

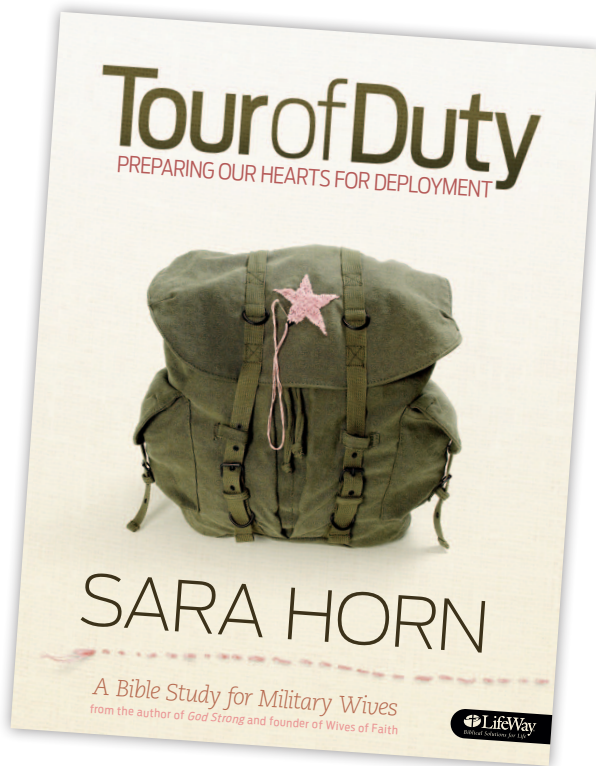
SAMPLE
Tour of Duty
PREPARING OUR HEARTS FOR DEPLOYMENT



SARA HORN

A Bible Study for Military Wives
from the author of *God Strong* and founder of *Wives of Faith*

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life



About the Author

Sara Horn loves sharing with military wives tips on how to apply biblical truths to the military lifestyle. She passionately encourages them to keep their focus on God no matter their circumstances. A military wife herself, Sara married her Navy Reservist husband more than 12 years ago. In 2006 she founded Wives of Faith (wivesoffaith.org), a faithbased military wives support ministry. Her goal? To offer spiritual encouragement and support to military wives in all branches of service including Reserve and National Guard.

A writer and author, Sara has traveled twice to Iraq to write about Christians serving in the military. Her newest book, *GOD Strong: A Military Wife's Spiritual Survival Guide* (Zondervan), released in 2010.

Sara and her family reside in South Carolina where she serves as Director of External Relations for the College of Christian Studies at Anderson University.

About this Study

Military families like to be prepared—you plan, you strategize, you organize. But whether you're active, National Guard, or Reserve, when deployment comes, all the planning in the world can still fail when it comes to your heart. Ready yourself with *Tour of Duty*, the only Bible study specifically for military wives. This study is an excellent way for women to connect with others in the military community who share this common thread. If your family is facing deployment, you can learn how to lean on God and come out of this confident in the knowledge that God is with you, He loves you, and He will never abandon you.

Extra Bonus Material:

The Emotional and Spiritual Stages of Deployment
For Churches: Ministering to Military Families
The Top 10 Things You Should Know about Deployment

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Look Around!

Explore this sample taken from the first chapter of *Tour of Duty: Preparing Our Hearts for Deployment*. Visit lifeway.com/women for more information or to order.



Chapter 1

The Road Less Traveled



Less than one percent of Americans serve in our nation's armed forces. As military spouses, we comprise part of a special minority. Some of us had a say with our husbands on making that commitment. Some of us didn't. We just happened to fall in love with men who had already sworn a duty to their country. But whether you had a voice in your husband's decision or whether you see your military bride status as a gift or a burden, God knew before you did that you would travel this road. And He has great plans for you!

From the Home Front

We stood in the airport that afternoon, holding on to one another, not wanting to let go. I remember thinking how surreal the scene felt. People hustled through the ticket counter lines, anxious to be on their way to intended destinations; airport staff worked with bored expressions on their faces; and I even noticed someone I'd worked with years before talking and laughing over coffee at a nearby table. But there was no laughter for me or my family that day. For us, life was not happening as usual. Instead, it felt like our lives were crashing to a halt. My husband was mobilizing with his Navy Reserve battalion to California. In six short weeks he would head to Iraq.

We'd spent months preparing for the deployment, and Cliff was as ready as possible. In the months before this day we lived by checklists. We fixed everything around the house that suddenly couldn't wait. We replaced the front door with a brand-new one that was more secure, and we even added a patio in the back—though why we thought that was so urgent at the time now makes me chuckle!

All of the paperwork was complete: DEERS, TRICARE, wills, and power of attorney. We also spent a day in Clarksville where Fort Campbell, the military installation nearest our home, is located. We bought all the recommended equipment, and we found Cliff everything he might need: a hard case for his laptop, his connection to us and the outside world; 550 cord, that stretchy survival cord that always reminds me of bungee jumping; and several other things that I couldn't name but knew he needed to go to war. That information alone was good enough for me.

Even though our family prepared as much as possible for the day when my son and I would leave the airport without Cliff, I still wasn't ready for the actual moment of saying good-bye. We huddled, our little

family of three, in a corner of the airport, softly whispering one last prayer together. Then it was time for Cliff to head toward his plane. We held onto each other so tightly! *How I love this man*, I thought, and I could feel the hot tears welling in the corners of my eyes.

Cliff is the man who makes me feel safe when the house creaks and groans at night. He makes me laugh on a daily basis, and he does his best to keep me from taking life too seriously. I depend so much on him—for everything. But in that moment he was leaving me and wouldn't return for almost a year.

As we parted, I remembered conversations with military wives I'd interviewed years previously. "How do you do it?" I asked. The common response? "You just do." In awe and respect I'd regarded those women who lived, along with their husbands, for a greater purpose. They sacrificed their own wishes and desires for all who enjoy living in freedom. That day, as my son and I left the airport, I realized my turn had arrived. I had to wonder ... *God, what are You thinking?*

A military wife?

Me?

As I looked into the dark blue eyes of my somber 6-year-old who needed my reassurance, I felt something stir inside me. Like Cliff, I too had a mission—my own God-given assignment. It was time to get started, ready or not.



Like me and many other military wives I know, you probably appreciate insight into what's going to happen next. After all, who wants to guess all the time? I function best knowing a pot of coffee will meet me in the morning, looking forward to a Saturday full of fun, and knowing a paycheck's coming at the end of the month. In short, I like clear direction and anticipating regular things. No uncertainty for me.

I can't go anywhere in my car without my trusty (at least on most occasions) GPS. Not having to read scribbled notes or shadowy street signs means not having to worry whether I'll make it to my destination on time, if at all. Unfortunately, life during deployment doesn't come with a GPS. Worse, it doesn't allow us to bank on fun family Saturdays and the comfort of knowing our husbands will put on the coffee in the morning. Yes, there's a beginning and an end to the journey, but even those dates can get pretty hazy. Everything about deployment seems designed to challenge the girl who loves consistency.

When I created marble jars to help our son count down my husband's first deployment, I made a point to add at least 30 more marbles than I thought we'd need—just in case his time was extended. Surprisingly, my husband came home early! I learned firsthand that deployment certainly doesn't come with clear direction. Though it can bring a nice surprise like Cliff's early return, deployment will inevitably bring hills and valleys, sharp turns and U-turns, thick fog, desert heat, and stormy wet roads. The challenges and upsets can leave us feeling lost and wondering whether the military route is truly the best for our families.

During our first deployment I knew in my head that God walked beside me. But sometimes when I missed Cliff so much I could barely stand it, my heart found it difficult to remember. How easily I could forget where to focus when sadness, loneliness, or sheer exhaustion pressed in on my spirit. It was easy to question whether I was cut out for the military life. Maybe God meant someone else for the job, someone who could deal with these challenges better than me.

The journey of deployment comes with emotional pit stops: moments when we feel inadequate, when we miss our husbands so much we can barely breathe, when we just can't see how God could possibly bring good out of our situations. That's why you and I must recognize and accept that God knew before time began that we would serve as military spouses. He has a purpose and a plan for us. Even in deployment and all the upheaval it brings, we can rest in the fact that He holds us in His hands.

Which of the following best summarizes your pre-wedding expectations?

- a romantic comedy: sweet, romantic, and never dull
- a 50-50 partnership: give and take as needed
- a white-picket fence dream: 2.3 kids, "normal" jobs, and a comfortable life
- an endless adventure: world travel couple style

How does your life differ from those early expectations?

Planning and dreaming are fun. That's why most of us make a life plan. Seeing our lives unfold very differently from our expectations, however, can feel frustrating. I remember my high school civics teacher asking students to write down when we expected to graduate college, our age when we would marry, and when we would become parents. It seemed fun at the time, but none of my expectations met my timeline! Life rarely happens as we expect. As a military spouse, you already know your plans take a backseat to the military's. Your timetable definitely fails to match Uncle Sam's, and just when you adjust to the idea that the military's in charge, you'll find even their plans change.

My friend Natalie faced a new plan when her husband joined the Navy Reserves immediately following 9/11. They were married several years before he enlisted. Military life never came up in their pre-wedding conversations. Now, with two small boys and two deployments under her belt, Natalie struggles with her role as a military wife. On top of her responsibilities as wife, mom, and successful home-business owner, it feels overwhelming. "This wasn't part of the plan," she told me.

Circle the following terms that best describe your pre-military perceptions of life as a military wife. Place a star beside those that best identify the realities.

glamorous adventurous patriotic exhausting
 challenging scary difficult lonely comfortable
 confident secure steady respectable discouraging

How well did you anticipate challenges that come with living as a military wife?

1	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	10
I had no idea what I was getting into!			I did my research and felt that I could handle it.			I come from a military family so nothing really changed for me.		I was fully prepared.

Most of us find that life—or at least our expectations regarding a certain aspect of it—fail to align with reality. We may find that new duty station we were so nervous about reveals wonderful new friends, or we may find the perfect career when we'd planned for something much different. So too will we discover that the expectations we set for our lives don't always match with the bigger, better, or more challenging assignment that God designs for us. And God's plan, whether or not we understand it, is always better than the short-sighted one we choose for ourselves.

Many find it difficult to accept that our plans aren't necessarily God's plans. Proverbs 19:21 tells us "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the LORD's decree will prevail." That means that no matter what we choose for ourselves, He designs an overarching plan to grow us into the people He desires. While we don't always understand the situations in which God sometimes places us—and quite often, we put ourselves in situations He never intended—God uses the circumstances of our lives to mold and shape us into the women He wants us to be. Our time as military wives provides a perfect shaping opportunity.

Help for Your Heartstrings

It can take 14 to 45 days for a service member to get his or her new address and become familiar with the new living situation and overseas communication options. Be patient. You'll hear from them soon!

But what about deployments, TDYs (temporary duty), trainings, and tours when our husbands must leave us? How can God ask us to go through such times of separation from our spouses? How can He ask our families to live apart so often? Do these things really fit into His plan? Surely He could find an easier path to shape us, right?

I don't know why we must go through so many separations as our husbands serve. I do know, however, that God stands in control. He is sovereign and in charge of it all. Every separation and challenging deployment figures in to God's work. Since the beginning of time, He's chosen to use average people to fulfill His big purposes. Through circumstances seldom easy, the men and women of Scripture found that God chooses to use individuals to accomplish His plan.

Match the circumstance in each biblical figure's life with the bigger plan God chose to accomplish through them.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>___ 1. God told Adam and Eve they could eat the fruit of all but one tree (Genesis 2:4–3:20).</p> | <p>a. God formed a people group through whom to bless the world.</p> |
| <p>___ 2. God instructed Noah to build an ark (Genesis 6–8).</p> | <p>b. God set up the earthly family tree of Christ.</p> |
| <p>___ 3. God asked Abraham to leave his homeland (Genesis 12:1-3).</p> | <p>c. God extended free will to humanity.</p> |
| <p>___ 4. God expected Judah to father a child by his widowed daughter-in-law (Genesis 38; 49:8-12; 1 Chronicles 2:4).</p> | <p>d. God gave humanity a second chance.</p> |

I love that although these people faced struggles and challenges, mistakes and uncertainty God used each person to put a divine plan into motion. Through Adam and Eve, He allowed us to choose whether to follow Him. Noah's faithfulness gave a sinful world a second chance. Abraham's agreeing to follow God set the stage for a new nation—the Hebrew people. And through Judah's reluctant acceptance of duty, God set up the family tree of King David, which eventually included Christ!

Through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus, God works in our world as He uses people and circumstances such as deployments to accomplish bigger purposes. God's sovereignty—His supreme authority over all—is just as evident today as it was in Scripture. While we may not fully understand why we've been placed on this "road less traveled," we can—like those Bible heroes—learn to trust in God's sovereignty.

Confident in the Plan

God remains the absolute authority on both history and our lives. While His total supremacy over the human story might at first seem negative, as if God forces people to do His will, it actually shows His compassion and His care for us.

1. God has His best in mind for us.

What strikes me most about Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, and Judah is that God had a plan for each of them that far exceeded anything they imagined. The big picture He had in mind, however, was for His best and not their comfort or ease.

If we were to write our own biographies, most of us would choose the easy, comfortable, familiar path. Few would purposely write difficult things for our own benefit, much less for our grandchildren or history. But few short-sighted paths grow us into the women He calls us to be.

I can walk on the treadmill all day, but running myself into a sweat brings faster results. Lifting a bar repeatedly requires adding weights to allow my muscles to do their real work. God wants us to grow, mature, and embrace the potential He designed for us. Unfortunately, instead of seeing God as our loving Creator and trusting Him to make wise decisions for us, we sometimes think of God as some great puppet master in the sky who pulls our strings and gleefully rubs His hands when we fall. We need a renewed understanding of God.

What do Romans 8:28 and Jeremiah 29:11-13 reveal about God's attitude toward His followers?

God desires only good things for those who enter into a relationship with Him by accepting forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Just like a father with his child, God wants the best for us. His best and our idea of best may not always match, but we should not undervalue the compassion and good will God holds toward His followers.

If you've never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you're missing out on a relationship with your Creator. God loves each of us and doesn't want us to struggle through life alone. If you've not already done so, I encourage you to get to know Him. In the back of the book you'll find an easy-to-follow plan that explains how.

Though God's plans for our families may not keep our husbands home or dramatically answer the hundreds of wants and desires we send up in prayer, we can rest in the assurance that He has our good in mind. He wants to accomplish in our lives whatever will bring us closer to Him. Sometimes only the hard stuff allows that result.

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Extra Helps

The Emotional and Spiritual Stages of Deployment

Since deployments have become the norm rather than the exception for military families after 9/11, we've known about the emotional stages of deployment. These are stages or periods of emotion that are common to just about anyone who goes through a deployment, particularly spouses. But we don't always think about these stages from a spiritual point of view. The next time you recognize yourself experiencing one of these emotional stages of deployment, use this chart not to think about what emotional stage you're living through but what God can teach you as a result.

Anticipation of Departure

You may feel both denial and anticipation of loss. As reality sinks in, both you and your spouse's tempers may flare as you try to take care of all of the things on your predeployment checklist while trying to make time for making memories together before he leaves.

Anticipate God's Presence

Separation from your spouse and the changes it will bring for you, him, and your family are inevitable, but if you have a relationship with Him the one constant you have is God and His presence in your life. When feelings of impending loss start pressing in, start pressing toward God.

Write out these Scripture verses and read them daily.

Isaiah 43:2

Deuteronomy 20:1

Matthew 28:20

Detachment and Withdrawal

You'll notice your husband becoming more mentally focused on his unit, the deployment, and their mission. This is a natural part of the deployment process, but it can cause emotional tension and distance in your marriage and sometimes in the family. You may try to protect yourself from the hurt of the separation, replacing that hurt with sadness or even anger. The more it feels like he's pulling away, the more personally you may take it.

Attaching to God's Love

When a husband starts to pull away, it's easy to become convinced that nothing is worth caring about and get lost in numbness. Better not to feel at all than to hurt. But God doesn't want that for you. Instead, He wants you to focus on His love—the love He has for you and the love He has for your spouse that He wants you to reflect. Don't take your husband's behavior personally. Instead, take the opportunity to show love to him, the way God shows love to all of us. Unconditionally.

If you're struggling with this stage, write out the following verses and keep them close by to remind you to show extra love to your husband during this time and that God loves you very much.

Romans 5:8

Ephesians 2:4-5

1 John 4:19

Colossians 3:12-14

1 John 4:7-8

Stage ONE	Anticipation of Departure
	Anticipate God's Presence
Stage TWO	Detachment and Withdrawal
	Attaching to God's Love
Stage THREE	Emotional Disorganization
	God Is the Source of Our Strength
Stage FOUR	Recovery and Stabilization
	Remembering God
Stage FIVE	Anticipation of Return
	Reliance on God
Stage SIX	Return Adjustment and Renegotiation
	Show God Thanks
Stage SEVEN	Reintegration and Stabilization
	Continue to Connect to God Through Prayer

Emotional Disorganization

It doesn't matter whether this is your first deployment or your fifth, getting used to doing things by yourself doesn't get easier with practice. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and wonder how to deal with the kids, the house, and everything else on your own.

God Is the Source of Our Strength

When we become overwhelmed is when we need to get with God. Taking time to start each day in prayer and reading His truth through Scripture will help us keep our wandering thoughts focused where they need to be.

Need more help? Look up these verses and keep them where you can see them.

Philippians 4:13

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Psalms 27:3

Romans 8:28

Recovery and Stabilization

Eventually the overwhelmed feeling starts to subside and you start to gain confidence. You realize that you can do this deployment thing, and your outlook starts looking brighter. If this isn't your first deployment, you may still a little burned out from your last. But your emotions, if they were a boat, no longer feel like they're sinking.

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Leader Guide

Session One

Before the Session

1. This is an introductory session.
2. Provide name tags, pens, light snacks, and a contact information sheet.
3. Gather markers and boxes such as those used for care packages for the ice-breaker activity.
4. Have member books on hand should a participant need to purchase one.
5. Pray over the room you will be meeting in and for those women you know will be coming. Ask God to bless your time together and to give you wisdom as you lead the discussion time.

During the Session

1. Encourage participants to fill out name tags and help themselves to refreshments as they come in. Welcome each by name. Lead each member to fill out the contact information sheet.
2. Introduce yourself, explain why this study is important to you, and ask the women to introduce themselves, their husband's branch of service, and their deployment status. (Example: My name is Lisa, and my husband is active duty Army and is currently deployed to Iraq. This is his third deployment.)

3. Explain more about the study:

- Distribute member books to everyone and discuss payment if necessary.
- Instruct women to skim through the book with you. Tell them that the study is seven weeks long, but that you will meet eight times.
- Note that each chapter is broken up by headings. Let participants know that it is OK to stop throughout the week as they need to. This study should serve as encouragement to members and not add any additional stress to their lives.
- Explain that you would like for them to finish each week's homework before coming to the session, but it is not a requirement. Remind them that the meetings are important and to come whether or not they have finished that particular week of study.

- Encourage women to bring their Bibles to the group sessions. Provide extras in case someone doesn't have a Bible or forgets to bring hers.

4. Participants need to trust that their comments will be kept within the group. Establish the following confidentiality guidelines:

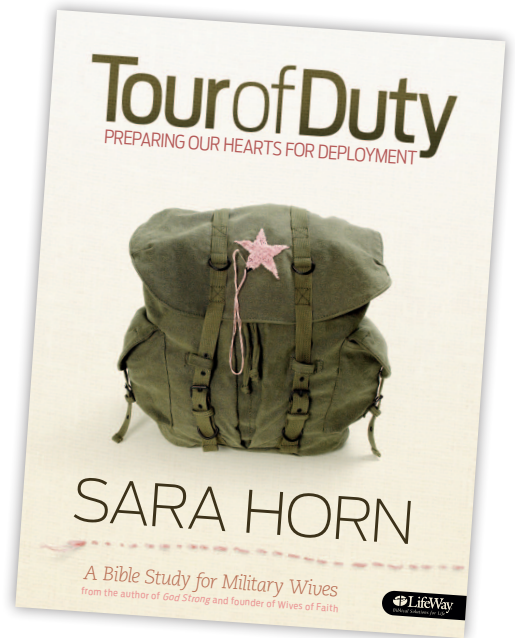
- Everything shared in the room stays in the room. Nothing is repeated outside the group.

- No one has to share who doesn't feel comfortable doing so.
- We leave rank at the door. Each of us is a military wife. Rank should not be a factor.

5. Lead this ice-breaker activity. Divide the group into smaller groups of two or three people. Hand each group a shipping box used for care packages (similar to the small or medium sizes from the post office). Give each group a black marker and three minutes to list inside and out of the box the challenges or emotions felt during deployment. Then call for the teams to share their lists. Say: "Many of us experience these emotions and challenges when it comes to deployment, but all of us must remember where our hope comes from."

Point out that hope in Christ gives you the confidence and assurance to face deployment with a better perspective than you might have otherwise. You have a choice on how you live through deployment; you can feel helpless, hopeless, and on your own, or you can find hope in God's strength and truth. You can rely on Him for what you need to get through.

6. Discuss as many of the following questions as you would like and have time for in your group:



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because

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