

**MOVIE: BROTHERS**

**\*\* Please read the Introduction to Large Group Studies in order to best utilize this material**

**CAUTION:** This movie is **rated 'R'** for serious themes involving trauma and PTSD and strong personal relational issues surrounding a war theme. There are some scenes of war violence that may create an uneasiness or even stronger reaction with teens, so be aware of that. There is some strong language as well. This movie was chosen for its very current and applicable theme about military deployment. Another movie that could be used is "We Were Soldiers," however, it is also "R" and has more graphic violence than does this movie. The deployment theme is considerable in both. (Because of the sub topic's serious content, it is difficult to find movies dealing with the subjects that are not 'R' rated)

**Sub Topic theme:**

SEPARATION & DEPLOYMENT: the ever-changing family

**Lesson objective:**

To wrestle with and understand some of the complicated issues involved with deployments in a military family (both positive and negative), the threat of death, the implications of returning home, possible PTSD, and the toll the separation takes on children. With an opportunity to discuss these issues and gain understanding, teens can learn some coping mechanisms and develop resilient responses to this military family reality.

**Intro to the Movie:**

*Brothers*

**\*\*Movie rated R\*\***

for parental guide from IMDB.com see

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0765010/parentalguide>

*Be aware that this movie may portray some themes that are highly emotional for teens, therefore be careful to watch for reactions and allow for emotional responses!*

Before leaving on his second tour to Afghanistan, Marine Captain Sam Cahill, a leader, an athlete, a good husband and father to two young girls, welcomes his screw-up brother Tommy home from prison (he'd robbed a bank). Obvious themes of deployment and the difficulties of separation on the young wife and girls bring a certain tension to the movie. In country, Sam's helicopter is shot down and all of the soldiers on board are presumed dead, and his wife and family gets that word from the military. While Sam (not dead) wastes away as a prisoner in a remote encampment, Tommy tries to take care of the widow and her two children with a truly responsible caring heart – quite a change from the irresponsible brother he had been. He grows up with this new assumed responsibility. While imprisoned, Sam experiences great horrors, so when he's rescued and returns home, he's silent, detached, without affect, and he's convinced his wife and brother have slept together. This is a classic depiction of PTSD. Sam's oldest daughter's response at the dinner table where she declares that she liked the daddy from before he left is a telling effect on children (and teens)! While she's only about 8 years old, many of the teens will be able to identify with this honest cry from the daughter. Officially, this is called "ambiguous loss."

(The 3D lenses) Look for themes such as the tensions accompanying military duty like pride of service and sense of purpose mixed with loss and fear and separation. War affects people, not always negatively as portrayed in this movie (with PTSD), but some soldiers don't want to talk a lot about what they've seen and experienced. Giving a military parent time to process being home after deployment and for family members to expect some changes is an important understanding. These understandings help us cope as family members.

### **Discussion Group Questions:**

1. If **you** were cast in this movie, which of the main characters would you rather be and why?
2. What are some good things that occurred back home as a result of Sam's deployment?
3. What do you think is the hardest part for the family of a military member returning from deployment? Do you know somebody with PTSD? If so, how has it affected them?

4. How much do you identify with the daughter's response at the dinner table blurting out her desire for her 'old' daddy?
5. What sort of emotions does this movie bring up for you? How close are things depicted here to your own family's story?

### **Group input:**

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective: *To wrestle with and understand some of the complicated issues involved with deployments in a military family (both positive and negative), the threat of death, the implications of returning home, possible PTSD, and the toll the separation takes on children. With an opportunity to discuss these issues and gain understanding, teens can learn some coping mechanisms and develop resilient responses to this military family reality.*

### **Bullet Objective:**

*Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:*

Military teens miss their military parents for several reasons. There's the obvious reason of deployments like in this movie, but there's also TDY, training, or separations such as when the family is left behind for the kids to finish the school year. This means that the military parent misses birthdays, holidays, vacations, and specific accomplishments and transitions taking place in the life of a teen (like honor roll, the prom, sports teams, etc.).

Another kind of loss that is reflected in this movie is what we call "ambiguous loss," which means that the parents returning from combat deployment seems to be a different person than the one we remember. PTSD or injury may cause some striking difference from when we last saw them. Often, as a teen, it's hard to explain this kind of loss, because it seems a little allusive; you know something's different, but can't quite figure it out. Since we can't bring the old parent back, we have to first understand what's going on and then figure out some strategies to strengthen our relationship and accept them as they are. Perhaps this is not the story of your personal family, but you probably know someone (a friend) who needs some help and support in this kind of struggle.

During deployments, we can use Facebook or email or SKYPE to communicate regularly. Tell your parent about little everyday things like school, friends, sports, church, clubs, something you're learning.

Videotape and post on YouTube some special family events or personal competitions and accomplishments.

Understand that you may need to find a new balance between family time and your normal routine and time with friends when the parent returns.

Know that it's OK, and even expected, to ask for help from a chaplain, a counselor, a youth director, and especially God.

An abbreviated look at the story of Moses seems to speak of this idea of deployment and separation in Exodus 2--5. Listen for the way Moses changes because of his deployment.

In Exodus 2, Moses runs away: <sup>14</sup>“The man answered, “Who made you our ruler and judge? Are you going to kill me just as you killed that Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and said to himself, “People have found out what I have done.” <sup>15-16</sup> When the king heard about what had happened, he tried to have Moses killed, but Moses fled and went to live in the land of Midian.”

Living in the desert, Moses encounters God directly. Exodus 3 says, “<sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that Moses was coming closer, he called to him from the middle of the bush and said, “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Yes, here I am.” <sup>5</sup> God said, “Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground. <sup>6</sup> I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ”

God calls Moses to go back and confront Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, on behalf of the enslaved people of God. Then God gives him a sign of his power in Exodus 4, <sup>2</sup>“So the LORD asked him, “What are you holding?” “A walking stick,” he answered. <sup>3</sup> The LORD said, “Throw it on the ground.” When Moses threw it down, it turned into a snake, and he ran away from it. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Reach down and pick it up by the tail.” So Moses reached down and caught it, and it became a walking stick again. <sup>5</sup> The LORD said, “Do this to prove to the Israelites that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to you ”

As Moses returned from this lengthy deployment in the desert, he returns, not as a runaway murderer, but as someone who has encountered God personally. Exodus 4 and 5 says, “So Moses took his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey, and set out with them for Egypt, carrying the walking stick that God had told him to take....”

Then Moses and Aaron went to the king of Egypt and said, “The LORD, the God of Israel, says, ‘Let my people go, so that they can hold a festival in the desert to honor me.’”

Moses transforms from runaway to confronter. When he returns, he is clearly a different person. As this Scripture story indicates, some people return from their separations as better and stronger people; maybe even more purposeful. Some soldiers even come face to face with God and it really changes them for good.

Whether you have experienced or know of someone who has a returning family member, they may have some real challenges to work through or they may be a stronger, more resilient person. Either way, there will more than likely be some kind of change. The question to ask yourself is “How have I changed during this time as well? Am I the same person I was when they left? How can we rebuild our relationship NOW!”

**Challenge:**

1. On a 3 x 5 card being handed out, write down what ways (good or bad) that your military family member has experienced change since being deployed. Now write down some ways you think you changed while they were gone. Who will you share this with?
2. If you have a deployed family member (or a friend does) get together and build a care package out of random things that will remind them of home and you. If you'll have a family member deploy sometime in the next year, start setting things aside in a 'future' care package pile. Plan and execute this with friends.

*Pray for God's purpose and power to put it into action and transform lives. Remind them of the online personal journey at ReZilient Life for further involvement with this topic of a family Separation & Deployment.*