

Group Leader's Guide

for

Women, War + Trauma



Draft: In Process
Only covers Chapters 1,2,5,7,8,10

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Overall Philosophy for these manuals

Even though the best environment in which to address trauma and to facilitate healing is in a small group situation, these manuals were originally written for a “solo” application. Since there is a war going on in Ukraine, we couldn't expect people to gather in small groups for multiple weeks when they are being bombed, fleeing the country, in combat, or experiencing electrical blackouts. Therefore, we wrote these so that people could work through them on their own as they had the opportunity. We made the manuals available in both print and electronically, so people could download them to their phones or computers. But we also know that it is possible for some Ukrainians to meet in small groups on a consistent basis. So this “Leader's Guide” is meant to aid those who would like to lead a small group through the manuals.

Who's doing the teaching?

You, as the group leader, are not the *only* source of wisdom and knowledge for the group! Keep in mind that there are five learning dynamics that we hope to see in a group study like this. Participants can learn...

1. From the manuals.
2. From the group leader.
3. From each other during discussion times.
4. From the Word of God as scripture is presented in the manuals.
5. From the direct action of the Spirit of God on the participants' hearts and minds.

There are hundreds of approaches to dealing with Post-traumatic Stress, and virtually every one of them involves “talk therapy,” that is, helping the trauma sufferer to remember their traumatic experiences, to not stuff them down, but instead to talk about them in an environment where they feel safe, unjudged, and understood. This is why we want our leaders to avoid taking up too much time “sermonizing,” and try to motivate the group members to talk. If they are talking, you're winning!

Most of the actual content that we hope to get to the participants is contained in the manual. Let the curriculum do the work! But we could go even further and point out that it is God and His Word which are actually going to do the healing and transforming. So count on the Word to do the true work! Any time the curriculum takes you to a place where you can get the participants to read and consider Scripture, be sure to do it! It's profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness! (2 Timothy 3:16)

My job versus God's job

As it says in Exodus 15:26, “I, the LORD, am your Healer.” This should be a great relief to us as group leaders. The healing of the participants is not our responsibility. It's God's! He's the only one who can do it anyway! We're not The Healer, but we can be “bridges” to The Healer. Our job is to create an environment that will give God optimal access to the participants' body, mind, and soul for the purpose of healing. Then God does the healing.

Every chance you get, try to help them shift their hope and expectations to God – not to you, or to the group, or to the manuals, or to medicine, or to counselors. Sure, those things all help to

make a positive environment for healing. But help them see that God is the One who will make the biggest differences in their life.

An important note about discussion times

As was mentioned before, group members can teach each other and learn from each other. They have specific experiences and insights that can benefit other members of the group. This – and the fact that talking about their experiences is therapeutic – is why we put so much emphasis on the discussion times. Most of what you'll find in this Leader's Guide are questions that are designed to stimulate discussion. And whenever a group member shares something that others find beneficial and insightful, it helps to restore a sense of usefulness and honor in the one who shared – something that many traumatized people need.

When you notice group members starting to get involved in the discussion, and there is animated give and take between them, and you find yourself not having to say much to guide the discussion, again, you're winning!

But – there can be times when someone contributes something to the discussion that is a bit strange or even downright heretical. What then? That's when you will need to step in and – without criticizing the person or saying he or she is "wrong" (this could shut down future contributions from that person, and perhaps from other group members too) – steer the discussion back to solid ground by saying something like,

- That's a very interesting point of view...
- I hadn't thought of it in those terms before. I'll have to give that some more thought...
- I can see why a person might think that way (or come to that conclusion) ...
- [And then transition with...]
 - Here's something I've often heard about that subject... or
 - Let me share with you what the Bible has to say about that... or
 - Circling back to what we were talking about a minute ago... or
 - I would love to look deeper into that idea, but we need to get back on track here – could you and I talk about it some after the meeting?

Share your life

While we don't want the group leaders dominating the discussion times, we DO want you to share your life and the insights you've gained. We also encourage you to be a good example in terms of vulnerability. Be willing to share the difficulties you have experienced in the past – or are presently experiencing. Show them that it's OK to not be totally OK. God can do great things in and through a person despite their weaknesses. We are ALL in-process.

A few practical tips

- Pray for every member of your group every day. You'll be amazed at how their responsiveness to your teaching improves.
- Come early and welcome people in.
- Start and finish on time.
- Be the last one to leave, making time to talk with those who need to talk.
- Provide refreshments of some sort – even if it's only cookies and juice. But the more effort you make on this, the more the group members will appreciate it. After a few weeks, ask group members if they would volunteer to bring the refreshments.

- Schedule appointments between meetings for those who need extra attention.
- Meet with your leadership team every two or three weeks for review, troubleshooting, improvement, and prayer.
- Contact each member of your group once a week between meetings, either by phone, text, email, or a visit. Those mid-week “touches” make a big difference!
- Consider doing at least one event with your group during the weeks you are meeting. It may be a recreational event, a service project, having a special dinner, movie night, a hike, etc. Be creative!

Share the “Participation Rules”

Consider copying these rules on a separate piece of paper and giving it to each member, then go over them together. It’s important that everyone understands and agrees with what they can expect, and what is expected of them.

- 1. Confidentiality** – Anything said in our group stays in our group. Trust takes time to build but only moments to destroy. DO NOT talk to non-group members about who else is in the group or anything that was said.
- 2. Zero rank** – Out there, you might be a big deal or a nobody. In this group, we are all equals, working toward a common goal, helping each other out.
- 3. Faith** – While we don’t hide that we are a Christ-centered organization, we are not affiliated with any specific church or denomination. People of any faith or no faith are welcome here. We will respect each other’s faith convictions.
- 4. No comparisons** – Each person experiences stress and trauma differently. What is traumatic for one person is just another day on the job for someone else. We are all wired differently and have unique life experiences. Comparing trauma experiences to decide if mine was better or worse than yours is unproductive and even harmful. Focus on what God’s doing in your life.
- 5. Share your mind** – Have the courage to share what’s on your mind or what you’re feeling – it’s part of your healing process. The more you share, the safer you and everyone else will feel here, and the sooner you will experience healing.
- 6. Share the air** – But moderate your sharing. Make an effort not to dominate discussion times; let others in. Avoid long, detailed descriptions of your experiences. Get in, make your point, get out.
- 7. Listen** – Actively, deeply, honoring and affirming all contributions.
- 8. Don’t criticize** – Show grace and mercy to other group members – just as God has shown you.
- 9. Don’t interrupt** – You may have a valuable pearl of wisdom to share, but wait your turn.
- 10. Honor** – Look for opportunities to honor and affirm each other during and between meetings.

Chapter 1: How Can A Good God Allow Such Evil?

Objectives of this Chapter:

To give group members confidence that – even though they can't totally understand it – God is a loving, all-powerful God who can bring good out of evil and who will do so for them; to help group members understand that the origin and engine of evil in our world today is not God, but evil men who are abusing the free will God has given them.

Opening Verses and Paragraphs

[Have someone read the opening verse, the quote, and the rest of this section.]

By a show of hands, how many of you here have struggled with these questions?

Have you gotten any answers? Have you come to any conclusions about this topic?

If you haven't gotten any answers, what has this done to your faith? Are you still able to believe in an all-good and all-powerful God, even when you observe all that is happening to Ukraine?

That's the main issue that this chapter will be addressing.

[Leader: if you feel comfortable, and if you have had this experience, share a time when you personally struggled with that "dark night of the soul" when you questioned whether God was good or that He even existed.]

How Did Evil Get Here?

[Have someone read this section.]

So, what role would you say "free will" played in the introduction of evil into our world?

[You may want to have someone read the story of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:1-19, for the benefit of those who may not be too familiar with it.]

When in this story did Eve decide to abuse her free will, and disobey God?

What motivated her to do this? *[The lies of Satan, and her own desire for things forbidden by God.]*

This is a report of how sin entered the world. But how does it also describe how sin has entered every one of our lives at some point in the past? *[So whether we are talking about the "original sin" of Adam & Eve, or our own personal sin, we see that it wasn't God who was the bringer of evil in the world, but actually, WE WERE.]*

Down Through the Centuries, How Have We Responded?

[Have someone read this section.]

According to what was just read, the evils of this world are traceable to man abusing his free will to go against his Creator's commands, and God honoring His promise to give people the freedom to make their own choices and experience the consequences, whether they are good or bad. And yet so many blame God for all the difficulties in the world. Is this logical? Logical or not, have you ever felt like blaming God for tough times that you experience?

It has been said that "rebellion" is our basic drive to be in control – regardless of who is supposed to be in control. Aren't we all, therefore, guilty of rebellion against God? I often go to great lengths to try to control things, without a thought as to whether or not God wants to control them Himself.

Let's read Psalm 5:4,5 (ESV): *"For You are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all evildoers."* What

do these verses say about whether or not God tolerates evil in Himself or in people? He will judge and stomp out all evil eventually, but why doesn't He do it right now?

The trauma that we are experiencing right now here in Ukraine – is it something that God is doing, or is it something that a man is doing?

How Can You Know that God is Good and that He Can Help You?

1. Suffering is not unusual. It is universal – even for God.

[Have someone read this section.]

The verse at the end of this section (Hebrews 2:18) says that Jesus was tempted – or “tested” (same word) – so that He could help us when we are tempted or tested.

Besides being a good example for us when we suffer, why would God the Father want to expose God the Son to suffering and testing when He was in human form on earth?

Read Hebrews 5:8 – *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

He learned things through His trials that could not be learned any other way.

Why do you think God allows us to be tested? *[To expose what is in our hearts, and to teach us things that can only be learned through suffering.]*

Let's read Psalm 11:5-7. It's all about God testing both the righteous and the wicked.

The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

What happens to the wicked when they are tested? *[Judgment, pain, torment.]*

What happens to the righteous? *[We see His face, He doesn't turn His back on us, etc.]*

I think we have all observed that no one on earth is exempt from suffering. But have you ever thought about God Himself suffering? How has He suffered?

2. God grieves with you over your suffering and loss.

[Have someone read just the first 3 paragraphs.]

When someone close to you has died, do you just make a mental note of it and say something like, “Well, we've all got to go sometime” and get on with your day? Or does it feel deeply unnatural and odd? Since everyone does indeed die eventually, why does death seem so out-of-place and wrong to us?

[Have someone read the rest of the section.]

Since Jesus' plan is to eliminate all sorrow, pain, and death forever, how could knowing this shift our perspective on the suffering and death in this world?

Mary and Martha deeply desired that their brother would not die. But Jesus knew that they actually wanted something else even more. What was that? *[An eternity without sickness and death. This is what we all want deep down, and this was the experience we were originally created to have.]*

Does this mean we should not grieve our losses, or feel great sadness when we lose a friend or relative? *[No! The grief associated with separation and loss is built into us by God. It's normal, natural, and expected. If even Jesus grieved, certainly we should too.]*

God must allow those losses to occur – and what does it make Him do? *[Weep. But He also knows what He's going to do about it before too long.]*

Rather than to marginalize Martha's grief, and rebuke her for her lack of eternal perspective, Jesus ministered to her in three ways. Can you identify them? *[He empathized with her pain; He gave her words of hope; He gave her a chance to respond, to talk.]* We can do these same three things when we encounter someone who has suffered a great loss.

3. God is an expert at bringing good out of bad.

[Have someone read this section.]

Let's take a few minutes now and think about the war. But rather than to think about all the difficulties and horror it has produced, let's consider some of the good that has come out of it. You might think, "Can anything good come out of a war?" Two thousand years ago, people used to say, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) Well, Jesus Christ did! What is some good that you've see produced in your life since the war started? Putin meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

4. God does not want anyone to suffer, but He has eternity in mind.

[Have someone read this section.]

How many people do you know who have never suffered adversity? *[If you think you do know someone, just wait a while. Something will come along, unfortunately!]*

God does have eternity in mind. But some of the treasures that are treasured in Heaven will not be found in pleasant places. Big diamonds and emeralds are found in dark, muddy places. Many of God's eternal riches are in similar places.

[Have someone read Isaiah 45:2,3 - I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.]

What treasures has God shown you in the dark times of your life, where you found the jewels God had reserved for you?

The Take-Away

[Have someone read this paragraph.]

What is one new thing that you have learned in this chapter that will help you better understand how a loving God can allow such adversity in our lives?

Prayer

[Have someone read the closing prayer.]

Chapter 2: Facing Fear with Faith

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members understand God's perspective on fear and faith; to motivate group members to not allow the threats and dangers that currently exist in their world to paralyze them or cause them to "run away," but rather to face them with faith that God will defend them and bring them to a place of peace in their hearts, inner strength, and confidence.

Opening Discussion

What fears are you struggling with today? What makes it hard for you to fall asleep, or wakes you up in the middle of the night and steals your sleep?

[Have someone read the opening verse.]

Yulia's Story

[Have someone read the story.]

How many of you can identify with Yulia's situation and what she has gone through?

I'd like to give a few of you the opportunity to share with us the traumatic journey you've been on since the Russian invasion. Let's try to keep it to two or three minutes, in the interest of getting through this chapter.

Some people say that if you have fear, it shows that your faith in God is weak. What do you think about that? Is that true?

[No! Everyone has experiences or potential experiences that cause fear to spring into their minds. It's normal and even healthy to fear things that might hurt or kill you! But the important thing is what you do next – do you let your fear paralyze you, or do you take action to confront or prepare for what you fear? It has been said that "courage" is not the absence of fear, it's taking action in spite of your fear. But if you don't take action, it can indeed cripple you – which is talked about in the next section.]

Fear Defined and Disarmed

[Have someone read this section.]

There are three responses to threats: **Fight**, **Run**, or **Freeze**. Different people respond in different ways when they are put in a threatening, fear-producing situation. But too often people go with the second or third option – running or freezing. When we make the decision to stand our ground and fight against our fears, we're falling in line with what God would like to see in us. This is why – as we just read – God tells us "Do not fear" so many times in His word. If we run or freeze, what happens to the threat that we fear?

If we face it and fight, is it much more likely that it will stop, and go away?

What does James 4:7,8 say about "resisting the devil" – what will he do when we resist him?

Can any of you share with us a time when you worked up your courage, faced your fears, and triumphed over them? *[Leader: think about an experience in your life where you faced your fears and they backed off.]*

[Have someone read Joshua 1:9 – "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not be terrified nor dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."]

Is this call for courage a suggestion or a command?

If it's a command, what does this tell you we can do about our fears? [*We can choose to obey God and by an act of our will resist our tendency to run or freeze, and instead take steps – with God's help – to face our fears and resist the devil.*]

A Worthy War to Wage

[*Have someone read this section up to where it says, **In the moments of panic, we can...***]

When God's Word tells us to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12), would that indicate that it's going to be pleasant and easy to have faith while facing threats, or that it may be unpleasant and difficult?

Does "fleeing to God" mentioned in this section qualify as "running" from our fears?

Can you think of an example (real or made-up) of someone being in a fear-inducing, threatening situation, but completely calm and confident that nothing bad can possibly happen to him or her? [*Example, a small boy running from a bigger bully into the arms of his huge, strong daddy.*] How is this similar to us running into the "high tower" of our God?

[*Have someone continue reading this section from where it says, **In the moments of panic...** Read the five scripture verses, stopping at **The current war has brought with it...***]

What is the common theme of these five verses that were just read?

What do the following three verses say we should fear? [*Have someone read these 3 verses.*]

Deuteronomy 6:13 - You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

Deuteronomy 10:12 - And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Deuteronomy 31:12 - Assemble the people, the men, the women, the children, and the stranger who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to follow all the words of this Law.

As we read earlier in Psalm 27, if the Lord is my light, my salvation, and my defense, who else do I need to I fear? [*No one!*]

[*Have someone read the rest of this section.*]

What are some of the things that you fear losing? Could the source of our fear be our sense that God might not be in control and sovereign in our lives, making us vulnerable to loss?

How can we gain the attitude that God is in control of our lives, and thereby lose the fear of loss and gain a stronger sense of faith, peace, and courage?

The Take-Away

[*Have someone read the Take-Away verse.*]

We might think that those who belong to God should not suffer or need to be "put together and back on our feet" again. And yet, what is the current state of the people that this verse was written to?

What does this verse tell you about our current state of suffering, and what we should be focused on and have faith in?

Prayer

[*Have someone read the closing prayer.*]

Chapter 5: How Has Trauma Impacted Me?

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members understand the physiology of trauma reactions; to inform group members about the spectrum of trauma reaction symptoms; to give group members the opportunity to self-assess their trauma symptoms; to help group members understand how and why God has programmed us to react when confronted with dangerous situations; to give group members practical ways to deal with a flashback in themselves or others.

Opening Verse

[Have someone read the opening verse.]

Would it surprise you to know that this verse was written by King David, the mighty warrior who was said to be “a man after God’s own heart”? Would you expect such depressing talk from such a man of God?

Have you ever felt like this?

Darya’s Story

[Have someone read Darya’s Story.]

Does Darya’s story sound familiar to any of you? *[Call on someone who reacted to that question.]* How about you? Will you tell us what your experience has been? How has it been like Darya’s?

Would anyone else like to share what they’ve experienced?

What is a very concerning – and common – part of Darya’s story? You heard it in the last two paragraphs. *[The fact that even though she and her children are safely in Poland, she is still very afraid that she’s still in danger. She is experiencing the symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress. In fact, the last sentence in this section is mostly right out of the manual that Psychologists use to describe PTS.]*

What Causes Trauma Reactions?

[Have someone read this section, including the list of ten causes of trauma reaction and the paragraph after the list.]

You’ve all experienced war-related trauma. How many of you have experienced one or more of the experiences in this list?

How have those previous traumas made your war-related traumatic experiences even more difficult?

Trauma Spectrum

[Have someone read this section up to 1. Intrusion (or Re-Experiencing) Symptoms. If you have a white board available, draw a long horizontal line on it, and write “Mild” at the left end, and “Severe” at the right end. Point out that the six symptoms mentioned in this section are on the “Mild” end.]

The symptoms that are on this “Mild” end of the spectrum will usually go away within a few hours or day of a bad experience. I’m calling it simply a “bad experience” because it may not really rise to the level of what we would call “trauma” if the symptoms go away so quickly and easily. But if these same symptoms persist for more than a couple of weeks, we would put your experience farther to the right end of the spectrum *[make some marks on the line on the white board showing this].*

Can you think of a few examples of this “Mild” level of bad experiences?

1. Intrusion (or Re-Experiencing) Symptoms... Etc... *[Self-Assessment Exercise]*

Now we'll look at four classes of trauma symptoms that are at the “Severe” end of the spectrum. I'd like four volunteers who would read each class of symptoms. As they are being read, put a mark next to any symptoms that you have experienced in the past, or are currently experiencing.

[Have four different people read the four classes of “Severe” symptoms on the next two pages, and a fifth person read the final two paragraphs of the section.]

I'm sure that most – if not all – of you put check marks next to several of the symptoms listed. Would any of you be willing to share one or two of your symptoms that concern you the most?

Disorder or Injury?

[Have someone read this section.]

Would it bother any of you to be labeled as “Disordered” because of the trauma you have experienced *[as in “Post-traumatic Stress Disorder”]*?

How does identifying your condition as “Injured” rather than “Disordered” change your self-perception? How do you think it would change the self-perception of a soldier?

If You Are Struggling with War-Related Trauma or PTSD, You should know...

[Have someone read this list of seven facts about PTSD.]

Which of these seven facts is new to you – something you hadn't heard or considered before? Which one gives you the most comfort and encouragement?

A God-Designed Defense Mechanism

[Have someone read this section.]

Have any of you experienced a trauma so severe that your brain and body have clicked into the defense/survival mode described in this section? Would any of you like to share what happened?

What did it feel like when your body shifted to that defense mode?

What did it feel like after the threat and danger had passed?

How would you say that these defense mechanisms may have minimized your injuries, or kept you alive?

But No Matter Who You Are...

[Have someone read this section.]

Do any of you feel embarrassed by what you did during these self-defense trauma reactions? Many soldiers do, but many non-soldiers could too. If so, this section is to try to help you understand that your reactions were normal and good, because God programmed them into you to keep you alive.

Because of the trauma you have experienced, you may feel depressed and a bit hopeless right now. But on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning “No way possible” and 10 meaning, “I'm positive it will happen,” put a number on how likely you think that eventually you will come to a place of strength, stability, and be able to strengthen and enrich the lives of others?

[No matter what number you picked, I firmly believe that all of you could pick 10! It may not seem like it right now, but God is very good at using bad experiences to bring about good results!]

Getting Stuck in Crisis-Alert Mode

[Have someone read this section.]

This is the condition that was so concerning in the opening story about Darya. The danger had passed, she was in a safe place, but her body and mind wouldn't let her relax and move on. It sometimes can even produce what we call "Flashbacks."

Can any of you identify with this experience? Have any of you ever had a flashback? Would you like to share your experience with the group?

What To Do with Flashbacks or Panic Attacks

[Have someone – or several people – read this section.]

All of these practices can help a person come out of a flashback. Let's try one of the breathing exercises right now – the 4-7-8 breathing.

[Go through the exercise three or four times, counting out loud for them. Inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth. Afterwards, ask them how it made them feel. Wasn't it relaxing, calming?]

What Do We Mean by "Healed?"

[Have someone read this section.]

It's important to define terms to have realistic expectations. By "Healed," do we mean "No more trauma symptoms"?

What is the main thing we are working towards in our trauma healing? *[That our symptoms are muted, and no longer control us.]*

Of what benefit is it to only have our symptoms muted, and not totally gone? Why would this be part of God's plan for us?

The Take-Away

[Have someone read this section.]

What are some of the ways you can do what this Take-Away advocates? How can you "Take action"?

Prayer

[Have someone read the final prayer.]

Chapter 7: Survival Tips for Protecting Your Family

Objectives of this Chapter:

To help group members understand how doing an inventory of weaknesses, vulnerabilities, strengths, and skills can greatly increase the chances of survival in a crisis situation; to show group members how to build a three-dimensional set of resources for survival that are internal, external, and eternal; to identify character qualities that need to be cultivated which will greatly increase the likelihood of survival in a crisis.

Opening Bible Verse

[Have someone read the opening Bible verse – Proverbs 22:3.]

According to this verse, what is the difference between a prudent person and a simpleton?

As a prudent person, what kinds of precautions have you taken when you saw the danger of the Russian invasion approaching?

Opening Section

*[Have someone – or several people – read this whole section, all the way to **Building Internal Resources**.]*

When it comes to your family, would you consider yourself a “Mama Bear?” How has this characteristic manifested in you?

This section says that the difficulties you are currently suffering are a lot like birth pains – “pain with a purpose.” What purposes do you think God has in mind as He allows the pains you are currently experiencing?

Building Internal Resources for Survival

[Have someone read the first paragraph and the list of three spiritual virtues.]

The Bible says that everything we do flows out of our heart, so we must watch over it diligently (Proverbs 4:23). So our “doing” does indeed flow out of our “being.” Let’s look at each of these three spiritual virtues that will greatly aid our survival and well-being of our families.

1. Being a Faithful Servant

[Have someone read this section including the five points. Let the reader know they don’t have to say the Bible references – those are put in there as source material for the point being made, and for later study.]

The word “faithful” can be a little vague – especially when we try to apply it to our relationship with God. Maybe it will help if we think about it in terms of being “faithful” to our husband. What does “faithfulness” to your husband look like? When you got married, you probably vowed to be faithful to your husband. What did you mean by that? How could each example of faithfulness to your husband be applied to being faithful to God?

2. Being a Wise Servant

[Have someone read this section including the five points. No need to read the references.]

Judging from the five points shared in this section, is wisdom gained passively, or is it something you have to pursue intentionally? I want to be a wise person. What do I need to do? *[If they need a little prompting, they can put in their own words some of the five points listed in this section.]*

3. Being Prudent

[Have someone read this section including the seven points. No need to read the references.]

According to the Bible verse at the beginning of this section, what is the main characteristic of a prudent person? *[When they see danger coming, they take precautions – they don't just let things happen, they make things happen!]*

Seven great characteristics here that need to be developed through a combination of our efforts and God's direct action on us! Look over the list again and decide which one you'd like to work at developing the most? How will you do this?

Building External Resources for Survival

[Have someone read the first three paragraphs of this section.]

For those of you who have been in situations where there have been attacks, missile strikes, and power blackouts that have left the infrastructure of your cities and towns in shambles, which would you find more comforting and motivating: to have to figure things out and get to safety moment-by-moment, reacting to threats and difficulties as they appear, or being organized ahead of time, ready for any contingency, meeting challenges in a prepared and organized fashion? *[Obviously, most people would choose the second option. This section will help you to make that happen.]*

Survival Tip #1: Plan

[Have someone read the first paragraph in this section.]

Six issues were mentioned. Let's look at them one at a time.

Emergency Assessment

1. Threats

[Have someone read this paragraph and example.]

After you return home, what are some of the threats that you might have to deal with there? Write down a few abbreviated notes in the "Threats" column in the table at the end of this section. (Share with the group?)

The table is pretty small in your manuals, so if you'd rather find another blank page in your manual to write these things in, that would be fine.

2. Strengths

[Have someone read this paragraph and example.]

Let's take a minute and think about this. What are some of your personal strengths? How are you gifted? What experiences can you draw from? What personality characteristics do you have that would be helpful in a crisis? Write these things down in the table in your manual.

3. Weaknesses

[Have someone read this paragraph and example.]

What are weaknesses you have discovered in yourself over the past few months or years? What liabilities do you need to be aware of and make allowances for? Write these things down in the table in your manual too.

4. Vulnerabilities

[Have someone read this paragraph and example.]

What are the vulnerable areas in your life which, if they were attacked, could go down quickly and bring about difficulties or great harm to you or your family? It could be your income, your job, your housing situation, a poor marriage that is not improving, a vehicle that is about to fall apart, a health condition, uncontrollable reactions to surprising events, etc. List these vulnerabilities in the table in your manual.

5. Opportunities

[Have someone read this paragraph and example.]

Look at the lists that you have written so far on the table in your manual. Can you think of a few specific things you can do to meet those threats? Write some abbreviated notes in the table in your manual. After a few minutes, I'd like to have a few of you share what you came up with.

6. Skills

[Have someone read this paragraph and example.]

Skills differ from Strengths in this exercise as they are practices and disciplines that you have learned over time and have become good at exercising them. They could be things like, knowledge of first aid, cooking, preserving food, hunting, martial arts, drawing, writing, mechanical repairs, etc. Write some of your skills down in the table.

Plan of Action

[Have someone read the first paragraph in this section.]

This is a complicated – but very important – assignment that you should go through with your spouse later (or think through by yourself if you are single) when you can give it some good attention. But just to make sure we are all exposed to and familiar with these issues, let's go around the room and read each item out loud one at a time.

Survival Tip #2: Prepare

1. Pack a 72-hour “go bag” for each family member.

[Have someone read just the first paragraph.]

How many of you have go bags packed and ready to go? *[Call on someone who raised their hand and ask them to share a few things that they put in them.]*

For some additional ideas about what to put in a go bag there is a list right there in your manual. When you get home, look over the list and start accumulating items for your go bags.

2. Important Documents

[Have someone read this paragraph.]

If you're like a lot of people, you have your important documents scattered all over the place. In peace time this isn't a problem – as long as you know where they are. But when you live in a country where violence could break out at any time, you need to have them all in one, safe place, and in a form that you can grab quickly and stuff them in your go bag.

3. Update Items

[Have someone read this paragraph and the final paragraph in this section.]

Survival Tip #3: Practice

Before we read this section, what are some safety procedures that you and your family practice on a regular basis?

[Have someone read this whole section.]

What are some other things your family ought to consider practicing on a regular basis?

Survival Tip #4: Recover

[Have someone read this whole section.]

Can you think of a time when, because of the crisis you were in, and because of the needs that were all around you, you pushed yourself to the point of exhaustion and still forced yourself to keep going? How did this affect you over the next few hours or days? Is there a way you could have built in a “Recover Time” that would have been helpful?

After a crisis has passed, what are some of the ways you have found to recover?

Building In Eternal Resources For Survival

We’ve considered building **Internal** and **External** resources into our lives for survival. Now we need to look at one more set of resources that is vital, but which too many people neglect: **Eternal** resources.

[Have someone, or a couple of people, read this section and the final Bible verse.]

Planning, preparing, practicing, and recovering are all faithful, wise, and prudent ways to anticipate and triumph over any threat that comes your way. But there are still many “wild cards” that life can throw at you – things that you could never have anticipated. That’s when it is a huge advantage to have a strong relationship with the God of the universe who can come to your aid and alter your circumstances perfectly. He may not necessarily to take you out of difficult circumstances (although He may), but to come into them with you, and make sure you go through it in a way that will make you stronger and give Him glory!

Final Prayer

[Have someone read the final prayer.]

Chapter 8: Finding Light in the Darkest Grief

Objectives of this Chapter:

To give group members a sense that they are not alone in their difficulties, that their grief is common and good, and that God will take them through their time of darkness and accomplish constructive things in their lives as a result of their trauma, grief, and eventual healing; to show group members that there are productive and unproductive ways of grieving; to share some practical tips to group members about how to grieve their losses in productive ways.

Opening Bible Verse

[Have someone read the opening Bible Verse – Psalm 34:18.]

Many of you here today have come with broken hearts and crushed spirits. I wonder – even in this difficult condition – if any of you can say that you still feel the Lord’s closeness?

It seems that, sometimes while going through difficulties we do feel that God is very close to us, walking with us through the “valley of the shadow of death,” comforted by His rod and staff, like in Psalm 23. But other times He seems to have left – gone on vacation or has more important matters to pay attention to. Why do you think our perceptions vary so much?

Sasha’s Story

[Have someone read Sasha’s Story.]

I’m sure that many of you have suffered many losses too. Some may not seem as catastrophic as Sasha’s, having lost her home, her job, and many of her loved ones. But for some of you your losses might even be worse. This will be hard, but I’d like for us to go around the room and each one of us share one to three words that describe something that you have lost since the war started. Friend, mother, son, home, job, a precious possession, your inner peace, your dreams, self-confidence, faith, ability to love. Whatever is lost or seems to be missing right now. By naming your loss, you’ll be better able to accomplish the difficult work of grieving over it.

[After everyone has shared, ask the group if they would let you pray for them – not for each one and their individual losses, but for the collective grief that all the group members share. Alternatively, ask two or three of the group members to pray for the group.]

Loss and Grief

[Have someone read this section.]

In the first paragraph, Frank O’Connor said that he felt sorry for those who go through life not knowing what grief is. Would you agree with that? Why would he say that? *[If you grieve the loss of someone or something, it proves that you had love for that person or thing. No grieving, no loving – a very hollow life.]*

When we grieve over the loss of someone or something, we are responding like God has responded. Is it surprising to you that even God grieves? Can you think of an example of this? *[It’s right there in their books – “Jesus wept” when His friend Lazarus died, and all his friends were heartbroken about it. This caused Jesus to cry in sadness.]*

The Purpose of Grief

[Have someone read this section.]

How does it make you feel that your tears are so precious to God that He stores them?

Have you ever known someone who – whenever their life was jolted by some great loss or catastrophe – they never had any emotional response, but instead just stuffed their reactions down and acted like it wasn't a big deal? Maybe they wanted to appear strong or impervious to difficulties. But what do you think the long-term effects of this will be?

“Normal” Grief

[Have someone read the first two paragraphs of this section – through the quote by C.S. Lewis.]

Lewis said that grief was like “fear,” “suspense,” or “waiting.” Can you identify with that? What word would you use to describe what grief is like?

I'd like someone to read through the list of grief symptoms (including the extended list below the first 7 common ones). As she does, check off any that you are currently feeling.

When you're done, turn to the person next to you – or get into groups of three – and share the top three symptoms that concern you the most, or seem to be the most dominant. Then spend a couple of minutes praying for each other, that God would lift and remove these symptoms, and give you strength, faith, and endurance until that happens.

How NOT TO grieve

[Have someone read the first paragraph and the 17 points under it (or break the list up and have several people read it) and the last paragraph after the list.]

As we read through this list, put a checkmark after each coping action that you do from time to time. Afterwards, I'd like to have a few of you share which ones you have to deal with the most – so we can recognize that these behaviors are pretty common to us all!

How TO Grieve

[Have someone read this section, including the seven stages of grief, but stop before the final two paragraphs.]

As you think about the trauma you have experienced, and the grief you feel now over your loss, which of the stages in the Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle best describes your current state of mind?

What are some of the experiences you have had in this stage?

[Have someone read the final two paragraphs in this section.]

In your manuals you see the Kubler-Ross Cycle and a nice, neat wave. But as we just heard, for most people it's not so uniform and predictable. For most of us, it's not a Cycle – it's more like a scribble! *[If you have a white board, draw a line like the “nice, neat” cycle in the manual, but then draw a second line that is like a scribble a 5-year-old would produce.]*

Can you identify more with this representation of your “grief journey?”

Good Grief

[Have someone read the opening paragraph of this section.]

Remember where God is

[Have someone read this section.]

I'd like for us to take a couple of minutes, close our eyes, and do what is described here.

[After they have closed their eyes, quietly read the last paragraph out loud, a phrase at a

time: “Ask Jesus to enter your pain with you... Feel Him coming up behind you, wrapping His big arms around you and holding on tight... Let Him pull the pain out of your body, soul, and spirit into His...” Close with prayer, thanking God for the peace He can bring to those who grieve.]

What did you feel during that?

Remember the past and remain optimistic

[Have someone read this section..]

We’ve all been through plenty of winters before. And we’ve also loved the beautiful springs that follow them. Every year. Year after year. Spring has always followed winter. It’s one of the great rhythms of God’s creation. The spring of God’s healing and restoration will also follow the winter of pain and grief you are currently experiencing. What do you think you could do to hasten the coming of that spring?

Aim steadily at faith’s target

[Have someone read this whole section.]

So, what’s the difference between “faith goals” and the “object of or faith?”

What’s the danger of turning a specific experience or outcome into the object of our faith?
What’s the danger of turning that experience or outcome into a validation (or non-validation) of our faith?

What should be our attitude instead?

[Make it clear that we are certainly not saying that we should not pray for specific needs we have or outcomes we desire. The point is that we need to always remember what we learned in Bridge 5 about prayer – “Not as I will, but as YOU will, God.” We leave the results to God. He is the one we look to and trust to bring about the best outcome.]

We should imitate Jesus’ attitude and prayer: “Not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39). A person of mature faith will boldly express his or her strong desires to God, and then leave the results in His wise and loving hands. See if you can finish the second part of this sentence: “Sometimes we may be trying very hard to get God to change our circumstances, while He is using our circumstances to _____.” [...change us.]

Don’t try to be the “Lone Ranger”

[Have someone read this section.]

This is difficult, isn’t it? Most of us don’t want to admit we have any weaknesses, or that we’re struggling, or that we might need some help or someone to lean on. Think about it for a minute. Who do you know that you could talk to and tell them about the difficulties you are experiencing without jeopardizing your personal sense of honor? Someone you know understands you, and wouldn’t judge you?

Do something with your anger

[Have someone read this section.]

What do you do when you feel anger rising in you? How do you keep it from boiling over?

The Take-Away: Grief and Eternity

[Have someone read this section.]

According to this scripture, what is on Jesus’ heart to do for you?

[Have someone read the final Prayer: “The Lord says this to you today...”]

Chapter 10: God's Strategy for Defeating Your Enemies

Objectives of this Chapter:

To clarify who our enemy is in the battles we are currently fighting – physically, emotionally, and spiritually; to help group members gain insight on their physical enemies and how to fight them; to help group members gain insight on how to put themselves in the strongest position to fight their enemies in the spiritual realm – both defensively and offensively.

Opening paragraphs

[Have someone read the three opening paragraphs, including the Bible verse.]

Understandably, we tend to focus on the Russian invaders as our enemies. And though they are certainly accountable for the horrible things they have done – as an army and as individuals – they aren't our true, ultimate enemy. Who is?

You probably won't get out on the physical battlefield to fight Russian soldiers, but what do you think about the fact that you can fight the forces behind those soldiers wherever you are? Even right here, right now?

[Have someone read the rest of this section, including the story about the Spanish invaders of Guatemala.]

What would you say is the point of this story? *[The importance of focusing on our true enemy. The horses were impressive, but it's the riders who were the ones directing the horses and who could kill you. The Mayans were defeated because they were focused on the wrong enemy.]*

But this is not to say that, in our fight today, we should ignore the "horses" – the humans that are the direct cause of so much of our difficulties. Let's look at some principles we can apply in our fight with our human invaders.

Biblical Principles on How to Deal with the Horses

[Have someone read this section, including the 10 points about our "Rules of Engagement." Tell the reader that they don't have to read the verse reference after each point – those are there for future individual study.]

After reading this section, what would you say is the difference between "killing" and "murder" – which is the word used in the sixth Commandment: "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13)

Obviously, we are allowed to do everything we can to defend ourselves, our families and or friends from lethal harm. But here is another tactic we can use against the "horses..."

Abraham Lincoln was the famous American President who served during the Civil War in the US in the 1800s. He once made this profound statement about how to destroy our enemies during the height of the fighting between the North and the South: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" How could it be possible to make the Russian soldiers our friends? *[Prayer; looking for opportunities to return good for evil; showing mercy when there is an opportunity; encouraging and helping Russian soldiers who want to defect; helping Russian refugees fleeing the war; showing kindness to the spouses of the soldiers; other ideas?]*

Biblical Principles on How to Fight the Riders *[The forces of darkness; Satan and his demons who are behind what the Russians are doing.]*

*[Have someone read the opening two paragraphs up to **My Declaration of Faith.**]*

Although we won't be getting into a lot of spiritual warfare tactics in this manual (see *When War Comes Home*, Chapter 10 for much more on that), we will be considering the most important aspect of fighting our spiritual enemy: making a strong connection with our Commander-in-Chief, Jesus Christ. Since He is our power source, and the One who is ultimately behind the strategies of this war on a global basis, if we are aligned with Him we will be in the best position to withstand the attacks of our enemy, to counter-attack, and to win every battle we get into.

Declaration of Faith

Let's read this "Declaration of Faith" out loud, together. *[Have someone read it in Ukrainian.]*

Why is this Declaration so important? When we make this Declaration, who is our audience?
[God, of course, but it also serves notice to our spiritual enemies about who we belong to, and the power that we possess because of it.]

My Oath of Allegiance

Now let's read this "Oath of Allegiance" out loud, together. *[Have someone read it in Ukrainian – they don't need to read the last sentence in parentheses about my first oath in 1978.]*

How is pronouncing this Oath an important part of being equipped to fight against the forces of darkness? *[It reminds us of our submission to God's authority and reaffirms it, which opens the door to God being able to do much more through us in the battle.]*

My Preparation for Battle

Now let's read the "Preparation for Battle" section out loud, together. *[Have someone read it in Ukrainian. Alternative idea: go around the room and have group members read each small paragraph out loud one at a time, while the others pray it silently. Again, they don't need to read the verse references in some of the statements.]*

How has going through this "Preparation for Battle" made you feel differently about yourself and the enemies that you are at war with – both spiritual and physical? How will this help you?

The Take-Away

[Have someone read this section.]

All through the Bible we see that things get done in the spiritual realm through the spoken word. From God creating the universe in Genesis 1, to Jesus commanding demons to leave, wind and waves to stop, healing to happen, all the way to Revelation where Jesus is depicted as having a sharp sword coming from His mouth (Rev. 19:15), verbal pronouncements are seen as central in accomplishing God's will. Not muscle power or machinery or bombs or bullets, but our speech. Making these declarations aren't just rituals or psychological exercises meant to make us feel better. They are actually accomplishing important things in our lives, literally equipping us to not only survive the battles we encounter, but to triumph!

Decide today to make these declarations on a daily basis, or at least weekly.