

**SUB TOPIC THEME:**  
**SEPARATION & DEPLOYMENT:**  
**the ever-changing family**

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:**

*Family members will deal differently with separations and deployments. Emotions can run high! Sometimes the deployed member has experienced things that are nearly unexplainable to those who weren't there. And sometimes the significant things to you seem disconnected and less valuable to others. It's important to learn how you personally react emotionally and physically to these situations so that you can grow in deeper understanding and healthier responses to these inevitable differences.*



**Set Up Info:**

***Supplies Needed:***

1. Computer or internet connection to watch the YouTube video
2. Several coins for having flip-offs
3. Some paper, markers, pens, etc.
4. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
5. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
6. A passion to see students transformed in their positive influence on friends!

***Instructive Prep:***

Military family members are individuals as well as family members; therefore, they will all react to situations with varying emotions and even physical responses. Some people deal with stress of deployments better than others, and some deal better on certain days than they do on other days. There is a lot of variety in human responses to fear, trauma, a sense of loss, stress and anxiety, joy, restoration, anticipation, acceptance and more. What teens know about their deployed parent is not always complete information, and that can be worrisome or troublesome for them. When a family member returns, there are new issues to deal with for the re-entry process. Some experience 'ambiguous loss,' which is when a returning person is different than when they left. It really takes work on everyone's part.

This session is designed to look at the ways teens can understand and recognize many of these complicated issues of deployment and returning, and how these things personally affect them emotionally and physically. Additionally, they will need help to develop both willing hearts and personal strategies to engage the family and military parent with positive input and attitudes.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do, and what next*. We want students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate in doing something during the study (like making a hand gesture as a weapon). Finally, the *what next* focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, the movement is toward spiritual and emotional transformation in kids' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

#### **INTRO:**

*Sometimes as teens we are getting pretty tired of being told what to do. We believe that it is time for us to make our own decisions, and to some extent, that's very appropriate. After all, growing in maturity means becoming independent of our families as we become our own person. Military families face some exceptional challenges and opportunities with high rates of deployments and separation as well as military members reintegration back into the family unit. This dynamic can create all sorts of issues for a teen trying to figure out where they fit in the family. The story below identifies some of those development issues and ends with a specific look at a familiar military family.*

#### **INTRO STORY:**

Here are two portions of blog entries from military brats like you. These come from <http://www.seedsofhopebooks.com/my-story.html> and are found in a book titled: "My Story; Blogs by four military teens" by Michele and DeAnne Sherman. See if you identify with any of their blog entries, feelings and responses.

**MARIAH***June 17***Off to War**

Two weeks to go until Mom leaves for Iraq and everybody is feeling the stress. Mom is in the Army National Guard, and I never really thought much about being a “military family.” She would just do her weekend drill and a summer camp, and that’s it. I’ve known about the war, but didn’t think it would ever be something that I had to worry about. Well, she got her orders about a month ago and she’s getting ready to leave. Everything is pretty confusing right now—Mom and Dad have lots of paperwork and business to take care of. I get scared when I think of her leaving. We’re pretty close and I talk to her about everything. Dad’s great but it’s not the same. It freaks me out

sometimes thinking about Mom being so far away....

I’m going to make a card for Mom and hide it in her duffel bag. I want to tell her how proud I am and how much I love her. She can keep it by her bed (or maybe she’ll sleep on a cot in the barracks over there, I don’t know). I’m going to include my favorite picture of us from our camping trip last summer—I know it will make her cry. I sure hope we can keep in touch by email and that we can talk once in a while...I just want to be able to hear her voice.

*August 31***My First 5k Race**

Ran my first ever 5k race yesterday. It was a really hot day, so I was exhausted after...but I was so pumped to have finished and got a cool race t-shirt. My dad and sisters were at the finish line cheering me on which was sweet. The race was a fundraiser for the cancer unit at the local children’s hospital, so it was for a good cause. Getting up WAY too early on a Saturday morning was worth it. I made pretty good time, and bet I’ll be even faster at the next race in a couple weeks (hopefully it will be cooler!). My legs are SO sore today—ugh!!

*September 20***Iraq—The Other Side of the World**

Mom has been gone for two months now—we’re doing OK but still trying to figure out who does what chores and how Destiny, Sasha, and I can get to all our practices, games, and school stuff. Before Mom left we had a couple family activities—a short camping trip and a movie night. It was fun but...I really miss Mom. It’s so different without her. Sometimes I can’t watch TV when they show bombs, people getting hurt, and lots of homes and buildings being destroyed. It keeps me up at night—I have nightmares. I’m terrified Mom might get really hurt or, even worse, might not

come home at all—what would I do without her? I can't believe she's over there—she seems so far away and sometimes I feel really alone.

### ***September 29***

#### **Got My Ears Pierced**

Got my ears double pierced at the mall last week. Now I bet Destiny will want to get hers done, too. Dad's not happy, but I think it looks cool. Maybe I'll surprise him with a nose ring some day. J

### ***October 15***

#### **Military Group**

Joined a military group at school. Our school counselor, Mr. Rodriguez, organized it and we meet about once a month. I even get to get out of math class to go to group. There are 12 kids and we all have parents who are or have been in Iraq or Afghanistan. We just talk about what's going on—what's hard about having a parent so far away and in danger. I haven't said anything yet, but it's OK—you don't have to talk if you don't want to. Things at home are pretty tense these days—a lot of drama and yelling. This is hard on Dad, too. I think we all miss Mom...I think I'm mad at her for leaving me....

### ***October 31***

#### **Halloween**

Destiny and I gave out candy tonight to the trick-or-treaters. Sasha dressed up as a princess—she was so cute. It made me think a lot about Mom, though, because she loves helping us get dressed up for Halloween. Anyway...I tried out for the school play last week. I'm not much of an actress, but it helps to stay busy and it gets my mind off the war. It feels good to be thinking about something else...but sometimes I feel guilty that she's off at war and I'm doing fun stuff....Our military group at school is having a fundraiser. We're selling candy and using the money to put together care packages to send to Iraq.

**ADAM****August 20****Dad is Home...**

My dad is one of the coolest, smartest, bravest men I've ever met, but sometimes I just can't stand being around him. He's a doctor—a surgeon—and is in the Air Force Reserves. He just returned from a second tour in Iraq, and he sure acts different. After his first tour, it took us some time to get caught up, but just when things got normal again, he got his orders to go back to Iraq. Now he's finally home (for good?), but he just isn't the same. He gets mad over the stupidest things and spends most of his time in his bedroom or in front of the computer. He's still in "military mode," and orders us around way too much. He doesn't joke around like before, and sometimes just hangs out in the garage by

himself. We don't talk much. I almost liked it better when he was gone. It was a lot quieter and less stressful around the house. Ashley, Lisa, and I just stay out of his way. Derrick is lucky—he's leaving for college soon. Soccer tryouts are in two weeks. I need to start running to get in shape.

**September 4****I Can't Have the Car??**

Derrick left for college—he was pretty excited to get out of here. I don't blame him. Sometimes I wish I could go, too. My dad and I got into a huge fight last night. I wanted the car to go out with some friends and he wouldn't let me have it. What's going on? I've had my license for 6 months and I drive everywhere. Dad just doesn't get it. Things happened while he was away, and he hasn't caught up with our lives yet. He treats me like a little kid. It's like all he cares about is himself. I hate the way he wants to control me! I don't know what I did to make him so mad, but he sure went off on me. I've got a big algebra test tomorrow. I can't concentrate on anything. I made the soccer team. It's good to have something to look forward to and the coach is great.

**September 28****What Is Up with Dad?**

I've got a big soccer tournament and Dad says he's not coming—some lame excuse about too many people, too much noise, and he can't handle the traffic. Mom will be there, though—that's good. I really cannot believe Dad is not coming. He's quiet and so nervous now—the littlest thing totally freaks him out. Just last week Ashley and Lisa were playing cards—Slap Jack—on the kitchen table, and Dad came unglued.

The sound of them slapping the table really set him off, and he yelled at my sisters. I kinda felt badly for them, so I took them out for ice cream later that night. Anyway, I wish I could have some friends over to the house but I think it would be embarrassing. I never know how Dad is going to act. This stinks. Dad doesn't sleep much and sometimes I can hear him walking around at night. I try not to ride in the car with him because he drives crazy (and they think I am a bad driver? Whatever!). Dad sometimes swerves all over if he sees any trash or garbage bags. I guess it's because he had to avoid stuff that could have been an IED in Iraq. Oh yeah, I hate to say this, but I think he's been drinking a lot lately. I see lots of beer cans in the recycling—sometimes he's just a zombie— maybe it's because he's not sleeping at night. I'm driving again—finally!

### **October 10** **PTSD???**

Things have changed a lot around here. Dad has started going to the VA hospital—it seems like he goes up there for appointments all the time. I've driven by that big hospital lots of times but never thought MY dad would go there! The doctors say Dad has PTSD. Guess that's from trying to save so many wounded troops. That's basically all he did in Iraq. He saw so much bad stuff over there that it got to him. I had no idea! He thinks about all the people he operated on and wonders how many lived or died. He says he can't get those images out of his head. He dreams about it and says he sees it all over again when he closes his eyes. The docs at the VA are really helpful—they have special programs for vets with PTSD. His therapist says that emotional wounds are just as serious as physical wounds, and that we can all help Dad by being patient and supportive. Sometimes that's hard to do!

Watch these two video clips to see some additional ways that teens describe having a parent deploy.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52Tjhnu\\_VHY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52Tjhnu_VHY)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iTOT0Nm7p8&feature=related>

Intro Questions:

1. What are some of your first impressions when you heard some of the blog entries?
2. What did teens on the videos express that caught your attention?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

*Use the coins to have group members flip and call heads or tails. You can pair off and have a competition or have the whole group flip at the same time calling heads or tails. Whoever loses is out until you have a coin flip champion. That person begins answering the first question and then it progresses to the person on their right. Decide who you want to begin question 2 and following.*

1. Which of the two situations in the blogs do you most identify with and why?
2. Do you have a parent deployed or separated from the family currently? How long has it been/when was the last deployment for you and your family?
3. Do you identify with any of the feelings of the bloggers or the teens in the videos? What emotions run the highest for you, and when does that happen (i.e., Angry when parent leaves; depressed after two weeks, happy to have freedom, worried all the time, etc.). Try making a chart of key events and the emotions associated with each event. (see Student Response sheet)
4. Write your own questions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES**

*Joshua, Caleb and others are deployed as spies in the land of Canaan. They are to report back to Moses what they find. Interestingly, how they report what they see is very different and so is the reaction of the people and Moses when they hear it. The story is found in Numbers 13 and 14.*

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “Choose one of the leaders from each of the twelve tribes and send them as spies to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites.” <sup>3-15</sup> Moses obeyed and from the wilderness of Paran he sent out leaders, as follows:

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Leader</i>
Reuben	Shammua son of Zaccur
Simeon	Shaphat son of Hori
Judah	Caleb son of Jephunneh
Issachar	Igal son of Joseph
Ephraim	Hoshea son of Nun
Benjamin	Palti son of Raphu

Zebulun	Gaddiel son of Sodi
Manasseh	Gaddi son of Susi
Dan	Ammiel son of Gemalli
Asher	Sethur son of Michael
Naphtali	Nahbi son of Vophsi
Gad	Geuel son of Machi

<sup>16</sup> These are the spies Moses sent to explore the land. He changed the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Joshua. <sup>17</sup> When Moses sent them out, he said to them, “Go north from here into the southern part of the land of Canaan and then on into the hill country. <sup>18</sup> Find out what kind of country it is, how many people live there, and how strong they are. <sup>19</sup> Find out whether the land is good or bad and whether the people live in open towns or in fortified cities. <sup>20</sup> Find out whether the soil is fertile and whether the land is wooded. And be sure to bring back some of the fruit that grows there.” (It was the season when grapes were beginning to ripen.)

<sup>21</sup> So the men went north and explored the land from the wilderness of Zin in the south all the way to Rehob, near Hamath Pass in the north. <sup>22</sup> They went first into the southern part of the land and came to Hebron, where the clans of Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of a race of giants called the Anakim, lived. (Hebron was founded seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) <sup>23</sup> They came to Eshcol Valley, and there they cut off a branch which had one bunch of grapes on it so heavy that it took two men to carry it on a pole between them. They also brought back some pomegranates and figs. ( <sup>24</sup> That place was named Eshcol Valley because of the bunch of grapes the Israelites cut off there.)

<sup>25</sup> After exploring the land for forty days, the spies returned <sup>26</sup> to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had brought. <sup>27</sup> They told Moses, “We explored the land and found it to be rich and fertile; and here is some of its fruit. <sup>28</sup> But the people who live there are powerful, and their cities are very large and well fortified. Even worse, we saw the descendants of the giants there. <sup>29</sup> Amalekites live in the southern part of the land; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country; and Canaanites live by the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan River.” <sup>30</sup> Caleb silenced the people who were complaining against Moses, and said, “We should attack now and take the land; we are strong enough to conquer it.” <sup>31</sup> But the men who had gone with Caleb said, “No, we are not strong enough to attack them; the people there are more powerful than we are.” <sup>32</sup> So they spread a false report among the Israelites about the land they had explored. They said, “That land doesn't even produce enough to feed the people who live there. Everyone we saw was very tall, <sup>33</sup> and we even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. We felt as small as grasshoppers, and that is how we must have looked to them.”

<sup>1</sup> All night long the people cried out in distress. <sup>2</sup> They complained against Moses and Aaron, and said, "It would have been better to die in Egypt or even here in the wilderness!" <sup>3</sup> Why is the LORD taking us into that land? We will be killed in battle, and our wives and children will be captured. Wouldn't it be better to go back to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let's choose a leader and go back to Egypt!" <sup>5</sup> Then Moses and Aaron bowed to the ground in front of all the people. <sup>6</sup> And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, two of the spies, tore their clothes in sorrow <sup>7</sup> and said to the people, "The land we explored is an excellent land. <sup>8</sup> If the LORD is pleased with us, he will take us there and give us that rich and fertile land. <sup>9</sup> Do not rebel against the LORD and don't be afraid of the people who live there. We will conquer them easily. The LORD is with us and has defeated the gods who protected them; so don't be afraid. " <sup>10</sup> The whole community was threatening to stone them to death, but suddenly the people saw the dazzling light of the LORD's presence appear over the Tent.

#### LIFE APPLICATION:

1. According to experts, there are several emotional cycles associated with deployments. They include: Anticipation of deployment; Detachment and withdrawal; Emotional disorganization; Recovery and stabilization; Anticipation of return; Adjustment and renegotiation; Reintegration and stabilization. Identify which stage you are in now. Circle the stage(s) that is the most difficult and describe why. (use Student response sheet)
2. Brainstorm with your group about specific ways to deal with your strongest emotions and when you experience them. Develop a strategy for handling the stress of deployments and parents returning (use Student response sheet)
3. Write your own challenge: \_\_\_\_\_

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## STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. KEY EVENTS and YOUR EMOTIONS: (*EVENTS LIKE DEPARTURE, CHRISTMAS, DRIVER'S LICENSE, PROM, FIRST DATE, MAKING THE TEAM, GETTING LETTERS, ARGUMENTS WITH SIBLINGS OR PARENT, HALF-WAY POINT, RETURN DAY, ONE WEEK LATER, ADD YOUR OWN*)
  
2. IDENTIFY THE CYCLE YOU ARE IN, CIRCLE WHICH ONE(S) IS MOST DIFFICULT FOR YOU:
  - a. Anticipation of deployment;
  - b. Detachment and withdrawal;
  - c. Emotional disorganization;
  - d. Recovery and stabilization;
  - e. Anticipation of return;
  - f. Adjustment and renegotiation;
  - g. Reintegration and stabilization
  
3. GROUP BRAINSTORMING STRATEGIS FOR DEALING WITH THE STRONG EMOTIONS: