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*Section One*

BASIC TRAINING:

*Guiding Principles for  
Military Living*

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*For physical training is of some value, but godliness  
has value for all things, holding promise for both the  
present life and the life to come.*

1 TIMOTHY 4:8

by Jocelyn Green

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# Vision CHECK

*Taste and see that the Lord is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.*

PSALM 34:8



WHEN ROB AND I MARRIED, we chose the hymn “Be Thou My Vision” to be played while we lit our unity candle. I had always loved the lyrics, but I had no idea how perfect they would prove to be not just for a single moment during a wedding ceremony, but for the day-to-day military lifestyle I was entering into.

So much of how we think, feel, and live depends on our vision—what we choose to see in any given situation. In fact, I believe that the difference between being simply concerned or being consumed by worry rides on where we tend to focus our sight.

In her book *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, Joanna Weaver says, “Pastor and teacher Gary E. Gilley sums up the difference like this: ‘Worry is allowing problems and distress to come between us and the heart of God. It is the view that God has somehow lost control of the situation and we cannot trust Him. A legitimate concern presses us closer to the heart of God and causes us to lean and trust on Him all the more.’ *Concern draws us to God. Worry pulls us from Him.*”<sup>1</sup>

Military wives (indeed, everyone on the planet!) will always have something to be concerned about. There are issues that

simply cannot be ignored. But if we have done everything we can to help solve the problem and still find ourselves obsessing over it, we've crossed that line from concern to worry and find ourselves in dangerous territory.

The key to banishing worry from your heart is surprisingly simple. I look at it this way: Your heart (and mine) has a limited capacity. The best way to get rid of the negative thoughts is to crowd them out with something else bigger and more beautiful: worship of the One who holds everything in His powerful and capable hands. In other words, stop focusing on the root of your worries and shift your gaze to the Lord. It won't make the troubles disappear, but it sure will help you to stop staring at them all day long!

King David was a master at this. Psalm 10 begins with "Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" But by the time he gets to the end of the chapter, he changes his tune: "You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more" (verses 17–18). Did you see that? He turned his worry into worship.

The next time your heart is troubled, check your vision. Focus on God and on His unchanging character. Trust in who He is and the promises He provides in Scripture, rather than what is going on around you.

*Ask*

What am I most worried about today?

What can I praise God for instead?

*Pray*

*Lord, please forgive my tendency to worry about things I can't control. Help me draw closer to You and replace my anxiety by meditating on Your Word. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



by Tonya Nash

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# Faith THAT

## MOVES MOUNTAINS

*“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

MARK 11:22-24



NOTHING SPOILS THE JOY of an engagement like hearing that your fiancé is deploying to war, with no guarantees of returning in time for the wedding. But that’s what happened to me.

Jamie and I got engaged November 10, 2002. We prayed about our wedding date and both felt that June 7, 2003 was perfect. Three weeks after our engagement, Jamie received orders to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was devastated! I asked Jamie if we should postpone the wedding, but he was adamant about not changing our wedding date. We continued to plan our wedding while he was deployed through e-mail, letters, and phone calls.

Opposition often presented itself, but Jamie and I prayed to God and believed by faith that he would get home in time for the wedding. On April 30, a miracle happened. The command allowed a few people to go home who had important,

life-changing events coming up. Jamie arrived home on May 3, a little over a month before our wedding, just in time for the groomsmen's fitting party.

I'll admit that at times our faith became weak, especially during that month of April. But the Bible says we only need faith the size of a mustard seed to accomplish the impossible (Matthew 17:20).

Abraham believed by faith when God told him that his descendants would outnumber the stars in the sky, despite the fact that he was well beyond the age of childbearing. Because of his faith, God credited it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:1–6).

Mary believed when the angel Gabriel told her she would give birth, while still a virgin. Joseph could have broken off the engagement. But Mary continued to believe by faith and maintained a positive outlook saying, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38).

Are you struggling in an area of faith? Connect with positive people who will stand in faith with you and lift you up in prayer. Study the Word of God and put your faith in action, for the Bible declares, "Faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26).

## *Ask*

Am I exercising my faith?

Do I believe God for the seemingly impossible?

## *Prayer*

*Dear Lord, strengthen me when my faith gets weak. Help me to have childlike faith in the midst of challenging circumstances. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

by Pattie Reitz

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# THE *Reluctant*

## MILITARY WIFE

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.  
Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your  
God will be with you wherever you go.*

JOSHUA 1:9



NO.

That's what I said when my husband said he wanted to go into full-time active duty military ministry.

I am not one of those women who willingly married a man in uniform. I'd married a preacher passionate about sharing God's Word with His people and winning souls to Christ. When he joined the reserves in the wake of 9/11, I barely batted an eye. The camouflage in the closet was new, and he was gone a little more, but in most ways our life was the same. That is, until he decided to leave the pastorate and join the military full-time.

I said no, but God would not release His calling on my husband's life. I wrestled with God, and I would not budge. "This is not what I signed up for, Lord!" I cried. "This was not in the plan!"

Throughout the long weeks in which my husband filled out paperwork and waited to hear if there was a place for him, I cried and threw a fit in my heart. I argued with God, stomped

my feet, and was pretty upset with Him.

But then God reminded me of what he had said to His people through Joshua in Joshua 1:9 (quoted above).

There it was: *For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.* This verse suddenly applied to me in a very real way. I was not alone. In fact, in the first chapter, God tells Joshua *three* times not to be afraid. Remember Joshua is the man who led the unorthodox charge to conquer the walled city of Jericho (Joshua 6)! If such a courageous man needed reassurance, we are certainly allowed to need it as well. Jeremiah 17:7 also reassures us: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.”

Whether your marriage began with the military already woven into its fabric, or you came into the military life later on as I did, chances are you know what it’s like to be reluctant over something that was not part of “the plan”—a PCS, another TDY, a deployment. Rest in the knowledge that even if your life is not going according to your plan and you’re feeling reluctant to follow God’s call, you are not alone. God’s promises are steadfast and true, and “do not fear” is just as relevant today for you as it was for Joshua.

As Deuteronomy 31:8 says, “The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

## Ask

In what ways are you supportive of your husband’s calling into military service? How are you learning to depend on God’s promises even when His plans don’t line up with your own?

## Pray

*Lord, I claim Your promise that You are with me wherever I go. I rest in the assurance that You have led us into this military life, and You will continue to lead and guide us always. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

by Leeana Tankersley

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## COMPLAINING VS. *Confession*

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way  
you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

GALATIANS 6:2



“WE KNEW WHAT we were getting into when we signed up for this marriage. We have no right to complain.” Have you ever heard or said that line before?

Some of us have gotten good, maybe even too good, at coping. We steel ourselves into this pillar of strength, and we challenge anything to penetrate our armor. Meanwhile, we may or may not be feeling that same way on the inside, underneath our self-protective layers.

The problem is that we get used to living split off from our true selves. We become accustomed to denying what's actually going on inside us, and this creates a person who cannot be honest about her pain, cannot let others see her weakness, and cannot tolerate any kind of authentic struggle in others.

This woman sends the subtle (or not so subtle) message to her friends and to her children that the real winners are those who never let anyone see them sweat.

How incredibly isolating this behavior becomes for everyone. Yes, others may see us as amazingly stalwart, but they will never

see us approachable. This keeps everyone dancing around each other at a safe distance, never really able to offer help and support.

So how do we decipher between complaining and true confession? Complaining is all about staying stuck, rehearsing the injustices with no desire to see things differently, change behavior, or receive support.

Confessing is something different altogether. Honest confession is an externalizing of an inward conversation for the purpose of gaining insight, releasing a burden, or admitting reality. Confession leads to movement and helps us get out of the grind of merely coping. It opens doors to growth and change because it is an act of congruence. By externalizing—sharing—our true state of affairs, we are better able to receive the help we really need.

It's risky to show need. Whether the need is emotional or financial or any other kind, being "needy" is kind of passé and, well, burdensome. I want to be the kind of person who flies through life with answers and resources and decorum and brilliant ease. I want to be a "have," not a "have not."

Still, I have a choice. I can cover up my need and miss an opportunity for true authenticity; or I can take a big risk and admit that I just might need some help and support. A friend once told me that when we share our burdens with others, the weight we are carrying is divided between those listening, and our load is immediately lightened—carrying and being carried.

## *Ask*

Is my pride and sense of control keeping me from getting the support I really need? Am I willing to listen to others and lovingly carry their burdens as well?

## *Pray*

*God, I want to be strong, but I need safe places where I can be weak, too. Show me how to allow someone else to help carry my burdens. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

by Sarah Ball

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# Trail MARKERS

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17



“THERE HE IS! THERE’S DADDY!” my daughter yelled. It was an early spring morning, and my kids and I were standing alongside a wooded trail in Virginia. My husband jogged up the trail and past us toward the next checkpoint in the fifty-mile trail run.

Rather than following smooth roads or footpaths, trail runners scramble over logs, navigate puddles, and weave around boulders. More often than not, the trail is a barely visible line up a rocky slope. When the trail disappears, runners look for a splash of paint or a ribbon on a tree to indicate the path. A missed marker might mean a wrong turn and an extra mile or two of running in the wrong direction.

We are all engaged in a lifelong trail run. We’d like to follow smooth footpaths, but life keeps throwing boulders and logs in our way. We may hope that a relationship with Christ will lead us to an easier path, but God’s Word does not promise carefree living.

In 2 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul writes to his young protégé Timothy, telling him what to expect from a life of follow-

ing Christ. Paul reminds Timothy of the many persecutions that Paul endured during his ministry and warns Timothy that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (verse 12). Paul reminds Timothy of the importance of Scripture—for instruction, for correction, for equipping the child of God for every good work.

When we are exhausted from running and surrounded by obstacles, we may wonder, “Am I on the right path? Did I take a wrong turn somewhere?” With boulders on every side, we begin to feel as if we have been left without a marker to guide us. Paul’s challenge to Timothy becomes our challenge as well, to continue pressing forward in the way we have been taught, following the guidance of God’s Word in everything.

God has given you His Word to provide your trail markers. Find a Bible reading plan that will keep you reading and learning Scripture daily. Your path may not become easy, but God’s Word will thoroughly equip you to continue running in the direction God gives you.

*Ask*

How am I actively equipping myself with God’s Word each day? How has God’s Word provided guidance to my life recently?

*Pray*

*Dear Father, thank You for the gift of Your Word and for its ability to instruct, teach, and equip me. As I encounter obstacles in my path today, please bring to mind the Scriptures I have learned to guide me. Help me to continue running in the way that You lead. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*



by Jocelyn Green

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# Soul TALK

*For as he thinks within himself, so he is.*

PROVERBS 23:7 NASB



NINE O’CLOCK in the morning, and the sun still wasn’t up in Homer, Alaska. Darkness rested heavily, like a shroud upon my house, and just as heavily on my heart.

“It’s happening again,” I told myself. Years earlier, I had been clinically depressed. And though God healed me, I still felt vulnerable to sinking back into that pit of despair. And by predicting it, I unwittingly created a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But when I trained myself to say, “It’s just a bad day, just one bad day” instead, I no longer felt doomed to repeat the depression of my past. I felt like a normal military wife who has normal feelings, good days and bad days.

What we tell ourselves matters. Our self talk—whether silent or audible—directs both our attitudes and our actions. Proverbs 18:21 says, “The tongue has the power of life and death.” Proverbs 23:7 (quoted above) tells us we are who we *think* we are. It is vital that what we say to ourselves matches up with the truths of Scripture.

In the book of Mark, we meet a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. “When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.’” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that

she was freed from her suffering” (Mark 5:27–29).

In her book *Self Talk, Soul Talk*, Jennifer Rothschild explains: The most important thing to note here isn’t that she talked to herself. It’s what she told herself that matters. . . . Counseling ourselves to act upon truth, coaching ourselves, and cheering ourselves on to make good choices—these are both healthy and wise. Wise soul talk pushes us over the edge to help us overcome our issues. In this story, the woman with the hemorrhage clearly benefited by telling herself that she would be healed if she touched Jesus’ robe.<sup>2</sup>

We can follow this woman’s example when our “soul talk”—words of truth that can heal us—directs us to wrench our gaze from our own problems to rest fully on Christ for a moment. My own self talk of “It’s just a bad day” was a good start, but would have been better soul talk if I had added more Bible-based truth to it: “Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (Psalm 43:5).

Try it for yourself. Instead of telling yourself what’s wrong with your life, try “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11). The next time you think, “I can’t do it anymore,” tell yourself “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

## Ask

What do I tell myself that causes more discouragement? Which truths from Scripture should I be telling myself instead?

## Pray

*Lord, help me notice what I tell myself throughout the day so I can identify how that helps or hurts me. Please help me train myself to base my soul talk on Scripture. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

by Leeana Tankersley

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## AN *Outcry*

*But I cry to you for help, O Lord; in the morning  
my prayer comes before you. Why, O Lord, do you reject me  
and hide your face from me?*

PSALM 88:13–14



I'VE HAD AN on-again-off-again relationship with prayer. At times, prayer has felt like the only lifeline I've had left. Other times, it has felt as ineffective as screaming into a tin can with a string tied to it.

I've had to give myself permission to wonder if prayer even makes a difference, to question whether or not my pleas actually turn the hand of God in any direction at all. Is God so cryptic and callous that He asks us to pray but then doesn't actually take our prayers into consideration?

The Iraq war started when my husband and I were engaged. Without notice, he was off the radar, and I had no idea where he was or when I'd hear from him again. I remember the night the war started, listening to the radio reports of a helicopter downed in the Gulf. The flight had originated from the last place I had heard from him, so of course I assumed the worst.

Prayer, in that wretched moment, seemed like the only possible answer and—at the very same time—a complete and utter mystery to me.

People send their loved ones off to war every day, praying for their safe return, and they never see them again. How do

we reconcile such an inconvenient reality? My prayers may not save my husband. So, then, why do they matter?

I turn to the Psalms for some help with these types of questions. The Psalms are some of the rawest prayers in print—particularly Psalm 88. It’s an outcry. I love that. And it’s questioning the very validity of a prayer life. I love that, too.

Kathleen Norris has a great description of prayer. She sees it as an incessant beginning. Every morning we get up, and our prayer life begins again. We never conquer it, achieve it, complete it. Prayer, she writes, is “being ourselves before God.”<sup>3</sup>

I’m trying to embrace this notion of beginning again and again and again. Going back to God, turning toward Him, returning to Him—even as that feels repetitive and unproductive. I’m trying to accept the fact that prayer doesn’t move along in a linear fashion, accomplishing as it goes. It moves in a spiral, drilling down into us like a jackhammer tilling up concrete.

Some days I can just manage to breathe in God’s direction and somehow, in the sacredness of that unspoken spoken, He breathes back. And, I’ve found, we can go a long way like that.

Sometimes we wish prayer to be the rudder that changes the course of our entire lives. Yet I wonder if it’s our hearts—through the small spoken, the actual truths, the directed breaths—that end up changing. And that’s more the point than anything.

## *Ask*

Am I making prayer a part of my life?  
Am I able to be honest with God about my  
questions and doubts?

## *Pray*

*God, I’m willing to pray even though I don’t completely understand how it all works. Give me the faith to return to You, each and every day. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

by Bettina Dowell

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# Treasures OF DARKNESS

*I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.*

ISAIAH 45:3



I LIKE TO KEEP my ducks in a row. I am most content when I can get things in my world into ordered little boxes. If these principles are used in my pantry, my bill drawer, or my professional life, they can be powerful tools. However, when I try to fit the journey of my life, or the lives of those I love, into little ordered boxes, we have an instant setup for failure. I have moved from a place of organization, to one of control.

Life as a military spouse demonstrates to us how little control we actually have over our journey. Often the desire to control everything in our spheres of influence (and many things outside of it) springs from a place of fear. Our fear can be born in the tyranny of the “what-ifs?” in life. What if I truly cannot handle the rigors of deployment? What if my spouse endures attacks while he is away from home? What if he never comes home?

So where are we left when we find ourselves trying to control everything due to our fears? Right where God can meet us and show us the treasures of darkness, give us the blessed peace of knowing who is in control, and offer us rest.

*Treasures of Darkness:* Military life is challenging. Some-

times the journey takes us to some dark places where God desires to teach us. Isaiah 45:3 tells us God will give us riches stored in secrets places, so that we can know He is the Lord.

*Peace:* No matter what military life brings our way, God is still in control. We can be at peace knowing that nothing is hidden from Him. He has understanding that we cannot fathom, which gives us permission to not have the answers for everything. We can release our control and accept His peace. “Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God’? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom” (Isaiah 40:27–28).

*Rest:* When we decide to trust in our sovereign Father, we open the door to release fear and find the rest that Jesus promised for our souls. Rest for the body is good. Rest for the soul is amazing. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

As military wives, God longs for us to release our fears, give up control, and learn of the treasures in darkness He has waiting for us.

*Ask*

Father, what am I truly afraid of in my life?  
Where do I need to release control and trust You?

*Pray*

*Thank You, Father, that nothing escapes Your attention. Help me to learn the treasures You have for me in the darkness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*