



Christian Report

To Win...To Disciple...To Equip...To Win

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Confessions of a Military Mom — Claire Shackelford, Christian Military Wives

I may not wear combat boots, but I am a combat-boot loving woman. My husband and son wear them, and so you can keep the designer boots and the cowboy boots ... I'll take the combat boots! I think the happiest moment this year, for me, is yet to come. That is when I will see all four of those combat boots on the floor in my home.



Claire Shackelford

I can just see the boots empty and waiting for tired soldiers' feet to fill them again. One set of boots will have been through the challenges of training, while the other pair may still have sand in them from a very dangerous, distant, and ancient place.

When the boots are off, the feet get to tend to the family. In the meantime, I am slowly but surely understanding the permanent structure changes that are happening to our family. I am finding the wife role to be overwhelming at times due to the massive amount of new information I am learning. I know it will all sink in eventually, and we will settle into our new structure and expectations as a military family.

But I am still trying to figure out my role as a military mother. This role is much harder to grapple with, and as I talk with other mothers of deployed soldiers, I am hearing

the same thing from them. How do moms deal with the fear, anxiety and stress of a deployed son or daughter? We are normally not nested within the supportive environment of a military base — where we are met with empathetic glances while we wait to send those care packages to the one destination where no mother wants her loved one to be. Instead, we are often left to come to terms with a grief that is like no other we have ever encountered, and we carry this grief in a civilian world that often (though not always) does not understand it.

Grief is a very primitive but complex reaction to change — and the more difficult or tragic that change is, the more intense and complicated the grief becomes. Most mothers of grown children can relate to the difficulty of having an "empty nest." Even if our children are healthy, well-adjusted and successful adults we still grieve when the change in our family occurs. Our roles change, our identity becomes cloudy, and suddenly women who were once confident in their abilities are doubting everything they do and say. When your child is deployed to a combat zone like Baghdad for the first time, you are dealt a grief like you have never known

before. I have always tried to avoid taking my family for granted, and I know that none of us have any guarantees. But it is different when you know that the child you carried, birthed, nurtured and raised could be just an inch away from a bomb. On one hand I am dealing with a fear unlike any other, and on the other hand I am more proud of my son than I have ever been. Fear and pride combined like that add a strange twist to the mix of emotions that I have gone through over the past year.

Mothers are important to deployed soldiers. If the soldier is unmarried, often his or her mother becomes the primary source for morale and support. I know if my son were engaged or married, I would see my role differently. I would focus on keeping the morale of his fiancée or wife high so that she could in turn give him the support he needs. As it stands now, for us at least, I am the one who takes the calls, writes the letters, sends the care packages and communicates with family and friends. I would never complain about holding such a privileged position, but I don't know if people realize how much soldiers' moms do to support their soldier, the troops and the mission.

A mother will happily send a care package, attend to business, and support her soldier as much as she possibly can. It is a joy and an honor to serve my son while he is away serving our country. That part is not a burden. The burden lies in the bond between mother and son. The pain comes from the

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Marriage — An Alternative to Divorce — by MSgt Rick Hiltman, USAF

So your marriage partner has had enough. He or she no longer has “feelings” for you and “just wants out” of the relationship. These could very well be the most painful words any person can hear. Feelings of betrayal, hatred, blame and injustice swell within. This, mixed with fear of failure, fear of the ensuing financial stress, guilt, and shame give way to hopelessness and perhaps even profound depression. Even if there has been unfaithfulness, abuse, abandonment or strife in the marriage, there now comes a sad sense of relief that it is almost over. After the initial pain, confusion, and the feeling of emotional loss comes the numbness, not unlike the state of shock experienced after physical injury.

As in the movie “Fireproof,” when things looked hopeless for Caleb, you too may think the way ahead is, at best, bleak! However, in the movie, Caleb kept his word and finished the challenge his father gave to him. He endured the pain and allowed the Lord to guide his steps.

The Bible tells us that Jesus died to bear our sorrows and grief (Isaiah 53:4-6.) If we are willing to pour out our hearts to the Lord, we discover God’s method for releasing the anger, pain, sorrow and grief to Jesus. Secondly, we can ask God to show us how to go on, asking Him to make a way where there is no way. Remember how the Israelites felt when they faced the Red Sea with all the chariots of Pharaoh bearing down on them. That was when God parted the sea and made dry land for them to walk on, turning hopelessness into victory.

We should ask Him how to forgive, and do so with an honest heart, perhaps saying, “I can’t do this anymore.”

“I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” Psalm 121:1,2 NIV

“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord.” Psalm 27:13-14 NKJV

Who is it you are fighting? Recognizing the real enemy is an important part of any battle. Have you and your spouse been taken captive by the enemy? John 10:10 reminds us it is “the thief that has come to kill, steal and destroy.” I suggest to you that you are not really fighting your spouse; let God change you first and then perhaps your spouse as well. Give yourself, your spouse and the situation up to the Lord. If Satan can keep you focused on your spouse, he can keep you in a constant state of turmoil and frustration — because you cannot control the choices and behavior of your spouse.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood (my spouse), but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Eph. 6:10-12 NIV (interjection mine)

Ask God to show you the turmoil you are in from His perspective. Listen to Him and let Him begin to take back ground yielded to the enemy. Let Him tear down the strongholds (II Corinthians 10:3-4) — in your marriage, in you, and in your spouse. Let Him turn things around and let Him have the glory. Ask for faith, strength, courage and a heart to be obedient to Him and His will. Rest in Him while He starts to move the mountain before you.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28 NKJV

When I started this journey God applied two words from Psalm 23:3 as a personal promise to me, “He restores.” Dear brother or sister in Christ, when our marriages are in trouble it is urgent that we go before the throne and disable Satan on his account. Marriage is basic to a Godly seed and health to the body of Christ. There are two instructions (rhemas) that can be used against Satan. One may be found in Genesis.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24 NKJV).

The other was given as a command by Jesus Christ.

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate (Matthew 19:6).

Based on these two precise teachings, we can come before the throne of grace and intercede for our marriages.

Prayer: “Heavenly Father, I bring my marriage before Your throne, because You designed marriage and because it symbolizes Your relationship with the Church, the believer’s relationship to the law, and the redemption process. Therefore, I say to Satan, in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through His blood, ‘Get thee hence from this marriage, for it is written: “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be one flesh...what God has joined together, let not man divide.”’ And now Heavenly Father, would you send Your Holy Spirit into my life and that of my spouse and convict us of what is hindering the oneness in our marriage. This I/we ask this in the Name of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for Your glory. Amen”

Let’s dig in, let’s refocus, let’s rebuild foundations! The only verse of Scripture where “covenant” is used with regard to marriages is in Malachi where the Lord states the reason for unanswered prayer.

“You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.” (Malachi 2:14 NIV).

Peter reminds of this:

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.” (I Peter 3:7 NIV).

Interestingly enough, we find that the Bible opens and closes with pictures of marriage. In the beginning we have our ancient parents, Adam and Eve. In the end we have Christ and His Bride. So we can see through the ages that God’s plan for marriage is that it remains an irrevocable covenant. As long as you will stand on this truth, He will make a way and your marriage will not

Relationships: Face Time or At a Distance — Pastor Larry Hoskins, Th.M.

Some time ago, I came home to find my two college-age kids another college-age friend, all sitting in the same room of the house. All three were engaged, not with each other, but with their keyboards and computer screens. Nothing was wrong with what they were doing, yet I found it surprising, even odd, that all three were “connecting” with someone or something outside of the room rather than connecting with each other.

Today, if we are a technical initiate at all, we will become acquainted with words or phrases like Facebook — “Friends” and the “Wall,” Twitter Updates (Tweets), a Blog, a Forum, e-mail, IM’s (Instant Messages), Chat Rooms, Blackberrys, and Text Messages. These tools or types of communications have several benefits. They keep us a little more in touch with each other and our daily comings and goings. They allow many people to exchange ideas. They save time and postage, allowing rapid and immediate delivery. Large groups can be contacted all at once. Others can contact us or we can contact them whether we are on the road, at work, in the house or at our children’s practice field. What a day we live in!

Without intending to minimize these benefits, there are also certain drawbacks to this age of electronic communication. Besides the issues of distraction and personal safety, electronic communication can keep people at arm’s length. Whatever the communication is that takes place “at a distance,” it is not the same as seeing someone or a group face to face. Non-verbal communication is missed, as is tone of voice. “I love you, too” can be said earnestly or sarcastically and have totally different meanings in electronic fashion, yet be readily understood person to person. There’s less privacy, and unless we turn off our cell phones, there are more interruptions and distractions. There’s less “alone time” and “down time” at a personal level, so our “batteries” become drained rather than recharged. Sometimes, even the *environment* of face-to-face conversation and relationships, is more conducive to a more intimate level of communication. Loving accountability, which we all need from others (and which we all need to give from time to time) can have more of an edge when done by text message rather than in the context of face-to-face relationships. Work is required to rightly relate.

Christianity at its core is relational.

Think about it. Terms or phrases like Father and Son, brother and sister, and “my little children” are all relational. “God so loved the world” is relational. In fact, the Scriptures say that it is antithetical to say we love God — but that we do not love our brother or sister. Our horizontal relationship with each other is always a reflection of our vertical relationship with God.

Relationships have, at their core, a certain level of association. The Bible uses terms like sheep in a flock, branches on a vine, members of a body, and people in a family to say we are individuals yet always part of a group. These dynamics are part of God’s design. The degree of commitment and closeness with those we relate to is supposed to mark us as incredibly distinct from the rest of the world: “By this all men will know that you are My disciples,” Jesus said, “if you have love for one another.”

Such a biblical love is not instant; it is cultivated. It’s not immediate; it is developed over time. It’s not built in short, rapid communication, but in longer, transparent vulnerabilities conveyed in an environment of mutual trust and acceptance. This kind of trust and acceptance shares numbing pain and difficulties with personal sin — and that receives hard, often unwanted, words because we know we need them. Even if we don’t know we need them we trust a friend when he or she says that we do. This kind of love is mutual, because those same levels of communication are received and given in both directions.

Such love is also patient. This unique kind of love is not necessarily the “feel good” love that the world sells. It’s a “do the right thing, and relate rightly” kind of love — even if it is hard and painful. The Scriptures tell us that systematically, we are of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Yet if this is the case (and it is), why are believers so quick to point out our differences. When conflict arises, why are we so quick to backbite, gossip, grumble, complain, or even break off a relationship, leaving a friend or group — rather than gently working through the conflict, no matter how long it takes, to complete resolution? The former kind of response is not the kind of love that marks us as Jesus’ disciples. The latter can be exhilarating or painful for all involved, but it yields a stronger bond conveying that our relationship with each other is more important than

getting our way. That particular kind of love is distinct from that of the world.

When Jesus first selected His disciples, He appointed them “so that they would *be with Him*” (Mark 3:14 – italics mine). It’s not surprising that in *being with Him*, they noticed that He would often go off by Himself to pray and that He would pray with them. Soon they asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Electronic communication doesn’t teach us what we’ll gain naturally by osmosis just by *being with* each other — the gradual, often unconscious process of assimilation or absorption of lifestyle, character, and wisdom. It’s hard to see tender affection, gracious hospitality, and selfless serving of one another without spending time together. Discipleship is intensely relational in more ways than mere expression. It is life impacting life in a more total, comprehensive way.

Biblical community is being vitally connected with “one another,” too. We are to pray for one another (I know of a military couple who has done this via e-mail, because it was the only way they could pray together while one of them was deployed). We are to love one another, to be devoted to one another, to give preference to one another, to be of the same mind towards one another, to accept one another, and to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other as God in Christ has forgiven us. In fact there are almost forty “one another’s” in the New Testament. It is impossible to connect at the level the Scriptures call for us to connect without significant and quality face-to-face time.

In the early church, Acts 2 tells us that Christians met day by day in the temple and from house to house. The picture I get is that they worshipped together and they were constantly in each other’s houses. It seems more spontaneous than planned. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to sharing their lives, to eating together and celebrating communion together, and to prayer. These types of relationships invite others into our lives and welcome the “intrusion” of the unplanned into the planned or better, of the friends and family into our sphere of relationship where iron truly sharpens iron, where the wounds of a friend are discovered to be faithful, and where we find encouragement and are stimulated to love and good deeds. In short, we

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grow into Christ-likeness.

In an age of electronic communication that so often is “at a distance,” let us make sure that we do not have only surface-level relationships that trend towards detachment and isolation. Real relationships move from acquaintance, to the discussion of facts, to the sharing of opinions, and to the exchange of feelings. At the deepest levels we explore

the spiritual aspects of our relationship with God and where He and His Word are making an impact on our lives, and where He helps us discover that we are falling short and need to change and to grow. We explore serving Him together and enjoying fellowship with His people in church, in small group, and one on one. Having “face time” with people — both with those who don’t know the Lord and with those who do

— and lots of it, is the best way I know to take our relationships and our ministry with people (and theirs to and with us) to the next level.

So how are your relationships? How is your ministry to others? Is it “at a distance” or “face-to-face”?

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be over. Let us remember where our strength and help come from, and let the second half of John 10:10 come alive when Jesus continues and says, “I have come that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” Rest assured that God cares about your marital problems and is working for your good and the good of your spouse. He sent His Son into the world to die

for the sins of all mankind. He rose from the dead, defeating Satan and death. He is Lord of Heaven and earth! He seeks to draw you and your spouse close to His merciful heart. He can accomplish what no man can do. Have faith, and trust everything to His loving care. He can resurrect your marriage! My prayer for you: “May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all comfort, comfort

your heart and protect you from discouragement. May He cause His face to shine upon you as you walk through the troubles and trials in your marriage and give you grace to respond with His love and good works. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you with the riches of His glory, joy, and pleasure and give you His peace in your heart and soul today.” Amen

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deeply ingrained images of that soldier when he was a child — when he was sick and helpless and you were the one to carry him, hold him and tend to him. The pain and fear comes from the deep and intense love that you have for him — the love that only grows with time.

So, what’s a mother to do? Here are a few things that I have discovered along the way:

- Brace yourself for pre-deployment stress. You will start grieving before your soldier leaves.
- Stay away from the news when you are in a heightened emotional state.
- Keep yourself busy, but plan ahead so that you make yourself busy with healthy things instead of succumbing to impulsiveness when you need to distract yourself.
- Before deployment, you need to work up the courage to talk to your soldier about anything that is troubling you in your relationship with him. You need to have a clear conscience. Do this in a way that is not burdensome to your soldier. He needs to stay focused on the challenge ahead of him.
- Seek out and find people who can support you. Be sure you tell them you are not looking for a good debate on the war.
- Acknowledge that you are only human and you have limitations.
- If you feel that your health is being affected by the stress (high blood pressure, insomnia, etc.), you need to see a doctor. Do not allow your health to suffer. Your family needs you, and your soldier will need you to be healthy and ready for him when he comes home. Knowing you are taking care of yourself is very important to his morale.
- You are a mother, and guilt comes with that job. Stop it. Stop it now! It is time to sort out the real responsibilities from the imaginary guilt we often carry around. Don’t assume needless burdens. So you didn’t tuck him in one night when he was 5 ... let it go!
- Do not allow your imagination to take over when you haven’t heard from your soldier in a while. When I don’t hear from Mike for a period of time I always remind myself that no news truly is good news. He will contact me as soon as he can. Many things may be keeping him from calling.
- Journal or blog if you like to write. If you are not a writer, then find another way to keep notes about what you are going through during tough times. Also, make a note of what you found to be the most or the least helpful.
- When you hug your soldier goodbye, be sure you hold him tight. Then whisper in his ear, “I will pray for you with every breath. I will think of you with every thought. When you come home safe to me, we will celebrate like there is no tomorrow!”

New Members

PO1 Gus Calvo, USN
 Mr. Grant & Janette Clausen
 PV2 Colton Clausen, USAR
 SPC Shannon Downey, USA
 1stLt Richard & Catherine Fitzgerald, USMC
 MAJ David & Heather Garay, USAF
 Chaplain Chris Garrett
 CW3 Jody & Linda Hakala, NG
 PFC Norman & Cerissa Harvey, Sr., USA
 CW2 Sherl & Becky Johnson, USA
 Ms. Debi Malloy
 Mrs. Megan Meggison
 CW2 Anthony & Traci Pollard, USA (Ret)
 Mrs. Bharti Taylor
 Ms. Linda Westover