* to have represent your life?
- ◇ What do you think you should do about this?

### Five steps to filling / Asking to be filled (Page 88-90)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ If you knew that you could do something that would bring the power and insight of the God of the universe right into you mind and body, what would you be willing to do? *[The good news is, God doesn't place difficult and hard-to-accomplish tasks on us in order for this to happen. He makes it very easy for us!]*



- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ [1. **Desire**] What does the verse in your manual, Matthew 5:6, say is required in order for us to be filled? *[First blank.]*
- ◇ How did some of you answer that second question: What would that “desire” look or feel like in your life? Do you think a person could experience the filling of the Holy Spirit if he didn’t really want God leading him in his life?
- ◇ [2. **Confess**] What are some ways that people might “quench” the Holy Spirit in their lives? If a person refuses to admit and confess his sins before God, why would this keep the Holy Spirit from controlling, guiding and empowering him?
- ◇ [3. **Present**] How did you answer the question – is “presenting” (or yielding or offering) yourself to God a passive or purposeful action? Does it just happen whether you want it or not, or do you have to make a decision about it and actually *do* it? What do you think about the idea of being a “slave to righteousness,” as talked about in the passage (Romans 6:16-18)? What do you think that means? Can you think of something you’ve done in the past that you thought was going to be fun and freeing and would make your life better, but you found out later that it put you into bondage?
- ◇ [4. **Ask**] Based on the verse talked about in this passage (Luke 11:9-13) how willing do you think God is to say “Yes!” to those who ask Him for the filling of the Holy Spirit? Why? How did some of you answer the question at the bottom of page 89? *[Answer should be: simply ask.]*
- ◇ [5. **Thank Him in faith**] In the verse used in this section (Mark 11:24), why is it important to understand that after we have prayed for something we should believe God has already answered that prayer? *[It is a demonstration of our faith in God. We probably wouldn’t thank Him if we thought He was saying “No” to our request.]*

- **Application Question**

- ◇ After reading the prayer in the “**Asking to be filled**” section (page 90), do you feel it expresses the desire of your heart? If so, would you like to pray that prayer (or something similar) right now? *[If there are one or two who would like to – or if the whole group would – it seems to work well if you would lead them through the prayer sentence-by-sentence, with them repeating after you out loud. If anyone feels reluctant to do this in front of the rest of the group, don’t force them – just encourage them to do it that night when they get home.]*

So, am I done with this now? / *Spiritual breathing* (Pages 90-91)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ If you’ve asked the Holy Spirit to forgive and fill you, and He does, why don’t we remain in that condition forever? *[It has to do with our free will. We can choose to re-take the throne of our lives. Bible teacher J. Vernon McGee was one asked why we didn’t stay filled, and he answered, “Because we leak!” It’s a humorous picture of how the Spirit no longer “fills” us because of our sinful tendencies.]*

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ How is exhaling like confessing your sins?
- ◇ How is inhaling like asking the Holy Spirit to once again take the throne of your life?
- ◇ If you sin, and re-take the throne of your life, does this mean that you are not longer saved? If not, what *does* it mean?
- ◇ How often do you think you might have to “take a spiritual breath?”

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How do you think you will know when you have taken Christ off the throne of your life, and seated yourself there?

- ◇ Would someone like to share with the group how your life would look when you are *not* filled by the Holy Spirit, and how it would look when you *are*?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What are some things you can do to make sure that you are walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit *most* of the time? [*Brainstorm. Some of the suggestions might be: spend some time reading God's Word each day; ask the Holy Spirit to fill me first thing when I wake up every morning; ask a close, trusted friend to hold me accountable on this issue and let me know when he or she sees from my actions or attitudes that I may have re-taken the throne of my life, etc.*]

## Element #2: The Word of God – Your divine nourishment (Pages 91-93)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Can anyone describe what happens to a body when it doesn't get proper nourishment?
  - ◇ Have any of you ever had to go a long time without food? What was it like? How did it affect your energy, motivation, ambition, ability to do what you needed to do, etc.?
  - ◇ Would going without spiritual nourishment affect you in similar ways?
- **Content Question**
  - ◇ What do you think it means to be a “three-dimensional” being? How were we able to function as “two-dimensional” beings before being born-again spiritually?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How is God's word like bread and milk? [*Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2 – [First paragraph in this section.]*]
  - ◇ How would going without spiritual food for a long time be similar to going without physical food?

## Benefits of reading the Bible (Pages 91-92)

- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ Let's look at how you answered each of the questions on these pages. In each case, you are to find at least one benefit of reading (studying) the Bible.
  - ◇ In Psalm 119:9, 11 when David said that he had “hidden Your word in my heart,” what do you think he meant by that? [*Memorizing and meditating on it. Note: a person will only effectively remember 5% of what he hears, 15% of what he reads, 35% of what he studies, but 100% of what he memorizes. What does that tell you about the importance of using a variety of methods to take in the Word of God?*]

## Your personal plan (Page 92)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Think about how you take in the Word of God. If you had to put percentage values on each of the five ways talked about in this section, what would they be? Do you think you should change that a bit?
- **Application Questions**
  - ◇ Did you feel motivated to fill in the blanks in the “Personal Commitment” area in this section? If so, would you care to share what you wrote?
  - ◇ Do any of you have any thoughts about how you might increase the probability that you'll stick to the “Personal Commitment” you wrote down? How might you involve your Battle Buddy in this?
  - ◇ Are there any of you that feel you would like to try the “SPACE-Q” format for studying through the Bible on your own? If so, I'll help you set up a Journal for it.

- *[Note: There is a section in the Combat Trauma Healing Manual entitled "Taking the Sword" at the end of Step 3A. It's more for a combat veteran, but if you'd like to take a look at it and see if there are elements of it that your Sister's Group might apply, go for it!]*

### Element #3: Prayer – Vital communication with your Healer (Pages 93-95)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ How many of you feel like you should be spending LESS time in prayer? How many of you feel you should be spending MORE time in prayer?
- ◇ Why do you think that's the case with so many Christians *[Blank in the middle of this section, page 93.]*

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What are some of the purposes of prayer? *[Make sure they understand that communication is one of the main ways we deepen a relationship – whether with another person or with God. To neglect that communication – prayer – is to keep our relationship with God very shallow and unfamiliar.]*
- ◇ Would some of you like to share where you put your "x's" on the two lines at the top of page 94? Do you feel satisfied with where you are in this issue right now? How would you like to see it change?

### What does God want you to pray about? (Page 94)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Before we go into this section, what are some of the things that you think God wants to be included in your prayers to Him?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ Would some of you like to share some of your responses to the passages on page 94 about what God invites us to pray about?

*[Note: Go through them one at a time and give them the opportunity to share what they observed. Be sure you steer them towards the following observations (among others you might care to add):*

**Psalm 18:1-3** – *We can praise Him for the great resource, refuge and deliverer He is.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** – *We can thank Him – in every circumstance (not necessarily for every circumstance, but no matter what our situation, we can thank Him because of Romans 8:28.*

**Psalm 22:1,2** – *We can call to Him when we're in trouble – we can even yell at Him and express our disappointment and confusion!*

**1 John 1:9** – *We can confess our sins to Him for the purpose of gaining forgiveness.*

**Matthew 6:11** – *We can pray about our daily needs, whatever they are: food, clothing, shelter, finances, etc. "Bread" here refers to more than just whole wheat or white.*

**Matthew 6:13** – *We can ask Him to help us with the temptations we face, and to keep us from being overcome by our spiritual adversary, the devil.*

**Philippians 4:6** – *We can pray about anything and everything – no holds barred!*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How do you think spending more time talking with God in prayer will help you with your dealing with your husband, or with your Secondary Traumatic Stress?
- ◇ What are two things that you have prayed about today? Look at the list of examples of prayers from the Bible (page 94). Were your two prayers similar to any of those there?
- ◇ Do you feel comfortable with the idea that you can pray to God about *anything* – that you can even express your doubts, anger, confusion and fears to Him?

- ◇ Why do you think it's always important to mix our requests with thanksgiving, as it says in Philippians 4:6?

I want answers! (Page 95)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Was it news to you that God answers *every* prayer that you pray in faith? After reading this section, can you understand how we can say that?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What are the three different ways that God may choose to answer our prayers?
- *[Note: if you have time, look up a few of the passages listed under each of the three ways God answers prayer and discuss them.]* Can you think of a time when God answered one of your prayers in one of these three ways?
- ◇ How can we increase the number of “Yes” answers to our prayers *[see Psalm 37:4, middle of page 95 – if the Lord is our delight, then our desires will automatically line up with His, and before we even make our request, our prayers will reflect His will.]*

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Can we tell ahead of time in which of the three ways God will answer our prayers? *[No.]* How should this affect our praying? *[It shouldn't – since we don't know how He'll answer, we should pray and then leave the decision to Him.]*

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ Did you feel motivated to fill in the blanks in the “Battle Buddy Covenant” area of this section? If so, would you care to share what you wrote?
- ◇ When do you plan to share this commitment with your Battle Buddy?
- ◇ As it says in the “Prayer Assignment” section on Page 95, let's go back to Chapter 1, page 21, read what we wrote there, and spend a little time right now praying for what we wrote. How can you remind yourself to pray for this *every day*?

Element #4: The Christian community – Your divine incubator (Pages 96-99)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ What are some reasons why people don't want to go to church (speaking about *anyone* here, not just combat veterans)? What can we do to help eliminate some of those reasons?
- ◇ Does your husband find it difficult to go to church because of his Combat Trauma? How about you, if you are struggling with Secondary Traumatic Stress? What are some of the thoughts you struggle with as you consider going to church?
- ◇ Those who struggle with Combat Trauma may tend to stay away from crowds – and church. But what are some of the reasons why it would be worth the effort to go? *[Note: the study lists a number of negative things staying away from Christian fellowship will do in the second paragraph of this section. Have them turn each statement into a positive statement about the good things that happen when one spends time with other Christians.]*
- ◇ What do you think is meant by the term “The Church”? *[See second paragraph after Eccl. 4 passage on Page 96.]*
- ◇ On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is it to you to be involved with a local church? Not that everyone *should* mark a 10 on this, but what keeps you from putting down a 10 on this issue?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How is the church like a physical body?
- ◇ Why is social isolation *not* a good move for you or for your husband? *[Same list at the upper part of page 96.]*

- ◇ What are some of the benefits Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (middle of page 96) mentions that those who spend time with other Christians will enjoy?
- ◇ The verses on pages 96 to 98 talk about the things that are *supposed* to happen in a church. Unfortunately, they don't always happen, but God designed the church to include these things. Let's look at each passage and try to figure out what it is saying should be included in a "normal" church. *[If they have done this exercise ahead of time, ask them to share what they came up with. If not, do it together as a group now. When done . . .]* If each of these things were happening at a church, would you be motivated to go there? What can you contribute to make sure that they *do* happen at your church?
- ◇ Are there some of you who go to church, even though your anxiety level goes up each time you do? How are you able to continue going there if it makes you anxious? *[This discussion could give some helpful insights to those who aren't currently going to church.]*
- ◇ Have any of you – or your husbands – ever gone through a period when you had a difficult time going to church, or being in groups of people of any kind? Are any of you or your husbands still struggling with that? Have you found some things that help you deal with the anxiety associated with this?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ If you and/or your husband are currently isolating to some degree, what are some things you could do to gradually reverse that trend?
  - ◇ Do you have the level of Christian fellowship that you need? If not, what do you plan to do about it? How can we help you?

What Happens Underground? (Page 98).

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Have any of you ever seen those Redwood trees in northern California? What was your impression of them?
  - ◇ Did you find that the Redwoods always grew in stands, as it says in the manual?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Why won't a Redwood tree grow all by itself in the middle of a field? How is this like you?
  - ◇ What are some ways Christians can "interlace their roots below the surface"? What issues would this involve?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ How can we, as a "Band of Sisters" married to men who are struggling with Combat Trauma, interlace our roots beneath the surface? What would that look like? How would we start?

Element #5: Mindset – Spiritual "Battle Mind" for divine healing (Pages 99, 100)

#1: Courage

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Do any of you know if your husband went through the "Battle Mind Training" (or something similar) that the Army offers to its soldiers? If so, tell us what he said about it. *[It's a plan to help their soldiers have self-confidence and mental toughness so that they can face fear and adversity in combat with courage, and includes things like accountability, targeted aggression, tactical awareness, emotional control, etc.]*
  - ◇ How important do you think these five elements of Courage, Truth, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Joy are to a positive, healing mindset?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What reason do you have to feel courageous? *[If you're a Christian, you are connected to the Supreme Problem-Solver of the Universe!]*

- ◇ How would you define “courage”? *[A good definition to share after they have shared their ideas comes from Dr. M. Scott Peck in his book The Road Less Traveled: “Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the making of action in spite of fear.”]*
- ◇ How does one *get* courage? Are you born with it? Is it developed? Can it come and go? If you need some right now as you are struggling with Combat Trauma, how can you get some? *[Note: In Joshua 1:9 God **commanded** Joshua to do two things: be strong, and be courageous. As was mentioned a few weeks ago, we know that we can **do** certain things to become strong – or we can elect to **not** become strong. Doesn't this passage indicate the same thing about courage – that we can **do** things to increase our courage or decide to **not** be courageous?]*

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What is your plan to increase the amount of courage in your life?

### #2: Truth

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ For many Combat Trauma sufferers, living in denial has become a way of life. How true is this of your husband? What are some ways he lives in denial? What happens when his denial is met with truth? What effect does this have on you?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why is truth so important to you as the wife of a Combat Trauma sufferer? *[There are several good reasons mentioned in this section.]*

### #3: Gratitude

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Because of your husband's Combat Trauma, there are probably many issues that cause you to be depressed. Many things that have been taken from you and there are many reasons why you could be pessimistic. But not *everything* is bad. I'd like each one of you to list five things that you can be grateful for, write them down, and then we'll share them with each other. *[This is a good way to get them practicing Philippians 4:8 – look it up!]*

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ In the face of all the negative and difficult things that have happened to you, isn't it a bit Pollyanna-ish to enumerate the few positive elements in your life, and act like the negative ones don't exist? *[No one said we act like the negatives don't exist – but we don't have to focus on them, and let them determine our attitude.]*

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ What can you do with your list of five “gratitude issues” that will positively affect your life day-by-day?

### #4: Forgiveness

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Since returning from war, have your husbands ever done anything that required your forgiveness? *[“Dumb question” – of course!]* Has there been a day go by when he *hasn't* needed you to forgive him – either openly or in your heart?
- ◇ What do you think would happen to your marriage if you were not able to forgive him, and just let the bitterness grow and grow?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How can a combat veteran's wife develop a constant attitude of forgiveness toward her husband?

- [Go back to Chapter 4 and do a quick review of the “Nine facts about biblical forgiveness” listed on pages 53-58. Don’t take much time on this, just share the nine titles, to remind them.]

### #5: Joy

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Could anybody try to define the word “joy”? [If no one can, have a dictionary definition ready to share.] How difficult is it to experience “joy” these days?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What brings you joy recently? What brought you joy before your husband was deployed?
- ◇ How often do you intentionally engage in something just because you know it will bring you joy. [Did you know that one of the main reasons God answers your prayers with a “Yes” is simply so that “your joy may be full”? Look it up: John 16:24.]

- **Application Questions**

- Put your list of “joy producers” next to your list of “gratitude issues” and remind yourself of them often – perhaps each morning as you have your daily devotionals.

### Erin's Prayer (Page 83)

- Ask someone to read the “Promise from God’s Word” verse and then pray Erin’s prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 7: HOW DO I TAKE CARE OF ME? (PAGES 103-120)**

### **NURTURING YOUR SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand that it is not selfish to set aside time to take care of themselves, in fact this will enable them to do a better job of coping with their STS and of helping their husbands and children.
- To provide group members with practical input on how to be intentional about taking care of themselves spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and physically.
- To motivate group members to help each other out, encourage each other and hold each other accountable on these issues.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

### *Christina's Journal* (Page 103)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Would two or three of you share with us what a typical day is for you? [Hopefully, it will be apparent just how busy, pressured and stressful their daily schedules are – like Christina’s.]

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ The first part of Christina’s day was very exhausting and frustrating. The second part was better. What made the difference for her?
- ◇ Can you see God’s hand at work in Christina’s running out of gas? Has God ever done that for you – forced you to take a break?
- ◇ When we encounter interruptions to our schedule, what thought could help us to endure them in a less stressful way?

- ◇ With days that are so over-loaded with a million activities and responsibilities, how can we even *begin* to think about making time to take care of ourselves? *[If we don't, we'll eventually run out of gas ourselves. We have to make ourselves do this – it won't get done if we're passive about it.]*

(Top of page 104)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ On a scale of 1 to 10, how well are you taking care of yourself? What's keeping you from giving yourself "10-level" self-care?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ In the "second greatest commandment," Jesus told us that we are to love our neighbors as . . . what?
- ◇ Do you agree with the proposition that if we don't love ourselves, we will be unable to love others very effectively? *[See last paragraph/quote in this section from Dr. Karr.]*
- ◇ What is the message from combat medics that we should heed? *[Second-to-last paragraph: "You're no good to anybody dead!"]*
- ◇ Humility is a characteristic that is highly valued throughout the Bible. Is it possible to be *too* humble? *[Possibly, if you work so hard on being humble and putting yourself last that you harm yourself.]*

Who am I really? (Pages 104, 105)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What is the difference between self-love and self-centeredness?
- ◇ What is God's opinion of you? What do you think of His opinion? *[Is He crazy, wrong, misinformed, or is it possible He could actually be right?]*
- ◇ In what ways does your neglect of your spirit, soul and body hamper who God wants you to become?

Spirit-Nurture (Pages 105-109)

- **Opening and Content Questions**

- ◇ What's the difference between a person's spirit and her soul? *[First paragraph.]*
- ◇ Before going into the contents of this section, what are some ways you can think of that a person can nurture their spirit?

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◇ What are some of the main things a newborn baby needs? Jesus said that when we received Christ as our Savior, we were born into the spiritual realm – our spirit was born. What parallels can you draw between what a newborn baby needs and what a newborn *spirit* needs?

1. Stay in your healing place (Page 105)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- Take a minute and do a little personal assessment on how you're doing with those five elements of your healing environment. *[After you ask each of the following questions, give the group a chance to respond.]*
  - ◇ How successfully (or not) are you keeping the Holy Spirit on the throne of your life (pages 87-91)? Consistently asking to be "re-filled" when you blow it?
  - ◇ Are you getting into God's Word regularly? Staying disciplined with the personal plan you wrote out on page 93?
  - ◇ How's your prayer life? Consistent or spotty? A variety of prayers, or same ol' same ol'? Staying disciplined with the personal plan you wrote out on page 95?



- ◇ Involved consistently in a Christian community (pages 96-99)? Spending time with Christian friends who can build you up? Interlacing your roots with other supportive people?
- ◇ Making progress on your “Spiritual Battlemind” (pages 99-100)?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Are there any steps you need to take to be sure you are staying in your healing environment? Is there anything that someone here could do to help (pray for you, hold you accountable, etc.)?

## 2. Connect with God daily (Pages 103-105)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Have any of you been exposed to the idea of having a daily “Quiet Time” with God before? What are your thoughts on that? Is it something you’re currently doing, or is it something you’ve tried in the past and just couldn’t stick with it? Has your life just gotten too busy since your husband came home (or for other reasons – kids, job, health challenges, etc.)?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◆ *Prayer*

- ◇ What are some of the things you wrote in the blanks on page 106, about how you normally get to know another person?
- ◇ How can those same principles be used in getting to know God?
- ◇ What are the two main reasons to have a daily Quiet Time? *[Related to “Two main objectives” on page 106.]*
- *[Look up each of the verses listed along with the four different types of prayer on page 106 – ACTS. After you read each one, ask someone to volunteer to pray using that type of prayer as a guide. If no one feels up to it, you could give an example of each as you lead the group in prayer.]*
- ◇ Have any of you ever just sat and listened for God to speak to you while you were in prayer? (If so . . . ) What happened?
- *[A little humor . . . Read the 1 Samuel quote, (1<sup>st</sup> paragraph page 107), and then say, “Most people would rather say, ‘Listen, Lord, for your servant speaketh.” Take time to listen to God!]*

- ◆ *Bible study*

- ◇ Of the five ways listed by which you can take in the Word of God, which is your favorite way?
- ◇ Do you think you’re “stuck in a rut”? Is there a different approach you’d like to take?
- ◇ Does anyone have any additional suggestions about how you study the Bible, or how you’ve heard others study it?

- ◆ *When?*

- ◇ The suggestion is made in the manual that the first thing in the morning is the best time to have your Quiet Time. Are there some of you for which that would *not* be the best time? Why? What would be a better time for you?

- ◆ *How often?*

- ◇ Would some of you have difficulties having your Quiet Time every day? What creative solution can we come up with as a group to help overcome those difficulties?

- ◆ **Where?**
  - ◇ Where do you like to have your Quiet Time? Have you heard from others about creative places they like to have their Quiet Times?
- ◆ **How long?**
  - ◇ Do you think the suggestion in the manual of ten minutes per day – five minutes in the Word, five minutes in prayer – is reasonable and do-able?
  - ◇ Have some of you already experienced what it says here – that if you start with ten minutes, you'll soon find that it's not enough time, and you are spending more and more time with God each day? Tell us how that developed.
- ◆ **How will it affect me?**
  - ◇ After reading Marshéle Waddell's testimony (top of page 108), could you see your daily Quiet Time becoming as precious to you as it did to her? What do you think it will take to become so central and crucial to you?

### 3. Check your priorities (Page 108)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ How many of you feel like you've got your priorities perfectly lined up, and don't need to make any adjustments? [*Probably no one will identify with that, but if someone does – and they're serious about it – congratulate them and ask them to please share the secret of their success. Don't ridicule or act disbelieving or try to convince them they don't know what they're talking about. As the saying goes: "Perception is reality in the eyes of the perceiver."*]
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Does the hierarchy of priorities listed here look right to you? Would you change it any?
  - ◇ Why is it so important to have God at the top of your priority list?
  - ◇ What would you put after that #6 priority?
  - ◇ In what ways can we demonstrate (to ourselves, mainly – not doing this to impress anyone) that God really is the top priority in our lives?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What adjustments do you need to make in your life so that your days, weeks and months will more closely reflect this priority list?

### 4. Read inspirational books (Page 108)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Why do you think it's a good idea to read inspirational books?
  - ◇ Is it bad to read non-inspirational books, like novels or other secular non-fiction books? [*No, not at all, but not to the exclusion of inspirational books – with none of them taking priority over the Bible!*]
  - ◇ Can anyone make a suggestion of a *great* Christian book you've read recently – or even not-so-recently?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What would all of you think about reading a particular inspirational book together? [*If there is interest, great! But don't let it get in the way of your times in When War Comes Home. Frankly, it will be easier for them to read some other book, because WWCH leads them to engage in such difficult work. But in the long run, it will be work that will lead to their strength and stability. So encourage them not to abandon it for the sake of an easier path.*]

*Lots of other ideas* (Page 109)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- I'll read through the list out loud, and as I do, ask the Lord if there might be at least one of these that you would like to take action on. Then, when I'm done, perhaps some of you would like to share what you decided on with the rest of the group, and also share with us how you intend to make sure it actually happens.

*My Spirit-Nurture Contract* (Page 109)

- **Content Question**

- ◇ Who would like to share what they wrote in the blanks on page 109? Is there anything we can do to help you follow through on these intentions?

Soul-Nurture (Pages 109, 110)

- ◇ How would you define your "soul"?
- ◇ What kinds of things feed our soul?
- ◇ When is the last time you intentionally did something to feed your soul?

1. *Remember your strengths* (Page 110)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why is it important that we remember what we're good at, where we are strong, what gifts we have been given by God?
- ◇ What did you list in the blanks – three strengths, skills, talents or gifts you have?
- ◇ Are you currently doing anything to develop or employ these strengths?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What could you begin doing this week to either develop or employ the strengths, skills, talents or gifts you have been given?

2. *Set personal boundaries and margin* (Page 110)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Are there some obligations you currently have that, looking back, you wish you had said no to? Is there anything you can do to get out of them now?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Do we have some "chronic joiners" or "queens of 'get-'er-done'" here? (If so . . .) What motivates you? Why do you push yourself so hard? (If not . . .) What do you think motivates them and makes them push themselves so hard?
- ◇ What do you think of that motto shared in this section: "The need is not the call"? Is that a new concept for some of you?
- ◇ Take a few minutes of silence to think about this. Where are some of the "marginless" areas of your life? What problems is this causing?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What could you do to create some margin in your marginless areas?

3. *Schedule personal R & R* (Page 111)

- **Content and Follow-up Question**

- ◇ Does it make you feel guilty to think about scheduling a little "me time" in your day, month or year? Why do you think that is?

- **Application**

- ◇ Right now: schedule it! What are you going to do *tomorrow* for fifteen to thirty minutes that is just for you? Is this something you could schedule in every day?
- When you get home later today, get some time with your husband and tell him that, as a specific assignment from your “Band of Sisters,” you are required to schedule a half-day or a day (you choose) to get away from home and just spend some time alone doing something that would refresh your soul (or however you want to put it). We’ll back you up! Then, tell us what you decided when we get together next week.
- At some time in the near future, consider when you might be able to schedule three to five days of “Cave Time” to be alone with God.

#### 4. *Speak truth to yourself* (Page 111)

- **Application**

- Once you have gone through Chapter 9 on your identity in Christ, copy off the sheet on page 145 and meditate on it regularly. Perhaps you could tape it on the wall in your kitchen or in your bathroom next to your mirror or on the wall opposite your toilet. Put a copy in your Bible and read it during some of your Quiet Time.

#### 5. *Play* (Page 111)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ What was your favorite form of “play” as a kid? What’s the chance you could revisit that sometime soon? What’s the chance that we as a Band of Sisters could join you in that?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Other than playing with your kids, when is the last time you engaged in “play” just for yourself? What did you do?
- ◇ What do you think happens to adults when they drop their inhibitions and actually “play” like they did when they were kids?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ What would you think of us deciding on a group outing of some sort in which we did something totally off-the-wall and *played*? Not go to a movie or lunch or the museum – but something *different* like paint-balling, or go to the amusement park to ride the roller coaster, or go white-water rafting, or go to the local elementary school and play a game of four-square. What could we *do* together that would really be *play*?

#### 6. *Get counseling* (Page 112)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ If it isn’t too personal a question, have any of you ever gone to a professional counselor? Would you recommend it to the rest of us or not? (If not . . .) Why not? Is it possible that the counselor you had simply wasn’t very competent, or your personalities didn’t click?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What do you think would be some of the benefits of going to a counselor – even if only for a few times? Is there any reason why you would *not* want to go to a counselor?
- ◇ Can any of you recommend a good counselor to the rest of us?

#### 7. *Check out something beautiful* (Page 112)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ If someone were to ask you, “Go find some beauty,” what’s the first place or thing that comes to your mind? If it isn’t local, can you think of a beautiful place or things that are nearby?
- ◇ What’s one of the most beautiful memories you have?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How could being intentional about “going where they keep the beautiful things” help you with your current stress level?
  - ◇ Name one thing that you’ve wanted to do to make your home more beautiful. Now name one thing that you can actually *afford!* What’s keeping you from following through on that desire? How can your Band of Sisters help make it happen?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ How about combining this “beautiful place or thing” suggestion with #3 above, scheduling personal R & R?

Beware of the traps (Page 112)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Would any of you feel free enough to share one of the traps that you’re having a hard time staying out of? [*Remind all group members of their confidentiality commitments.*] How could the rest of us help you with this?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ All of us have opportunities to fall into various traps – and most of us have from time to time over the years. Once we find ourselves in a trap, what’s the *worst* thing we can do? [*Try to get out of it on our own, isolate, not look for help.*] What does Satan think when we follow this strategy?
- **Application**
  - If you are currently struggling with one or more of these self-medicating issues, and just don’t feel comfortable sharing it with the whole group, please be sure to tell *somebody*. I’m available, there may be one or two others here in this group or a Battle Buddy outside the group – but please let someone know.

Brainstorming (Pages 112, 113)

- **Content and Follow-up**
  - Let’s read through this list together. As we go along, if there’s something that strikes your fancy, put a check-mark next to it. When done, share with the rest of the group what you checked. It could be that there are others in the group that checked the same items, and you might be able to do them together.

My Soul-Nurture Contract (Page 109)

- **Content Question**
  - ◇ Who would like to share what they wrote in the blanks on page 113? Is there anything we can do to help you follow through on these intentions?

Body Nurture (Pages 113-119)

- ◇ After reading the effects that prolonged stress can have on your body (last sentence of first paragraph), how many of those symptoms have you noticed recently?
- ◇ How strong do you think the link is between mental/emotional stress and physical stress?

1. Get some exercise! (Pages 114, 115)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ How much and what kind of exercise are each of you getting nowadays?
  - ◇ How many of you feel you should be getting more exercise? What’s keeping you from it?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Why is it important that you – as a person struggling with Secondary Traumatic Stress and trying to deal with numerous additional stressors – should be conscientious about getting regular exercise?
- ◊ Are you getting a good mix of aerobic and anaerobic exercises?
- ◊ How can you minimize the issues that are keeping you from getting regular exercise?

- **Application Question**

- ◊ What can you do starting next week (or tomorrow?) that will help you get more exercise?  
*[Help them understand that they shouldn't start off with goals that are too ambitious. Set the bar low at the beginning. The first objective is to establish consistency. A first goal of three exercise sessions per week is great! If they think they can handle more, better still. Encourage them to set a goal of sticking with their workout objectives for four solid weeks. If they can do that, the initial soreness will have worn off, and it's likely they'll feel intrinsically motivated to stick with it for the long haul.]*
- ◊ Can you snag a workout partner? How about your Battle Buddy, or someone else within your Band of Sister's group?

## 2. *Get some sleep!* (Pages 115-117)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ On a scale of 1 to 5, how would each of you say you were sleeping recently?
- ◊ If poorly, what interrupts your sleep? Can you think of any way those issues could be minimized?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Looking through the list on the bottom of page 115, put a checkmark next to any of the symptoms you are currently experiencing. How many of these do you think could be traced back to your lack of sleep?
- ◊ Now looking at the list under "Planning for better sleep" on pages 116-117, which of these could you adopt immediately? Which could you adopt within the next few weeks?
- ◊ Would any of you like to share any tips that you've found helpful in getting better sleep?

## 3. *Eat right!* (Pages 117, 118)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ True confessions time! What are some of the "comfort foods" that you over-indulge in?
- ◊ What other unhealthy diet habits have you gotten into since your husband came home?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Why do you think the stress that we have encountered has changed our eating habits?
- ◊ What healthy eating tips that you read in this section do you feel you should adopt right away?

- **Application Question**

- ◊ How can we keep each other accountable to adopt more healthy eating habits?

## 4. *Go see a doctor!* (Page 119)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ How long has it been since you've seen a doctor? If it's been more than six months, are you avoiding him? Too busy? Can't afford it? Afraid of what he/she might find or ask you to do?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ Do you sometimes try to be Superwoman – refusing to go to the doctor and stuffing your needs because you have too many other things in your schedule, and just figure you'll "tough it out"? Is this a good idea? What could it possibly lead to?

- **Application Question**

- ◊ If you haven't been in for a check-up during the past 6 months, or if you are currently experiencing physical difficulties, how soon can/will you schedule an appointment with your doctor?

*My Body-Nurture Contract* (Page 119)

- **Content Question**

- ◊ Who would like to share what they wrote in the blanks on page 119? Is there anything we can do to help you follow through on these intentions?

*Christina's Prayer* (Page 120)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Christina's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 8: WHO CARES?** (PAGES 121-131)

### **SEEKING AND FINDING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help them understand that their normal tendency to self-isolate – if accommodated – will be detrimental to their healing.
- To motivate them to seek out a few individuals who can help them bridge the gap between themselves and God and their healing.
- To give them practical ideas about what to look for in a Bridge Person.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Danielle's Journal* (Page 121)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ How many of you can identify with Danielle's drive to try to "do it all" by herself? Would some of you share about how you have morphed into a Superwoman/Lone Ranger since your husband was first deployed?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ How do some of you feel about how the government labels you as "dependents"?
- ◊ Why do you think Danielle insisted on re-arranging the furniture in her house even when her friends offered to help?
- ◊ What point was Danielle making when she said she must learn how to be an interdependent?

*Bridges To Healing* (Page 122)

- **Content and Follow up Questions**

- ◊ How would you explain the "bridges to healing" principle to someone who hasn't been exposed to it before?
- ◊ From Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (middle of page 122) what are some things that a companion can prove to be useful in?

- ◇ How expectant are you that help will arrive as you work through your STS and the difficulties with your husband's combat trauma? What do you think this help will look like? Have you considered that helping coming in the form of other people?
- ◇ Most of you have been dealing with your husband's stress for quite some time now. Who has been a real help for you so far? Name some names, and tell us a story about some of the things he or she did for you.
- ◇ If God is our Healer (Exodus 15:26), why should we waste time and energy involving other people to help us with our healing process? *[See first paragraph in the "Bridges To Healing" section on Page 122. The people involved won't **heal** you, but they'll help you construct an environment where God can most effectively heal you.]*

### Friends of Faith / God Invented Bridges (Pages 122, 123)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ *[Read Mark 2:1-12 about the four friends who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus for healing.]* What great truths occurred to you as you listened to this story?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What were these four men willing to do to help their friend? What was at stake for them? What was at stake for the paralyzed man?
- ◇ What was Jesus' response to the determination and faith of the four men? *[He was impressed – and He granted them their desire that their friend be healed.]*
- ◇ How do you think the paralyzed man felt after all this was over?
- ◇ Would a few of you read what you wrote in the blank at the top of page 123, about the potential "roof demolishers" in your life?
- ◇ *[Read the five verses in the "God Invented Bridges" section (page 123).]* In each verse, try to find a principle that would tell us how God intends for us to help each other.

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Would you be willing to be like the paralyzed man, and let your friends help you?
- ◇ Has anybody been offering to help you? What is your usual response?
- ◇ If no one has been offering to help you, why do you think that is? What can you do about it?
- ◇ How difficult is it for you to *receive* help from others, and to let others take care of *you* for a change?

### What Can We Expect From A Bridge? (Pages 123-125)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Before we go into this section, what are some characteristics that you would like to find in a friend you could trust to help you with your healing?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What Bridge person characteristics do you see in **Proverbs 17:17** (bottom of page 123)? Will a true friend bail out on you when you're experiencing adversity? What will they do instead?
- ◇ Were you able to think of any people that you could write down in the blank provided near the bottom of page 123? If so, if any of these people were ever in a jam, what would you be willing to do for them? Do you think they'd be willing to do the same for you? *[In all probability, they would!]*
- ◇ Read **Acts 20:35** (top of page 124). When you do not allow your friends to be Bridge people for you, how are *you* depriving *them*? How did you fill in the blank there, about how you respond when you have to be a receiver?



- ❖ Read **James 1:19** (middle of page 124). How did you fill in that blank – what *should* a Bridge person be good at? Why is this important to you? What if someone that you're looking to for help is a real talker, and you find it hard to get a word in edgewise – what should you do?
- ❖ In **Proverbs 27:17** (bottom of page 124) it says that “a friend sharpens a friend.” What do you think that means? What are some of the unpleasant aspects of being “sharpened” by a friend? How well do you take criticism? What do you usually do when someone offers you some feedback that you don't much like? What if this person is a very good friend? What if he or she is just a casual acquaintance? *[They should be willing to listen to everybody, weigh what they say, either accept or reject the criticism and be thankful to the person who was willing to take the risk and share something they thought you would benefit from hearing. However, if after a period of time it becomes clear that this person is nothing but a pessimistic critic who enjoys pulling people down, steer clear of him or her – and perhaps even communicate to that person that the things they normally share don't seem to help, only hurt, and could they limit their criticism. “Just being honest here.”]*
- ❖ Read **Proverbs 27:5, 6** (top of page 125). This is a step up from the previous verse. How do you handle outright “rebuke”? What would be necessary for you to be willing and able to accept a rebuke with a positive attitude? *[Then, cultivate that!]* Did you catch the intention in the first question beneath this scripture, about how you'd like your cancerous tumor taken care of? How did you answer? Who are some of the influential people in your past that made a difference in your life (the second blank)? Share some of the positive things they did that influenced you, but also see if you can remember some of the negative, hard-to-hear, corrective things they said or did which also helped you. Do you get the feeling they were willing to risk your friendship in order to open your eyes to a vital truth you may not know?
- ❖ Read **Hebrews 3:13** (middle of page 125). How important is receiving encouragement to you? According to this verse, what can happen to us if we are starved for encouragement? What are some things you can do to cultivate encouragement around you? *[How about – encouraging others? This is something the group should commit to do on a regular basis.]*
- ❖ Would anyone care to share what they wrote in the blank, about some encouragement you've been needing to hear, but haven't lately?
- ❖ What areas of “callous” are building in your life that could use some work? *[See discussion of Hebrews 3:13 at bottom of page 125.]* How could a bridge friend help you with this?

### The BEST Bridge Person ability: Availability (Page 126)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ❖ Why did some of Rabbi Kushner's friends abandon him? Have you ever experienced this?
- ❖ What did Rabbi Kushner's *real* friends do, which he greatly appreciated? How much professional training did that require?
- ❖ Do you think you can do that for others who are hurting?

### A Formalized Bridge Relationship (Page 126)

- **Opening Question**

- ❖ What do you think of the idea of establishing a few “formalized” Bridge relationships, where you speak candidly about your need for a supportive friend, and communicate clearly what you need that friend to do and be? Will this be easy or hard for you?

- **Content Questions**

- ❖ What is one of the main things that causes a relationship to self-destruct? *[Uncommunicated expectations – third paragraph.]*
- ❖ Look through the list of questions that you should ask someone who could be a Bridge for you. Are there any there that you'd feel uncomfortable asking or discussing?

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What should you do if your potential Bridge friend says “no” to any of the questions on that list?
- ◇ Would it be possible to establish a Bridge relationship with someone who isn't married to someone struggling with Combat Trauma? With someone who has never been in the military? What are the pros and cons? [*Note: Just because someone has never been married to a combat vet or in the military, it doesn't mean they can't be a helpful Bridge person. A man who has never had a heart attack can still be a great heart surgeon. With a GPS, a person who has never been to a certain city can still get you where you need to go. In the same way, a knowledgeable non-veteran can still be used by God to help you create a healing environment. Don't dismiss them just because they don't fit your pre-conceived ideas of what you need – God might know differently!*]
- ◇ Take some time to browse through and become familiar with the “What I Need From You” document in Appendix C, starting on page 235. [*Perhaps you could read each of the numbered headings and then give them a few seconds to skim that section. Or, if you want to take the time, go through the entire document with them – it's your call!*] Do you think it would be helpful to give this to a few of your closest friends and family members? Why or why not? [*Remind them that they have the publisher's permission to copy this document as often as they'd like for their own use.*]

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Were you able to think of anyone that you'd like to begin a formal Bridge relationship with, and write his/her/their name(s) in the blank provided? How will you approach them? When?
- ◇ Are any or all of the people in your Band of Sisters group able to be formal Bridge people for you? Discuss this as a group.

### Group Bridges (Pages 126, 127)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ You are apparently already convinced of the positive usefulness of a group setting to work on your STS – because you've been coming to these meetings! What aspects of it have been helpful to you so far?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Look over the list of reasons to be involved in a group. Put a check mark next to any that you have experienced since you've been involved with your present Band of Sisters.
- ◇ Look at each of the points listed under “Some helpful tips” (middle of Page 127). After each point, could I ask one or two of you to share what you think about it...
  - ◆ Do you agree or disagree with it?
  - ◆ Have you experienced or applied the principle that is mentioned?
  - ◆ Is it a principle that you haven't tried yet, but think you should?
  - ◆ What have you observed when others in the group employed the principle that is mentioned?

### When Is It Time To Call In the Pros? (Page 128, 129)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ How many of you have ever been to a professional counselor, psychiatrist or psychologist? [*This question was suggested in the last chapter's leader's guide. Don't ask it a second time, but you might allude to what was shared by group members before, or get them to summarize if it's been a few weeks since you covered this ground.*] What did you think of the experience – was it helpful or not?
- ◇ What is your opinion of the counselor?

- ◇ Can a professional counselor be a Bridge person? [*In some respects, yes, in other respects, no. You could have an interesting discussion on this point – but in any case, having a professional counselor in the mix is almost always a good thing!*]
- **Content & Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Look at the first four warning signs at the top of page 129. Have any of you ever experienced any of them? How long ago? What did you do about it?
  - ◇ Are you *currently* experiencing any of these conditions? [*If so, do what the manual says, and – right after this meeting – take them to a professional who can give them some direct help. If no one can see them until tomorrow, consider having him/her stay the night at your house, or with someone you trust who could look after them.*]
  - ◇ Now look at the next nine warning signs. Check any that you currently see in yourself. As you look at this list, do you feel you should make plans to begin seeing a professional counselor, if you aren't already?
  - ◇ Read through the eight questions offered for you to ask a prospective counselor starting at the bottom of page 129. How would you *hope* a prospective counselor would answer each question? What if they don't answer a few of them as you hoped? Is it realistic to expect all of our criteria for a counselor to be met? Are there any questions in this list that you would consider “deal-breakers”?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ If any of you are not currently seeing a counselor, but would like to, would you like for me to see if I can help you with that?
- **Application Concern**
  - ◇ As you search for a good counselor or therapist, realize that some will be a good fit for you, but others won't. There are a number of issues that may limit their effectiveness for you: their personality, their counseling style, their spiritual/philosophical convictions, their training, their gender, their availability, their skills, their experience, etc. Ask God to give you insight and discernment, and lead you to just the right one.

Danielle's Prayer (Page 131)

- Ask someone to read the “Promise from God's Word” verse and then pray Danielle's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 9: WHO AM I REALLY?** (PAGES 133-146)

### **FOCUSING ON YOUR TRUE IDENTITY IN CHRIST**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand how important their self-perception is, and how profoundly a negative self-image can affect many areas of their life.
- To help them rebuild their shattered identity based on what God says about them, not on what the world, the devil or their own negative self-perceptions say.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Erin's Journal (Page 133)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Everybody get out your driver's license or military ID card. Take a look at your photo, and show it to other group members. How long ago was the photo taken? How much have you changed since then? On a scale of 1 to 10, how accurately do you think that photo reflects your true face? Can you remember what was going on the day you had that picture taken?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How has your identity changed since your husband came back from war, and you've had to deal with the stress of his Combat Trauma?
- ◇ *[As an alternative way to ask that question:]* Fill in the blanks in this sentence. "Before my husband left for war, I felt I was \_\_\_\_\_. But since he's come back, struggling with Combat Trauma, I now feel \_\_\_\_\_ about myself."
- ◇ On a scale of 1 to 10, how positive is your self-image currently? How much do you like yourself?

*Perception and self-perception / Traumatic stress and identity* (Pages 134, 135)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What do you think of that statement: "Perception is reality in the mind of the perceiver"? What does it mean to you?
- ◇ Why is it important that your self-perception be true, and lined up with what God perceives about you? *[Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." What we think about ourselves will strongly shape how we act, how we see ourselves, and how others see us. That's why it's so important that we tell ourselves the truth.]*
- ◇ How does what we think about ourselves affect our behavior?
- ◇ What forces are at work that will fuel the fire of negative self-image and self-hatred in the wife of a combat veteran?
- ◇ How are the words of God from the Bible different from the words of other people written in other books? *[See thoughts on this in the first paragraph at the top of page 136 under "Spiritual IEDs".]*
- ◇ Spend a few minutes (if you haven't already) studying the "Self-perception Assessment" on page 134. *[Note: make sure each group member understands all of the terms.]* As the manual directs, place an X on each line indicating your current opinion of yourself. When you're done, share your results with the group and give them your general perception of how you have "scored" yourself. Do you feel good or bad about it? Do you think it needs to change? Do you think it can?

*Exposing your enemy's deception* (Page 135)

- ◇ The lies of Satan are the foundations of your negative self-perception. How does he tell you these lies? What means does he use? *[See second paragraph in this section.]*

*Deception/True Identity #1: Disregarded/Regarded* (Pages 135, 136)

- **Opening Question**

- ◇ Have you ever heard yourself – or heard your enemy – tell you any of the "Lies of the enemy" listed here? Which one(s)?
- ◇ The manual talks about "Spiritual IEDs" – the element of truth in the lies of Satan. Can you identify the element of truth in the lies that Satan has told you and twisted all out of proportion?

- **Content Questions**

- ◇ What did you write down in the first blank, about what Jesus Christ calls you?
- *With each of the eight Identity issues, just progress through the various questions with blanks to fill in, and ask them what they came up with. Or if they haven't completed them ahead of time, have someone read the scripture, and then ask the group how they would answer the question associated with it. Then ask one or more of the Follow-up Questions, if appropriate.*

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How do the four verses in this section make you think that you are highly regarded by God Himself?

- ◇ What if God felt this way about you, but no one else did? Would it be enough for you to know that God held you in very high regard? If not, why should it matter what God thinks about you?

Deception/True Identity #2: Unimportant/Important (Pages 136, 137)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Which of these lies have you heard before? How deeply did they affect you?
- **Content Questions**
  - Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How do each of these verses add to the truth of how **important** you are to the kingdom of God, and the earth in general?
  - ◇ Of what importance is it to be known as “salt” from God on the earth?
  - ◇ *[Read the last paragraph in this section.]* How possible does it seem to you that you could be somebody that God is grooming to take on a leadership position in His kingdom during the difficult times that are to come?
- **Application Questions**
  - ◇ Since you ARE so important to God, what are you doing currently to hone your kingdom leadership skills, so that when you are called upon, you'll be ready to do your job?

Deception/True Identity #3: Accused & Guilty/Forgiven (Page 138)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Which of these lies have you heard before? Was there every any truth to them? How have you allowed your enemy to puff up that kernel of truth to make it all a lie?
- **Content Questions**
  - Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Since we have been forgiven of all the things that Satan says make us despicable, what should be our response when he whispers in our ear how sinful, useless and guilty we are?
  - ◇ Have you ever told Satan your testimony when he tries to come by and pull you down through accusations and discouragement? Try it sometime! As he tells you what a piece of garbage you are, you can start out, “Satan – let me tell you what happened about 2000 years ago, when the Son of God died on the cross for me, and the Father rose Him up three days later . . . and how I bought into that sacrifice x years ago when I invited Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior – and He took *out* the garbage . . .” Read Revelation 12:11 for extra insight.

Deception/True Identity #4: Devalued/valued (Page 138, 139)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Have you heard any of these devaluing statements before? What did you feel like when you heard them? Do you still hear them?
- **Content Questions**
  - Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Why do you personally “value” something? What gives it “value”?
  - ◇ Based on those responses, what parallels can you draw regarding why God values you?
  - ◇ How does our now being the Temple of God – actually replacing the one in Jerusalem – make us valuable?

Deception/True Identity #5: Rejected/Accepted (Page 140)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Did you ever desperately want to be picked to do something – perhaps to be on an all-league sports team, be accepted into a club, university or service academy, be chosen for a particular job or position, win the heart of a certain young man – and find yourself *not* chosen? How did it make you feel? Did it affect other areas of your life as well?
- **Content Questions**
  - Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Can you think of any other very-deserving and accomplished person who was rejected when he should have been picked? [*They may think of some famous people or friends, but how about Jesus Christ?*]
  - ◇ If Satan is trying to say that you are “rejected,” what are you supposedly rejected *from*?
  - ◇ All of us from time to time may fail to reach the goals we have set for ourselves. It’s part of life. Obviously, this makes anyone feel disappointed, but at what point does our disappointment become harmful to us?

#### Deception/True Identity #6: Powerless/Powerful (Page 141)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ What makes you feel powerless? Because you are not able to accomplish something that you set out to accomplish, how does that become a Name Tag for you? How does it become anything more than just a temporary condition?
- **Content Questions**
  - Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ You have been told (by God) that you are powerful. What should you do when you don’t *feel* particularly powerful? How can you get past those “feelings”?
  - ◇ In what ways has God made us (or you) powerful?

#### Deception/True Identity #7: Unlovable/Lovable (Page 142, 143)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Have you ever been jilted by a boyfriend, or received a “Dear Jane” letter? How did it make you feel? Were you able to shrug it off as “no big deal,” or did it shake you to the very core of your self-worth? How did you get over it (or did you ever)? How did Satan help you *not* get over it?
- **Content Questions**
  - Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ [*Read the last two paragraphs in this section (bottom of page 142) aloud.*] Does this give you some idea of how much God loves you? Do you think you could ever love someone to the depth that He loves you?

#### Deception/True Identity #8: Separated/Connected (Page 143, 144)

- **Opening Question**
  - ◇ Have you ever heard these lies before? How can they be especially devastating to the wife of a combat veteran who is struggling with self-image problems and the urge to self-isolate?

- **Content Questions**

- Share the fill-in-the-blank answers you came up with.
- ◊ How can you tell when Satan is lying? [*Whenever his mouth moves – paragraph in the middle of page 144.*]

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ How strong and durable is our connection to God? How far can we expect it to stretch before it will finally be broken, and we'll once again be disconnected? [*Our connection with God will **never** reach that breaking point. That's the nature of having been given eternal life by Him.*]
- ◊ From time to time, you will *not* feel connected to the Body of Christ. Christians won't seem to understand you or be interested in your struggles. Churches won't appreciate or honor the sacrifices you've made as the wife of a combat vet. You may feel peculiar and separated. But you must realize that (1) this probably a very temporary situation, (2) Satan will try to amplify those feelings in order to get you even more depressed, and (3) remember that the Christians that Jesus said you are connected to are sinful, fallible humans just like you. They have weaknesses, blind spots, and identity issues just like you. So, with this in mind, what attitude should you adopt toward your fellow believers when you are feeling *not* connected? In reality, are you, or are you not connected? [*What did Jesus say? **His** words are true!*]

*This Is Who I Am* (Page 107)

*Note: If you are able to, make copies of this proclamation listing the eight self-perception truths from this study, and give one to each group member. Encourage them to post it somewhere in their room or their home, keep it in their Bible, or any place where they will see it frequently and remind themselves of the truth about who they are.*

- **Group Exercise**

- Have the group stand up and read the proclamation aloud. It might be even more meaningful if the group stood in a circle, with one hand holding the paper with the proclamation on it, the other hand on the shoulder of the person next to her.

- **Content Question**

- ◊ Would each of you be willing to take the Self-Perception Assessment again in about a month and see what differences God has brought about?

- **Follow-up Question**

- ◊ After all we've learned in this chapter, is there still one or more of these eight areas that you are struggling with?

*Erin's Prayer* (Page 146)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Erin's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 10: WHO IS THE REAL ENEMY?** (PAGES 147-162)

### **FIGHTING SPIRITUALLY FOR MYSELF, MY HUSBAND AND MY KIDS**

**Objectives:**

- To help group members understand who their TRUE enemy is, and how to fight him in the spiritual realm.

- To help them understand the concept of “doorways and footholds” as areas of vulnerability that Satan will use to try to defeat them and to identify any doorways and footholds in their lives that they need to take care of.
- To help them understand and use the spiritual weapons that are available to them in their battle against Satan.

### Discussion Questions:

#### Lauren's Journal (Page 147)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ Lauren wrote about “fists full of my marriage and my home” that Satan had stolen. What are some of the things that your enemy has stolen from your marriage and home?
  - ◇ How has this affected you emotionally? *[Does it make you want to fight, or does it make you feel defeated and want to give up?]*
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ In one of his emails to Lauren, what did Jason say was one of the hardest things about being in a war zone? How does that remind you of one of the hardest things about the “war zone” in your home?
  - ◇ Have you ever felt like leaning over to your husband, as Lauren did, and asking, “Is that you?”

#### Black Hats/White Hats / Enemy 101 (Page 148, 149)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ To what extent do you consider your husband as an ally, and to what extent do you see him as an enemy? *[Example: 30% ally / 70% enemy? 80% ally / 20% enemy?]*
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ But in all difficulties and conflicts in your home and in your relationship with your husband, who is your *true* enemy?
  - ◇ What is Satan's main objective in your home? *[Mainly to drive a wedge between the husband and wife. If he can wreck that relationship, he can harm many other “constellation relationships” – with children, parents, siblings, friends, etc.]*
  - ◇ What is one of the most important things you can do to counter Satan's strategies? *[Know your enemy; don't be ignorant of his schemes.]*
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ When arguments start, and the pressure and stress build, how can you remind yourself that your husband is your ally and Satan is your enemy?

#### Preparing To Meet Your Enemy (Pages 109-112)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What are some of the facts you came up with about your enemy Satan? *[Blank on Page 149. Be sure to write down their contributions on a white board, chalk board or big piece of paper. When they have exhausted their ideas, if you can think of any others, add them to the list.]*
  - ◇ How does knowing what some of Satan's tactics are give you more confidence about beating him in a fight? What do you know now that you didn't know before you started this study? How is this going to help you with your STS and your husband's Combat Trauma?
  - ◇ What was Satan's primary problem? *[In “His origin” section: pride and self-centeredness. He wanted to take God's place. The five “I wills” at the bottom of page 149 make it clear that he wanted to possess all that God had.]*



- ❖ What are Satan's primary objectives for planet Earth? *[Four of them are listed at the top of page 149.]*
- ❖ Objective #4 on Page 150 says that Satan is going to use humans to stage a second coup attempt against God. What do you see in the world today that would indicate that he is ready to launch this next and final attempt?
- ❖ Let's take a look at some of your observations regarding Satan's tactics. *[Go through the fill-in-the-blank questions on page 150 and have them share what they wrote down.]*
- ❖ In the "Breaking The Code" section at the top of page 151, how did you draw your lines between the Genesis 3 passage and Satan's "decoded" words?
- ❖ Did you notice the difference between what God *actually* commanded, and what Eve *said* He commanded? God said they couldn't eat from the tree, Eve said that God said they couldn't even *touch* it. How did Satan springboard off this tidbit of wrong information to tempt Eve to do exactly what she just said she shouldn't do? What does that tell you about how important it is to know exactly what God has said?
- ❖ *[Read through the "Anatomy of a Temptation" at the bottom of page 151.]* Let's see if we can find each of these five elements in Satan's temptation of Eve on the previous page.
- ❖ How did you fill in the blanks on page 151, about some restrictions that are good, and some freedoms that are bad? What does that tell you about how we should examine the blanket statements Satan makes as he tempts us?

### Satan's Primary Tactic – Doorways and Footholds (Pages 152-154)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ❖ This section talks about how Satan will often offer us "freedom" of some sort, but then it always turns out to be *bondage* instead. Can you think of some examples of this?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ❖ Read Genesis 4:1-12 in your Bible to get the context of the truth found in verse 7. What does it say sin (Satan) is doing? What is the door that this verse is referring to? *[It refers to a person's will – 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph in this section.]*
  - ❖ Who else wants to come through the door of your will? *[Jesus – Revelation 3:20.]* Once Jesus has gone through that door, is it then shut and locked? *[Obviously not – we are continually peeking outside to see what the devil has to offer, and sometimes we let him in too. This is why the Holy Spirit and the unholy spirit are in a constant battle to be the one we listen to and obey.]*
  - ❖ What other analogy is used to describe Satan's tactics? *[Footholds.]* How are footholds used in order to "conquer" a mountain or a cliff? How is this like Satan's method of trying to conquer us? *[He'll do it one small, inconspicuous step at a time, so as not to alert us to his activities.]*
- **Application Questions and Exercises**
  - ❖ Spend a few moments (if you haven't already) and write down some of the doorways and footholds that Satan tends to use in order to tempt you to sin *[Blank in the middle of page 153 under "Exploiting Vulnerabilities"]*. If anyone feels bold enough, perhaps they would be willing to share some of their areas of vulnerability?
  - ❖ Now go through the list of "**Possible Doorways and Footholds**" in Appendix E, Pages 247, 248. Circle the number of any items that you have engaged in or had contact with. *[Remind them that, just because they have experienced one of the occurrences listed, it doesn't necessarily mean they have opened a door – but they may have. It's something they need to ask God about.]*
  - *Note: you may want to go over the list of Possible Doorways and Footholds as a group first to find out if anyone has questions about them.*

- ◇ Let's spend some time now privately going through the three steps listed under "**Closing Doorways**" on Page 114. *[Note: you may want to let them go outside or to some other area of the home or building you're in to give each person some privacy. If they have any actions to take listed in the second step (such as destroying offending objects) they will have to do that later and report back to you or the group about it. Another alternative would be to have them do this on their own at home, and then report back to the group next meeting. Depending on how close your group has become in the previous weeks, you might even consider doing it in a group. One individual would go to the center of the group, everyone else would lay hands on him and pray for him as he goes through the suggested prayer, specifically naming the doorways he has opened. Then it would be someone else's turn. This will greatly add to the group's unity and accountability. Also, remind everyone about the "Rule" of privacy and confidentiality.]*

### Weapon #1: Our authority (Pages 154, 155)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ What do you know about the importance of "superior weaponry" when it comes to warfare? Has your husband ever spoken about this?
- **Content Questions**
  - ◇ What's the difference between "power" and "exousia"? *[By the way, it's pronounced "Eck-zoo-SEE-uh."]*
  - ◇ Who has been given Christ's *exousia*? How and why were we given Christ's *exousia*?
  - ◇ What did you write in the blank at the top of page 155, about whose authority Christ's authority exceeds?
- **Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How does our having Christ's *exousia* help us in our battle with Satan? How do we use Christ's *exousia*? *[Through the spoken word, just as Jesus did in Matthew 4 when He commanded Satan to leave. Satan had to obey, stop his actions, and leave – our *exousia* is greater than his because it comes from Christ.]*
  - ◇ If we are living in sin, occupying the throne of our life, and not willing to repent, do you think we can still count on our *exousia* being stronger than Satan's? *[No – our place of warring is "with Christ in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 2:6). If we willingly disobey God, we quench His Spirit and voluntarily leave His "military war room." We are, of course, still saved, but we are trying to fight our war alone – and we're going to get hit hard. It's much better to keep our eternal, all-wise Commander-in-Chief on the war-throne of our life!]*

### Weapon #2: Our Spiritual Kevlar (Pages 155-157)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ In sports, why is a good defense as important as a good offense? Why is it also important in military battles? Why is it also important in spiritual battles?
- **Content Questions & Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ Look at the list of six elements of our spiritual armor. What do you think it would be like if God didn't supply each of those six elements? (For instance, why would not having the Belt of Truth make us more vulnerable to the attacks of Satan?)
  - ◇ Why is the "Sword of the Spirit" a unique element? How do we use it offensively? How do we use it defensively?
- **Application Assignment**
  - Starting tomorrow morning during your prayer time or devotional time, prayerfully accept each of the six elements of your spiritual armor and put it on. Imagine yourself standing before God's throne as He hands them to you one at a time. Receive them from Him, and then put them on. At the top of page 157 is a suggested prayer. *[Make sure they understand*

*that the prayer printed there isn't "magic". It's not the words that are important, but the attitude of their heart. Hopefully, that printed prayer will simply give words and a pattern that will express what's in their heart.]*

### Weapon #3: The Word of God (Pages 157-159)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ How do we humans normally get things done when something needs to be accomplished? For instance, if we build a house, what "tools" do we use? [Examples: our muscles, shovels, hammers, saws, axes, etc.]

- **Content Questions**

- ◊ How are things accomplished in the spiritual realm? [Through the spoken word. Have each member of the group read one of the passages under "**How Things Get Done In the Kingdom of God**" (middle of Page 157) and answer the question "How did this person use the spoken word to accomplish spiritual work?" Notice: the spiritual work that was accomplished was often easily seen in the physical realm. Examples: creation, healing.]
- ◊ How did you answer the question at the top of page 158? [Common denominator: in each case the person featured in the verse spoke a command. For an additional interesting exercise, look at who was spoken to in each case – a lot of variety there!]
- ◊ What are the three stages of a spiritual counterattack we should employ when we realize we are being tempted? [See the bottom of Page 158, discussion of James 4:7,8.]

- **Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ If Satan was trying to trick you into telling a lie, how would you defend yourself and defeat Him? [Be sure the answer includes speaking directly to Satan, and quoting a verse of scripture that is about not telling lies, such as Leviticus 19:11]
- ◊ When it comes to military tactics, what's the difference between advancing and retreating? Aren't they pretty much the same? Obviously not. But when it comes to spiritual warfare tactics, many Christians seem to think they're the same. From what is the Christian to flee and retreat? And when is he supposed to attack with guns blazing? [See "**Advance or Retreat?**" bottom of page 158.]

- **Application Exercise**

- Flip back in your manual to Appendix F, your "**Spiritual Warfare Ammo Bunker**" (pages 249-2520. Browse through the various listings of temptations, and find the ones that your enemy tends to hit you with the most frequently. If you can't find it, let's talk later about coming up with some additional ammo for you. But for the ones you do find, write then in the flyleaf of your Bible, so that when you are tempted in the future, you'll know right where to go to find your ammunition!
- Next meeting, I'm going to ask you to share what you wrote in the blank in the middle of Page 159 (or you can just tell us what happened) – that will be your report on how things went when you employed these strategies against your enemy in the coming week. We want to hear about and rejoice with you in your victory!

### Warfare praying (Pages 159-161)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◊ Were you

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◊ After you read Dr. Bubeck's quote at the bottom of page 159 where he is emphasizing praying biblically, can you give an example of praying based on "subjective feelings, emotional desires and fervent sincerity"? [Example: "Father, I desire with all my heart that you heal my husband from his PTSD. I know it is Your will! So Satan, I command you in

*Jesus' name to stop bothering my husband!" Very sincere, strong emotional desire – which are great – but she can't know that it is God's will to heal him of his PTSD at this particular moment. She can pray against Satan's tormenting of her husband on other biblical basis, but not based on her subjective feelings.]*

- Have a group members read each prayer out loud – praying it as she does (others can enter into the same prayer silently). When done with each one, ask the group what they liked about it – what resonated with them, what reflected the desires of their heart. Also ask what they didn't like – what was confusing or they didn't feel comfortable with or what wouldn't seem genuine coming from them.

- **Application**

- *[Recommend to them that they pray these prayers on a regular basis for themselves and their family, and use them as inspiration to construct additional prayers that come from their own heart.]*

*Lauren's Prayer* (Page 162)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Lauren's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 11: HOW CAN I HELP MY HUSBAND?** (PAGES 163-181)

### **CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR HUSBAND'S HEALING ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members understand that it is not their job – nor within their ability – to "fix" their husbands, but she *can* help contribute to their healing environment in significant ways.
- To give group members a number of practical ideas that will provide a strong, positive relationship between her and her husband, and help create an environment in their home that their husbands will see as safe, loving, non-judgmental, therapeutic and supportive.
- To help group members gain conviction that, despite their zealous desire to serve and care for their husbands, self-care needs to be an important part of their strategy.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Danielle's Journal* (Page 163)

- **Opening Questions**

- ❖ Consider the relationships that are listed below, and decide which one best characterizes the relationship between you and your husband. Share with the group why you chose the one you did. In some cases, you will need to clarify which role you play, and which is your husband's...
 

◆ Roommates	◆ Psychiatrists/client
◆ Newlyweds	◆ Mechanic/customer
◆ Old married couple	◆ Enemies living under a truce
◆ Jailer/inmate	◆ Strangers
◆ Parent/child	◆ Gardener/plant
- ❖ How does your perception of your relationship with your husband affect how you treat him?
- ❖ Does this perception need to be changed?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What similarities was Danielle noticing between her care of her garden and the care of her husband? Can you add any parallels to Danielle's?
- ◇ If you had to characterize your husband as a particular type of plant, what would it be? In light of that, how can you best care for him (how would you best care for that kind of plant?).

Broadening your vision / Thank you for your support (Page 164)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ As a wife and (possibly) a mother, you have a set of very honorable characteristics that can also prove to be detrimental. What are they?
- ◇ Other than God, what is the most important element in your husband's healing environment? [*His wife.*]
- ◇ But your support has its limits. Will you be able to fix your husband? As your husband's key care-giver, what limitations do you need to recognize? [*See the last quote in this section by Dr. Matsakis – the "Three C's."*]

Why bother? (Pages 164, 165)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ If you and your husband are still together – why? Why have you chosen to stay with him? [*Blank in the middle of page 165*]

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Look at the list near the top of page 165. Can you identify with any of these reasons why Israeli wives stayed with their combat veteran husbands? Which one(s)? How long do you think these reasons will be sufficient reasons for you to stay with your husband?

How can I help? (Pages 165-180)

- ◇ When you read something in this chapter for which you don't think you and your husband are ready, what should you do about it? [*Just file it somewhere in the "apply when appropriate" section of your mental filing cabinet. You or your husband may not be ready for it today, but it could be very different in a few months.*]

1. Redefine and clarify roles and responsibilities (Pages 165-167)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ What extra roles and responsibilities did you have to assume when your husband went off to war?
- ◇ When he came back, were you reluctant to give them up? Was he reluctant to take them back?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Why is it important to make sure you are not "overfunctioning" in your household roles and responsibilities since your husband returned? [*Third paragraph on page 166 – quote from Dr. Gilbert.*]
- ◇ What do you think Dr. Hicks meant when he referred to "dragon killing" at the end of his quote (bottom of page 166)?
- ◇ Why do you think it's important that our husbands be able to control something in their environment?
- ◇ In the "A variety of roles" section on page 167, check off the ones that you are currently performing. As the Battle Buddy assignment directs, which ones cause you difficulty – either because you checked them or because you couldn't check them?
- ◇ What was wrong with Patience Mason's attitude toward her husband (quote in the "A non-role" section toward the bottom of page 167)? What's wrong with seeing yourself as "a very

loving, giving person who would do anything to help her husband”? Have you ever tried to keep your husband from expressing anger, sadness or despair? Based on Mason’s comment, was this a good thing or not?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ Let’s get a start on this “**Chore Inventory**” (middle of page 166). Get out a separate piece of paper. *[Note: you may want to be ready to supply the paper. Read through the directions in the first paragraph with them.]* It would be good for you to take this list home and go over it with you husband and see what he has to add to it, but as you look at it right now, what are some of your impressions? Do you think some changes need to be made?
- ◇ If your husband is pretty incapacitated by his Combat Trauma, isn’t there *something* you can give him to do that will help him gain a sense of productivity, self-respect and control of his environment?

## 2. Learn how to have a good fight (Pages 167-170)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Why should you and your husband agree on the “Rules of Engagement” sometime during a peaceful, non-argumentative period?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Let’s look at these two columns near the top of page 168 that list eight common parameters of an argument. Why are each of the “Focus on” issues important and the “Rather than” ones good to avoid?
- ◇ Do you think it’s possible – as John Gottman advises in his quote in the middle of page 168 – to treat your husband as respectfully as you would treat your company? What difficulties would you have with this? Why do we sometimes find this difficult? *[See next paragraph after Gottman quote: expectations.]*
- ◇ From Tim & Joy Downs’ quote near the bottom of the page, what is “as basic to conflict resolution as oxygen is to life”? *[Goodwill – the heart attitude committed to heal rather than to hurt.]*
- ◇ Look at the chart on page 169 by Tim & Joy Downs. First read down the column headed by “Flashpoint.” Underline each flashpoint that you and your husband have trouble with. When done with this, next read down the middle column about “the real underlying issue.” Do you agree or disagree that the issue mentioned is truly at the base of your conflict? Now look at the right column about “Chief components.” Do these seem like what your arguments with your husband are *really* about? Would you add anything to the components that are listed?

- **Application**

- Show this chart to your husband and go through it with him – just as we did above. Ask him if it gives him any insights into your disagreements, and if it gives him any ideas about how the two of you might be able to resolve your conflicts with less animosity in the future.

Here’s how it works: (Page 169)

- Read through the interchange between the husband and wife – but don’t let the group read on to the next page! Ask them to look through the seven underlying issues in the center column in the chart above, and see if they can identify which of the seven issues was at the heart of the husband’s concern about the discarded toaster. Then go on to the next page and read the observations there.
- ◇ Can you think of a recent argument you had with your husband? How was it similar to this one about the toaster?

### 3. Pray for your husband (Pages 170-173)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ How many of you feel that you pray too much for your husband, and need to cut back some? How many of you feel you should be praying more for him?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- Consider giving each group member a purse-size or Bible-size notebook. Ask them to take a few minutes to write down some things they want to begin praying for their husbands on a consistent basis. Make sure they leave a little room after each entry where they can write in answers! Have them add to the list in the days, weeks and months to come, as God brings things to their mind that they should be praying for their husbands about.
- ◇ Why do you think Jesus went to such great lengths to convince us that we need to be persistent and consistent in our prayers? [*Fifth paragraph, starting with "In Luke 11..."*]
- ◇ **Praying Scripture.** Why is praying scripture a powerful way to approach the throne of grace? [*Next, see Application below, before proceeding to Doctrinal Prayers.*]
- ◇ **Doctrinal Prayers.** Look at the "**Do it yourself**" section near the bottom of page 172. Read Psalm 23:1-3, and then the Doctrinal Prayer next to it, so they can get an idea of how to construct one. Then give them a few minutes to write a Doctrinal Prayer for Psalm 18:16-19, top of page 173. Ask group members who would like to share what they came up with.

- **Application**

- Ask four volunteers (or just go around the group) to read the four scriptural prayers listed on page 171, inserting their husband's name in the blank. Recommend they do this for their husbands on a consistent basis.
- Do the same thing with the **Doctrinal Prayer** on page 172. Perhaps you could have each group member read one paragraph of the prayer.

### 4. Explore issues of sexual intimacy (Pages 173, 174)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ If it's not too private a subject to ask about, how has your sex life been since your husband returned from combat?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What are the two most common issues that combat vets struggle with? [*Sexual and sleep problems – first paragraph.*]
- ◇ If your husband isn't as interested in sex with you as he used to be, do you sometimes think it's because he is no longer attracted to you? Does this section change your mind about that at all? What are some more likely reasons why he isn't as interested in sex as before?
- ◇ Does your husband have problems at the other end of the spectrum – wanting sex daily or multiple times a day? Why do you sense this is?
- ◇ How important is it to you that your sex life with your husband be restored to some level of normalcy?

- **Application**

- ◇ What do you think you should do in order to help restore your sex life back to normal? Is it a big enough issue that you feel the two of you should go to a counselor about it? If so, bring it up with your husband within the next week. Do this in the context of sharing with him some of the things you learned in this section – so that he doesn't feel that he's a failure or unmanly. You need to assure him that it's just one of the symptoms of his Combat Trauma, and that it can be worked through.

## 5. Become intentional about communication (Pages 174-177)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◊ On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you say communication has been between you and your husband since he returned from combat? How different is this from how it was before he left?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Read through the questions in the “**Dialog Coach**” section. Put a mark next to any questions that you think your husband might really respond to. Why do you think these particular questions might be extra-meaningful to him?
  - ◊ What are a couple of the things mentioned in the bottom half of page 175 that you should avoid during these conversations? Why should they be avoided?
  - ◊ What will you do if you husband indicates that he just doesn't want to talk about a certain subject? [**Back off!** section, top of page 176.]
  - ◊ **Suicide talk.** As of this writing, more OIF and OEF troops have died from suicide than have died from combat. **THIS IS A VERY REAL AND SERIOUS PROBLEM!** Read through the list of indicators on page 176 and put a mark next to any that you have observed in your husband. If you are concerned about how many marks you made, bring it up with the group and get some counsel from them about what you should do. Review the information about suicide on page 129: “**When is it time to call in the pros?**”
  - ◊ Read through the list of “**What not to say**” starting at the bottom of page 176. Have any of you ever thrown any of these “conversational hand grenades”? If so, what was the result?
- **Application**
  - Ask your husband if he'd like to try the “Dialog Coach” during your next date. Assure him that you won't expect to go through *all* the questions – perhaps you could choose two and he could choose two. Then you both respond to each of the questions asked.

## Humor / Remind / Include / Indulge him (Page 177)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ What are some ways you have injected humor into your relationship with you husband? What's something funny that happened recently?
  - ◊ Take a couple of minutes and write down three or four skills and strengths that you husband owns. Look for an opportunity within the next couple of days to remind him of them.
  - ◊ Evaluate how much you are involving him in household decisions. Does this need to increase? Is there a reason why you are excluding him from these decisions? How can that reason be eliminated or gotten around?
  - ◊ What idiosyncrasies do you need to accommodate in your husband that are related to his Combat Trauma? How are you doing with that? Do you struggle with resentment sometimes because of it?

## 6. Be proactive about his healing environment (Pages 177-179)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Looking at these seven areas in which you need to be proactive, rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5. [*Read through this section, giving them a chance to rate themselves after each one.*]
    - ◊ **Counseling.** Have you and/or your husband tried going to a counselor before now? If so, what was your experience? If not, do you think it would be helpful? Do you think your husband would go?
    - ◊ **Medications.** Are you aware of all the medications you husband takes? Do you help to make sure he's taking them properly? Does he refuse to take some of the medications that were prescribed to him? If so, what do you think can be done about that? [*Suggestions from the group?*]



- ◇ **Spirituality.** How is your spirituality and that of your husband syncing up? Are you noticing any conflicts between you on this issue? Any resentment? What are some ways wives can exhibit that “gentle and quiet spirit” that Peter wrote about? What effect do you think that will have on your husband?
- ◇ **Combat Trauma Healing Manual.** Have you considered giving him this manual? Is there someone or a group (similar to your “Band of Sisters” group) that is already functioning that he could join? Is there anyone you can think of who would be willing to start one up? *[Note: it's best for a Combat Trauma sufferer to go through the manual in a small group setting, but if one isn't available, and if he is intrinsically motivated to push toward healing, he could try going through it “solo.”]*
- ◇ **Exercise.** Are you exercising? How about your husband? Would it be useful for you to suggest that the two of you become workout partners?
- ◇ **Fun.** Are you and your husband scheduling in “fun” activities? When's the last time you did something fun with him? What did you do? What's the next “date” you want to take him out on?
- ◇ **Substance abuse.** Is substance abuse a problem with your husband? If it's not too personal, can you share with the rest of us what's going on? Has he tried going through a substance abuse program? If so, what happened? If this abuse is on-going, what helpful suggestions could the rest of the group members make?
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ What actions do you need to take relative to these seven issues within the next day, week or month?

7. *Don't neglect your own needs* (Pages 179, 180)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ What are some of the “Nurture Contracts” you wrote in Chapter 7? Are you carrying them out? Do you need us to provide some “support” in that?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ What are some ways that you will be helping your husband by taking care of yourself? *[Be sure that what Patience Mason said in the quote in the middle of page 179 registers in their thinking.]*
  - ◇ How's your isolation quotient? In other words, on a scale of 1 to 5, how successfully are you not isolating yourself?
  - ◇ Even though we haven't gotten to the last chapter yet – which is about setting goals – what are some of the goals you have already set for yourselves? How can we pray you toward those goals and dreams?
  - ◇ How's your endurance quotient? Are you reaching the limits of your endurance, or do you still feel you have some margin there? Do you feel (relative to the Isaiah 40:31 passage on page 180) that you are in a “mount up with wings like eagles” phase, or have you gotten to the “walk and not faint” stage yet? Or are you just sitting on a rock beside the road?
  - *[Read the final section to the group: “Conclusion: It will be worth it.” This should help the session to end on a high note!]*

*Danielle's Prayer* (Page 181)

- Ask someone to read the “Promise from God's Word” verse and then pray Danielle's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **CHAPTER 12: HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILDREN?** (PAGES 183-198)

### **MAKING A SAFE, HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR KIDS**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members recognize some of the struggles their children are experiencing because of their husband's Combat Trauma and what are some of the serious consequences if they are not intentional about creating a safe, healthy environment for their children.
- To give group members practical ideas about how to open up lines of communication with their children, discern their struggles and stresses, and provide positive comfort, instruction and insight to their children regarding the difficulties their father is experiencing.
- To give group members practical ideas as to how their children can be empowered and enlightened so that they can make a positive contribution to the overall stability and emotional health of their household.

*Note: This may be a rather obvious comment, but if your group members don't have any children, or if their children are all grown and gone, you don't need to cover this chapter.*

#### **Discussion Questions:**

##### *Christina's Journal* (Page 183)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Since he came back from combat, how has your husband been treating your children? How have your children been reacting to him? How has this altered how you parent them?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Has your husband had any blow-ups with your children, similar to what happened between Angelo and Maria? Would you care to share what happened, and how it has affected your child or children?
- ◇ If you had done what Christina did – gotten between Angelo and Maria in the doorway, how do you think your husband would have reacted?
- ◇ What should Christina's course of action after this incident?

##### *Little people dealing with big people problems* (Pages 184-185)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Look at the list of instincts in the second paragraph of this section. Which of these should be your top priority, 24/7? [They may be prone to say, "pursue your relationship with God," because they probably think that's what you're expecting them to say. But the point of this paragraph is that, from time to time, all of these instincts will be competing for top priority. True, if we "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33) life will harmonize better with God's plans and therefore be more stable. But we still have to deal with the other instincts and priorities throughout every day. You read about a good example of that in Christina's Journal. Which two instincts came into direct conflict there? Only with God's help can we sort all this out, and help our kids deal with our adult problems.]
- ◇ It's good to be aware of how your husband's Combat Trauma may be influencing your children. Read over the chart at the bottom of page 184 under "**How combat trauma can affect kids.**" Are you noticing some of the effects listed in the right column in your children?
- ◇ Read through the three roles that children of combat-traumatized parents may assume (top of page 185). Do you recognize any of those roles emerging in your children (blank on page 185)?
- ◇ Read the quote in the middle of page 185 from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network addressing the question "**Can children get PTSD?**" What reaction do you have to this?

### Common problems faced by children of Combat Trauma sufferers (Pages 185-187)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - Read through this list of problems one at a time [*Suggestion: have the group members take turns reading them out loud while the rest of the group follows along in their manuals.*] At the end of each problem's section, give the group a few moments to make the assessment of each child. Then ask the group to share some of their assessments – especially if they put down any 5s in the boxes.
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ Based on the assessments you have made, what action do you think you need to take on behalf of your children?
  - ◊ Any suggestions from any of the other group members?

### Family dynamics (Pages 187, 188)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - Read through this section one dynamic at a time. [*As above, consider having the group members take turns reading them as the rest follow along in their manuals.*] When done, ask them to take some time to fill out the blanks at the bottom of page 188. Then ask if there are any who would like to share what they wrote. Allow them to comment on any of the unhealthy dynamics they observe in their family, especially if they could identify with something that “Rachel” wrote in this section.
- **Application Question**
  - ◊ What action do you think you need to take regarding these family dynamics? Do any of you feel you need to be more frank and open with your children about your husband's PTSD? If so, how do you plan to go about that?

### Approaches to avoid (Page 189)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Read through the three “**Approaches to avoid.**” Ask group members if they could put into their own words why they should avoid each of those three approaches – and if they have unwittingly tried any of those three, to share what the results were.

### Approaches to embrace (Pages 189-197)

- 1. Explain without providing graphic details (Pages 189, 190)
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◊ What are two things you should constantly be assuring your children of? [(1) *It's not their fault;* (2) *Things are going to work out okay eventually.*]
    - ◊ As a group, think up some “teachable moment scenarios” in which you could use the situation to teach your children something about their father's Combat Trauma. For example: using Christina's story at the beginning of this chapter, how would you have explained Angelo's actions to Maria without providing too many graphic details?
    - ◊ What are some other “teachable moments” the group could come up with and be prepared to take advantage of?
    - ◊ Read though Dr. Greca's tips starting at the bottom of page 189. Are there more that any group members would like to add, or any comments they'd like to make to these?
- 2. Assure them it's not their fault (Page 190)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◊ Do any of your children seem to think that the difficulties being experienced in your household are somehow their fault?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◊ Why do children often think that, if something is going wrong in the home, it is their fault?
  - ◊ Have you ever asked your children directly if they think the stress in your home, or how daddy is acting, is their fault? Do you think it would be good to ask them?
- 3. *Understand family dynamics and keep communication open* (Pages 190-192)
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◊ Have you done this yet – sat down with your children and told them frankly that you want them to share with you how they're feeling about things relating to your husband's Combat Trauma? If not, how do you think you could find an opportunity to do so?
    - ◊ If they have shared their thoughts and emotions with you, how close to reality were their observations? Were you able to correct their misconceptions and inaccurate conclusions? How did you do it?
    - ◊ How should you respond to your children whenever they make the effort to open up to you (no matter how positive or negative their attitude is)? *[Be appreciative and affirming.]*
    - ◊ **What should I tell them?** Read through the list of suggestions that Patience Mason makes regarding what to tell your children (starting at the bottom of page 190). Anything anyone would want to add to these suggestions?
    - ◊ **Talk about feelings.** Read the quote by Cantrell and Dean on page 191. What are some creative ways you could get your children to talk about or in some other way express their feelings? Why is it important to try to get your children to talk about their feelings? When would your attempts to get them to talk about their feelings cross the line, and become coercive and counterproductive?
    - ◊ Why is it important for you to share your feelings with them? How can you share your feelings with your children without alarming them?
    - ◊ **Physical contact.** It's easy to think of ways to comfort and reassure our younger children through hugs and kisses. But what are some creative ways we can provide physical touch to our older, teen-age kids (especially our boys)? When would they be open to it? How can we help generate those opportunities?
    - ◊ How can we motivate our husbands to provide more physical contact with the kids?
- 4. *Pray specific, applicable Scripture over your children daily* (Pages 192-194)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◊ What are some of the things about which you find yourselves frequently praying for your children?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◊ Why do you think that it is important that you pray for a "healthy and correct view of the Heavenly Father" for your children? *[Many people often form their concept of God based on their childhood relationship with their earthly father. If that was a negative perception, they could grow up having a negative perception and opinion of their heavenly Father.]*
    - ◊ Pray through each of these scriptural prayers as a group, with one person reading them out loud, and everyone else following along in their manuals and praying silently. Whenever they come to a blank, have the reader pause for a moment, and everyone else insert the name of their child or children audibly.
  - **Application Question**
    - ◊ What can you do to facilitate praying these scriptural prayers (or at least some of them) for your children every day?

- 5. *Help your children respect your husband's triggers* (Page 194, 195)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ Take a few minutes and write down some of the specific things that trigger your husband. When he is triggered by these things, how does he interact with the children? How are your children affected when he is triggered?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ How will it help for you and for your children to know what triggers your husband ahead of time?
  - **Application Question**
    - ◇ Go through the suggested exercise with your children, and ask *them* to brainstorm about the things that make their daddy angry, abusive or sad.
- 6. *If physical safety is an issue, take them out of the home* (Page 195)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ What is the line which, if your husband crosses it, you are prepared to leave immediately with your children? Do the rest of the group members have any counsel to add to this plan?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ What reasons are given as to why it is important to remove your children from an abusive household?
    - ◇ If you went through with this, what effect do you think it would have on your husband?
- 7. *Make time for each child* (Pages 195, 196)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ One of the most difficult tasks a mother has involved finding the *time* to do everything that she thinks is important. How vital do you think it is that you get some one-to-one time with each of your kids on a regular basis? How motivated are you to carve out time in your busy schedule to do this?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Why do you think this is so important?
    - ◇ Why is it important that you keep your emotions controlled when talking with your children individually? Does this mean we don't let them see our emotional struggles at all? How would you describe the balance that we should try to achieve between being emotionally strong and stable, and helping him/her know that emotions are OK?
    - ◇ Why is it important that we don't "fall apart" emotionally in front of our children?
- 8. *Enlist the help of your extended family* (Page 196)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ How many of you have extended family living nearby who are willing and able to help you with your kids? Are they very involved with your children at this time? If not, why not?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Think about some of your extended family in the area. What are some things they have done for you in the past to help you out with your children and family stresses since your husband returned home?
    - ◇ What are some requests you could make of your extended family members to help you?
    - ◇ What are some ways your extended family members who *don't* live nearby could help? Have they done so in the past?

- 9. Try to maintain family routines (Page 196)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ Were you
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ What are some of the reasons why maintaining family routines are helpful for your children?
    - ◇ What are some family routines that you have been able to maintain since your husband came home? Which ones have fallen by the wayside?
    - ◇ Can you think of some family routines that you'd like to adopt, for the sake of your kids?
    - ◇ **What about TV, videos, etc.?** Do the different forms of electronic entertainment media play a prominent role in your household? Do you see any reasons to restrict your children's access to this media based on this section? If so, how will you go about it?
  - **Application Question**
    - ◇ How can the rest of us help you as you try to set up and maintain helpful family routines?
- 10. Empower your kids (Page 197)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ What are some of the ways you are currently empowering your kids – giving them a bit of control over their environment?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ Brainstorm session: What are additional things we can do that will empower our kids around the house?
    - ◇ What are some service projects that you know about that our kids could get involved in? Should we try to think of a couple as a group and try to implement them, involving all our kids? Any ideas what we could do?
- 11. Seek professional help (Page 197)
  - **Opening Questions**
    - ◇ Have any of you ever been involved in family therapy? If so, how was it? Do you feel you and your kids were helped?
  - **Content and Follow-up Questions**
    - ◇ When would it be important to take your kids in for some professional counseling? What if your husband doesn't agree to it? What if he refuses to come?
    - ◇ What's one of the main beneficial things that family therapy will provide for your kids? *[It will provide a place where each child can have a voice in expressing what he or she needs.]*
  - **Application Question (For entire "Approaches to embrace" section)**
    - ◇ As you review the eleven "Approaches to embrace" section, what are three things that you plan to do immediately that will help your children (blank at the bottom of page 197)? *[Give the group a few minutes to review all that they went over, choose three applications, and write them down in the blanks provided.]*

*Christina's Prayer* (Page 198)

- Ask someone to read the "Promise from God's Word" verse and then pray Christina's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



Here are two recently-produced resources written for the children of combat veterans by Kathleen Edlick: *We Serve Too! – A Children's Deployment Book* (for children whose parent is deployed) and *We Serve Too! 2 – A Child's Reunion Book* (for children experiencing the joys and trials of a

parent's return from war). They will give you many entryways for questions and frank discussions with your younger children. Available through Wee the People Publishing, Eaton, CO. Find them at [www.weservetoo.us](http://www.weservetoo.us).



## **CHAPTER 13: HOW DO I GET BACK TO “NORMAL”?** (PAGES 199-215)

### **THE JOURNEY TO PEACE AND STABILITY**

#### **Objectives:**

- To help group members envision and define what their “New Normal” will look like.
- To give group members practical ideas about how to make plans to move from their current state of stress to a state of strength, stability, functionality and productivity by examining certain areas of their lives, including their vocation, location and companions – and those of their husbands.
- To help group members work with their husbands to face the things that trigger their stress-related symptoms.
- To teach group members how to set practical personal goals that will help them in their journey back to New Normal.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

*Erin's Journal* (Page 199)

- *Note:* You may want to find a picture of the USS New York on the internet (just Google it!), print it out and bring it to the group, giving them a visual representation of what was talked about in Erin's journal entry.
- **Opening Question**
  - ❖ Erin mentioned how the USS New York – built from steel salvaged from the World Trade Center – used “the same steel with a different configuration and a new purpose.” As she thought about the work she and her husband are doing to preserve their marriage from the ravages of Combat Trauma, she wrote, “. . . from the rubble, we are gathering what is still useful, what is still strong.” Take a few minutes of silence, and ask God to reveal to you what is still useful and strong in your marriage. Write it down, and when everyone else is done, we'll share what we came up with.

*What we've lost . . . what we've gained* (Pages 200-201)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ❖ Do you think the “normal” life that you and your husband had prior to his deployment is possible to reestablish? If not, what is your hope?
  - ❖ Do you think that what you wrote in the blank at the bottom of page 21 is still attainable?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ❖ In what ways is what happened to our country on September 11, 2001 similar to what happened to your relationship with your husband as a result of his struggle with Combat Trauma?
  - ❖ In the Zechariah 13:9 passage (towards the bottom of page 200), what was the result of God bringing these people “through the fire”? Have any of you seen similar benefits yet?
  - ❖ At the top of page 201 it mentions the concept of “New Normal.” It also says that this isn't the first time you've had to seek out a New Normal (i.e. when you first got married – had to redefine “normal”). What are some of the other times in your life when you had to establish a New Normal? Were the circumstances that made this necessary positive or negative? What was the end result – did you experience a net gain or a net loss? Did you end up stronger or weaker?

- ❖ How was Jesus Christ's New Normal after His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection different and better than His Old Normal? What did He have to experience in order to get there?
- ❖ On a scale of 1 to 10, how convinced are you that your New Normal will be "better than ever"? *[If people are giving themselves very low scores, stop and spend some time praying, asking God to give them faith, hope and confidence about their future and His ability to bring about miraculous results. They'll need to receive these things from Him – they are not things they will come up with rationally and logically on their own.]*
- ❖ What did you write down in the first blank in the middle of page 201 – ways in which your husband "died" while he was deployed? *[Be sure to read the John 12:24 passage first – to give them the context of this idea of "dying."]*
- ❖ What did you write in the second blank, about one outrageous, over-the-top thing you hope to find in your New Normal world? *[Spend some time praying as a group for these things to come about in each other's lives.]*

*After you have suffered a while / Becoming intentional about the New Normal*  
(Pages 201, 202)

- **Opening Questions**

- ❖ *[Read 1 Peter 5:10 to the group from your Bible.]* According to this verse, what must happen first before you will be "perfected, established, strengthened and settled"?
- ❖ General George S. Patton once said, "The test of success is not what you do when you're on top. Success is how high you bounce when you hit bottom." Do you feel you have hit bottom yet? Do you feel you are heading upwards? Why or why not?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ❖ How important do you think it is that we be "intentional" about partnering with God as we actively pursue our New Normal? How successful will we be if we are passive about this pursuit? *[Be sure to read Benjamin Franklin's quote just above the **Don't make me laugh** section.]*
- ❖ What do you think about the difference between "microwave maturity" and "crock pot maturity?" Which would you prefer? Which one is going to happen despite what you prefer?
- ❖ What will give God something to partner with and bless? *[As I begin to take action – walk by faith. Last paragraph in this section.]* What happens if you have no vision for your future? *[Hard to have faith, hard to pray about it, hard to take action.]*

- **Application Question**

- ❖ How many of you have husbands that are going through the *Combat Trauma Healing Manual*? Do you think they would be willing to work through this chapter with you? If your husband isn't going through the CTHM, do you still think he'd be willing to work through this with you? **Assignment for next week:** Ask him!

*What needs to change?* (Page 202-208)

*Vocation?* (Pages 202-204)

- **Opening Question**

- ❖ How many of you feel pretty satisfied about what your husband is currently doing vocationally?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ❖ What were the numbers you wrote down on Page 203 about how much or little you like your job? What did your husband write (or, if he didn't write anything – what do you think he'd write?)
- ❖ Is your husband pursuing (or thinking about pursuing) a career with the military? How do you feel about this?



- ◇ How long should you wait after coming back from combat before you make any major decisions? [*Fifth paragraph under "Vocation?" – wait one month for every month your husband was downrange.*]
- ◇ Is it a good idea for you to start having dreams for your future? [*Yes!*] Who else has dreams for your future? [*God – and they're real good ones! Jeremiah 29:11.*]
- ◇ What's the difference between a "job" and a "career"? Which does your husband have right now? Which do you have? What might keep a combat veteran from pursuing a "career"?
- ◇ **What about you?** How has God gifted you? What talents and abilities do you have that you want to use in a deeper, more intentional way? [*By the way, be sure to make the point that being a "stay-at-home-mom is an honorable and fulfilling career, too! We don't want to make those moms think that they are choosing "second best" by not pursuing employment outside the home – because they are not!*]
- ◇ [*Read Dr. Matsakis' quote near the top of page 204.*] What do you think of Dr. Matsakis' quote here? Do you think that – considering your husband's current state – you could or should begin considering a career of your own?
- ◇ What did you write down in the blank on page 204, about your "Dream Career"?
- ◇ [*Read Frederick Buechner's quote toward the bottom of page 204.*] Would this career make you truly glad? [*Being a stay-at-home-mom could make them very glad too! Don't let anyone in your group think this isn't an excellent choice for them if it's how they feel God is leading them.*]
- **Application Question**
  - ◇ Can you share your "Prayer Assignment" with your Battle Buddy?
  - ◇ What can you do this week to start the process of identifying and pursuing your "Dream Career"?

Location? (Pages 204-206)

- **Opening Questions**
  - ◇ If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?
  - ◇ For how many of you is this question about location a moot one? [*Because their husband is still in the military, and they have no say as to their location any way.*] Is there still room for you to do some dreaming though?
- **Content and Follow-up Questions**
  - ◇ How much would your current contingent of Bridge People dictate that – at least for the time being – you should stay right where you are? [*Second full paragraph on page 205 speaks to this.*]
  - ◇ What are other good reasons why you should not make a move right now? What are some good reasons why you should?
  - ◇ What elements need to be in your environment no matter where you live?
  - ◇ Which should take priority in your long-range planning: the vocation you'd really love, or the location in which you'd most like to live?
  - ◇ In Tad Williams' quote near the bottom of page 205, he recommends that we "make a home for ourselves in side our own head." In this way, we can take our home with us wherever we go. What do you think this means? How can a person do this?
  - ◇ If you haven't done this exercise yet (on page 206), let's take the time right now for you to fill out the right side of the grid, listing characteristics of your ideal dream location. Then we'll share them with the rest of the group.
  - ◇ How realistic is it to believe that God might want to work a miracle and combine your dream vocation and dream location just to make your joy complete? [*See John 16:24 at the bottom of Page 206. He **loves** to make us joyful!*]

- **Application**

- ◇ Take the chart home for your husband and ask him to describe the characteristics of his ideal dream location. *[Note: it may be a good idea to have him list out his characteristics on a separate sheet of paper first, so that the choices you wrote on the other side of the chart don't influence him.]* Bring it back next week and report to the rest of us how similar or dissimilar his choices were compared with yours.
- ◇ What do you plan to do to make your long-term vocation and location a major prayer project in your life?

*Companions?* (Pages 136-137)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ Generally speaking, would you say that most of your husband's friends and acquaintances have a positive, neutral or negative effect on him?
- ◇ Would you say most of your friends have a positive, neutral or negative effect on you?
- ◇ If you have some friends who you know have a negative effect on you, why do you continue to associate with them?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ As you read through the various "definitions" of what a friend is at the top of page 207, is there anyone who comes to your mind? If so, tell us about her.
- ◇ Go through the exercise in the middle of page 207. Think about one specific "marginal" friend of yours as you do it. Based on the exercise, what do you think you should plan to do with this friend?
- ◇ Can you think of a time in the past when your "good character" was corrupted by "bad company," as expressed in the verse near the bottom of page 207? How possible is it that this could happen again?
- ◇ Is it possible that you are giving in to the tendency a person dealing with traumatic stress often has: to isolate themselves from others? Are you trying to milk a bear? *[Quote at the bottom of page 207.]* If so, what can you do to reverse this trend?
- ◇ Are there some people whose names you felt led to write down in the blanks at the top of page 208? If so, what do you plan to do about them?

- **Application Questions**

- ◇ What steps can you take to solidify some of your positive friendships?
- ◇ What steps do you need to take to back away from some of your negative friendships?

*Facing triggers together* (Pages 208, 209)

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ To what degree do your husband's "triggers" disrupt your day-to-day life? How much do your own "triggers" disrupt your day-to-day life?

- **Content & Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ Would a few of you like to share what you wrote in the exercise near the bottom of page 208, listing your triggers and your husband's triggers and the effects they generate?
- ◇ How often do you get triggered? Have you ever talked with your husband about it? If he is the one who often triggers you, is he aware of this, and of what he does to trigger you?

- **Application Question**

- ◇ If your triggers are fairly disruptive, and they don't seem to be getting any better, what are some specific steps you plan to take to help yourself in this area?

- ◇ Consider sharing your “trigger list” with your husband. But first, ask God for discernment about whether this would be a good time for it. Is he stable and strong enough to be your Battle Buddy in this area?

### What to do when your husband is triggered (Pages 209-211)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ When your husband begins to slip into a dissociative state, under what circumstances should you leave the area immediately? *[Second paragraph in this section.]*
- *[Read the list of suggestions on pages 209 and 210 – or have the group members take turns reading them. Let them know that, after each one is read, if any one in the group has ever had the opportunity to employ that suggestion, has anything to add or has a question, to feel free to speak up.]*
- ◇ What are some things you and our husband could do ahead of time to prepare both of you to deal with his triggered episodes when they happen? *[One suggestion would be to go over the list on pages 209 & 210 with him during a time when he is calm and in a positive mindset.]*

- **Application**

- ◇ **What about me?** (page 211) Is your husband functional enough as a Battle Buddy for you to share your trigger list with him and discuss how he can help you? If so, do it! If not, consider sharing your list with your Battle Buddy and some of your Bridge People.

### Setting Personal Goals (Page 211-214)

*[Note: Be sure to bring along so extra lined paper that they can write some of their goals out on, if they don't have enough room in the manual.]*

- **Opening Questions**

- ◇ How many of you have been intentional in setting personal goals since your husband got back from combat? How has that gone?
- ◇ What happens if a person doesn't think though and set tangible, achievable goals – especially a person who is “stuck” in the present and desperately needs to move on?

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ How is thinking about the future and setting goals a lot like a bogged-down Humvee stretching out a cable to something solid and getting winched out?
- ◇ Read through the SMART criteria for goal-setting starting on page 211. Is there anything about those five criteria that isn't clear?
- ◇ What did you think of Dr. Jonas Salk's quote near the bottom of Page 212? Do you think dreams can indeed eradicate nightmares? How does this fit into the frequent theme you've heard about in this manual regarding “intentionality”?
- Let's take some time right now to think though and write down a few goals relative to the eight categories listed on page 213. *[Read through the **Setting goals** sections on page 212, and make sure everyone understands what they should be doing. They shouldn't at this time go into too much detail trying to work out “long-range, medium-range and short-range goals – that can wait until later when they feel more motivated to pursue some of these goals. Give the group about ten minutes to think through and write out the goals that God brings to their minds.]*
- *[Have them consult their Spirit-, Soul- and Body-Nurture Contracts on pages 109, 113 and 119. Make sure they are compatible and – whenever possible – incorporated into the goals in this exercise.]*
- ◇ Who would like to share some of the goals they wrote down on page 213? As each person shares, the rest of us will evaluate each goal based on the SMART criteria

- **Application**

- Consider doing the exercise starting at the bottom of page 213 where each group member writes out Long-, Medium-, and Short-range goals. If the group is willing, it will provide a very positive way to encourage each other and to hold each other accountable to be intentional about their journey toward New Normal. If you don't do this exercise as a group, at least read through this section so that each group member will have a practical knowledge of how to set and work through personal goals.]
- If your husband has completed Step 10 in the *Combat Trauma Healing Manual*, sit down with him and compare your goals with his goals. How might you be able to synchronize your goals and help each other attain them?

### The beauty of brokenness (Page 214, 215)

- **Content and Follow-up Questions**

- ◇ What made the vases of that one particular village in northern Italy so valuable? What was an important part of the process of making them so beautiful and sought-after?
- ◇ Name your wounds. How have you been wounded since your husband came back from war? [Now, have the group members share their thoughts about how God could potentially change that painful wound into something beautiful.]
- ◇ As mentioned in Isaiah 45:2, 3 (bottom of page 214), God wants to give you the “treasures of darkness.” Can you think of any of these treasures that you have already received – gifts that you never could have received if you had not walked through that dark cave of your husband's Combat Trauma?

- **Application**

- If you are a “crafty” person, try the technique of those northern Italians on something. Perhaps it would be an inexpensive vase or pitcher or a piece of masonry tile. Break it, and then – with golden glue available in many craft stores, reassemble it. As you do this, meditate on how God is rebuilding you in ways more beautiful than you ever could have imagined.

### Erin's Prayer (Page 215)

- Ask someone to read the “Promise from God's Word” verse and then pray Erin's prayer out loud as a close to the session.



## **FINAL MEETING**

Your final meeting should be a great time of celebration and honor. Plan on having a dinner, invite spouses and family members. Have each group member come up and say a few words about what they experienced during the time the group met, and then lead the group in prayer for that person.

This would be a good time for you to re-read “**The beauty of brokenness**” aloud found on pages 214 and 215, about the priceless vases that were made so because they had first been shattered and reconstructed using gold-mixed glue. This makes a good final word of perspective and inspiration for your group members and their families. (This is also the **Epilogue** in the men's *Combat Trauma Healing Manual* – page 145.)

It would also be appropriate to present each group member with a memento of some sort – a certificate, a medal, a coin, a small carving – something physical that will remind him or her of their time in this Combat Trauma Care Group, and of all God did during that time.

Your next job – if it hasn't already been accomplished – is to get them involved in some sort of service to others. A great idea would be to encourage them to lead a Band of Sisters Care Group, or to assist you in your next one. Don't let them stop growing now! Keep them motivated to continue seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)!



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<sup>1</sup> Judith L. Herman, M.D., *Trauma and Recovery* (Harper Collins, 1992). Page 183. Dr. Herman is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. H. Norman Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling* (Regal, 2003). Page 29.

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling*. Page 156.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these principles come from Dr. Aphrodite Matsakis, *Trust After Trauma* (New Harbinger Publications, 1998). Pages 327-328. Additional principles come from Dr. Patrick Stone, former professor of psychology at George Fox University who has worked extensively with Vietnam veterans and was wounded in Vietnam himself.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Larry Crab, *Shattered Dreams* (Waterbrook Press, 2001). Page 123.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Aphrodite Matsakis, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A Complete Treatment Guide* (New Harbinger Publications, 1994). Page 222.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling*. Page 38.

<sup>9</sup> Laurieann Chutis, A.C.S.W., Dir. of Consultation and Education Services, Ravenswood Community Health Center, Chicago, IL – Article: “Flashbacks” can be read at [www.mnwelldir.org/docs/mental\\_health/flashbacks.htm](http://www.mnwelldir.org/docs/mental_health/flashbacks.htm). Also Wright, *The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling*. Pages 210-226.