

JOSHUA 1:9

A Bible Study for Combat Veterans

"Be Strong and Courageous"

*"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and
courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be
discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you
wherever you go."*

— Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

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THE SOLDIER'S PRAYER

Adapted from Psalm 91

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

*I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."*

*You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

*For He will command His angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.*

*"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.*

He will call on me, and I will answer him;

*I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.*

*With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation."*

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Introduction

A Word to Veterans

You answered the call. You raised your right hand, swore an oath, and stepped into a world most people will never understand. You trained your mind and body for combat. You learned to suppress fear, push through exhaustion, and do whatever the mission required. You saw things that can never be unseen. You lost brothers and sisters whose names are etched on your soul.

And then you came home.

For many veterans, coming home is harder than going to war. The skills that kept you alive in combat—hypervigilance, emotional control, instant threat assessment—now create barriers in civilian life. The memories that surface unbidden, the nightmares that steal your sleep, the guilt that whispers you should have done more or shouldn't have survived—these are wounds invisible to the eye but devastating to the soul.

This study is written for you. Not by someone who will minimize what you've experienced or offer easy answers. But by fellow believers who recognize that the God who led Joshua into battle is the same God who promises to be with you now—in the darkness, in the struggle, in the long journey toward healing.

Joshua 1:9 was spoken to a warrior facing overwhelming odds. God didn't command Joshua to feel no fear; He commanded him to be courageous in spite of fear, because of one unshakeable reality: "The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." That promise extends to you—into the valleys of depression, through the flashbacks, past the guilt, and into a future you may struggle to imagine.

You don't have to do this alone. You don't have to "handle it." This study invites you to bring your full self—the warrior, the wounded, the weary—before a God who sees, knows, and remains faithful.

Welcome, warrior. The mission continues.

How to Use This Study

This six-module study breaks Joshua 1:9 into its component phrases, allowing us to examine each element of God's command and promise. Each module includes:

Opening Scripture and Prayer — Ground yourself before you begin.

Teaching Content — Biblical truth applied to the veteran experience.

Personal Exercises — Individual reflection and application.

Discussion Questions — For group study or deeper personal reflection.

Scripture Memory — Key verses to internalize.

Closing Prayer — Specific petitions for healing and growth.

For Individual Study

Set aside at least 45 minutes per module in a quiet place. Have your Bible, this study, and a journal ready. Don't rush. Some content may surface difficult emotions—this is normal and often necessary for healing. Take breaks as needed, and consider having a trusted friend, counselor, or chaplain available if you need to process.

For Group Study

Groups provide accountability, shared experience, and the powerful reminder that you are not alone. We recommend groups of 6-10 veterans led by someone familiar with trauma-informed care. See Appendix D for detailed guidance for group leaders.

A Note on Pace

There is no timeline for healing. Move through this study at whatever pace serves your journey. Some veterans complete one module per week; others take a month per module. The goal is not completion—it's transformation.

MODULE 1

"Have I Not Commanded You?"

Understanding God's Authority and Our Identity

Opening Scripture

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

— Joshua 1:9

Opening Prayer

Lord God, Commander of the armies of heaven, I come before You as one who has served and sacrificed. As I begin this study, open my heart to receive Your truth. Help me understand Your authority over my life and discover who I am in You—beyond the uniform, beyond the wounds, beyond the war. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Teaching: A Commander Worth Following

"Have I not commanded you?" These words weren't a suggestion. They were a direct order from the Supreme Commander to His servant Joshua. God was reminding Joshua that this mission came with divine authority and divine backing.

As veterans, we understand commands. We know what it means to operate under authority, to trust the chain of command, to execute orders even when we don't fully understand the strategic picture. The military instilled in us a framework for understanding authority that now provides a powerful lens for understanding our relationship with God.

But here's what makes God different from any commanding officer you've ever served under: He never sends His soldiers somewhere He won't go Himself. He never issues orders from a safe distance. In Christ, God entered the battlefield of human existence, faced the enemy, and won the decisive victory.

When God commands us to be strong and courageous, He does so having already demonstrated perfect strength and courage on our behalf. His authority isn't just positional—it's earned.

The Transition: From Military Identity to Identity in Christ

One of the deepest struggles veterans face is the question of identity after service. The military gave you a clear identity: your rank, your MOS/rate, your unit, your

mission. You knew who you were and where you fit. Then came the day you took off the uniform for the last time.

Many veterans describe a profound sense of loss—not just of comrades or purpose, but of self. "I used to be a Marine," one veteran said. "Now I'm just... nobody." This identity vacuum often drives veterans toward substances, isolation, or worse, as they try to fill a void that civilian life cannot fill.

Scripture offers a different answer: your truest identity was never your rank or your role. Your truest identity is found in who you are, not what you've done. Consider what the Bible says about believers:

You are a child of God (John 1:12)

You are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You are a soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

You are more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37)

You are chosen, royal, holy, belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9)

The mission hasn't ended—it has changed. Paul understood this when he wrote to Timothy, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him" (2 Timothy 2:3-4). Your enlistment in God's army is permanent. Your Commander is eternal. Your mission continues.

Personal Exercises

Exercise 1: Identity Inventory

In your journal, write answers to these questions:

- a.** What titles, ranks, or roles defined you during military service?
- b.** Which of these do you still hold onto? Which feels lost?
- c.** How do you typically introduce yourself now? What does that reveal about where you find your identity?

Exercise 2: Scripture Identity Statements

Read each verse below. Rewrite it in first person as a personal declaration. For example, John 1:12 becomes: "I have received Christ. I believe in His name. I am a child of God."

2 Corinthians 5:17

Ephesians 2:10

Colossians 3:3

1 Peter 2:9

Exercise 3: The New Mission

Military service gave you purpose through mission. What "mission" has God placed before you now? This might be family, service to other veterans, your church, your community, or something still unclear. Write your thoughts, and if the mission feels unclear, write a prayer asking God to reveal it.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways has the transition from military to civilian life affected your sense of identity and purpose?
2. What makes it difficult to trust God's authority in areas where you previously trusted your own training and capabilities?
3. How does understanding God as a Commander—rather than just a distant deity—change the way you relate to Him?
4. What aspects of your military identity are worth preserving as you follow Christ? What aspects might need to be surrendered?
5. Paul describes Christians as "soldiers of Christ Jesus." How does this image resonate with your experience? How might it be different from military service?

Scripture Memory

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

— 2 Timothy 2:3-4

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that I serve under Your authority—an authority exercised with perfect love and absolute faithfulness. Forgive me for the times I've found my identity in roles that were always temporary. Root my identity deep in Christ, where it cannot be taken from me. Show me the mission You have for my life now, and give me the strength to pursue it with the same dedication I brought to military service. I am Yours, Lord. Command me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MODULE 2

"Be Strong and Courageous"

Redefining Strength After Combat

Opening Scripture

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

— 2 Corinthians 12:9

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, You showed us that true strength is found not in domination but in surrender, not in self-sufficiency but in dependence on the Father. Reshape my understanding of strength. Help me bring my weakness to You without shame, knowing that Your power is perfected there. In Your strong name, Amen.

Teaching: The Lie of Self-Sufficiency

The military taught you to be strong—physically, mentally, emotionally. "Pain is weakness leaving the body." "Embrace the suck." "Never let them see you sweat." These mantras shaped you for combat, where any sign of weakness could get you or your team killed.

But what was essential for survival in combat becomes destructive in civilian life. The veteran who never admits struggle, never asks for help, never shows vulnerability, is the veteran most at risk. The very strength that kept you alive is now killing you slowly—through isolation, through substance abuse, through the refusal to acknowledge wounds that are bleeding you out internally.

Scripture offers a radical redefinition of strength. The Apostle Paul, no stranger to hardship, wrote: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). This isn't weakness as surrender to defeat; it's weakness as surrender to God—acknowledging that we cannot heal ourselves, save ourselves, or sustain ourselves apart from His power.

The Myth of "Handling It"

"I've got this." "I'm fine." "I've handled worse." These phrases roll off veterans' tongues automatically, deflecting concern, maintaining the image of capability. But behind closed doors, the reality is often different: sleepless nights, recurring nightmares, explosive anger, emotional numbness, broken relationships.

Here's the truth: you can't "handle" trauma. Not alone. Not through willpower. Not through alcohol or drugs or distraction. Trauma lives in your body, your nervous system, your neural pathways. It doesn't respond to commands the way your subordinates did. And there is no shame in this—only the reality of being human.

King David, the greatest warrior in Israel's history, modeled a different kind of strength. In the Psalms, we see him weeping, raging, pleading, confessing—bringing his full emotional reality before God without filter or pretense. "I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears" (Psalm 6:6). This was not weakness. This was the strength to be honest.

Courage to Seek Help

It takes more courage to walk into a counselor's office than to walk into enemy fire. It takes more strength to say "I'm not okay" than to pretend everything's fine. It takes more bravery to ask for help than to suffer in silence.

Seeking help is not failure—it's tactical wisdom. In combat, you relied on your team. You called for backup when outmatched. You medevac'd wounded soldiers rather than leaving them to bleed out. Why would you treat your own wounds differently?

God has provided resources for healing: professional counselors who understand trauma, medications that can help stabilize brain chemistry disrupted by prolonged stress, support groups where you can share with those who truly understand, and spiritual practices that reconnect you to the Source of all strength. Using these resources is not weakness—it's wisdom.

Personal Exercises

Exercise 1: Strength Redefined

Write your own definition of strength based on what you learned in the military. Then, based on this module's teaching, write a new definition of strength that includes vulnerability and dependence on God. What would change in your life if you lived by this new definition?

Exercise 2: The Help Inventory

List the forms of help available to you (counseling, medication, support groups, pastoral care, etc.). Circle those you have tried. Put a star by those you have resisted. For each starred item, write honestly about why you have resisted it. Bring these resistances before God in prayer.

Exercise 3: Writing Your Psalm

Following David's example, write a raw, honest psalm to God about your current struggles. Don't filter it. Don't make it pretty. Tell God exactly how you feel—the anger, the grief, the confusion, the despair. End with a statement of trust, even if it's as simple as "But I will trust You."

Discussion Questions

1. What messages about strength did you receive in military training? How have these served you? How have they hurt you?
2. What makes vulnerability feel dangerous? What would it take to feel safe being honest about your struggles?
3. Paul says God's power is "made perfect in weakness." What do you think this means? How have you experienced this, if at all?
4. What forms of help have you resisted? What would it take to overcome that resistance?
5. How can we as a group create a culture where admitting struggle is seen as strength rather than weakness?

Scripture Memory

*He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will
soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will
walk and not be faint.*

— Isaiah 40:29-31

Closing Prayer

Father, I confess that I have trusted in my own strength far too long. I have worn masks to hide my wounds and refused help I desperately need. Forgive my pride. Grant me the courage to be vulnerable, the wisdom to seek help, and the faith to believe that Your power truly is made perfect in my weakness. Be my strength when I have none. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MODULE 3

"Do Not Be Afraid"

Facing Fear, Anxiety, and Hypervigilance

Opening Scripture

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

— 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

Opening Prayer

Lord God, You command us not to fear, yet fear stalks me like an enemy I cannot see. You know the racing heart, the scanning eyes, the mind that will not rest. Meet me in my fear. Bring Your peace into places that have known only vigilance. Teach me to rest in Your protection. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Teaching: Fear as a Wound, Not a Weakness

God's command "Do not be afraid" appears over 300 times in Scripture—more than any other command. Why? Because fear is universal. Every person, in every age, has faced it. And God, in His compassion, meets us there repeatedly.

For combat veterans, fear takes particular forms. Hypervigilance—the constant scanning for threats, the inability to sit with your back to a door, the startle response to loud noises. Flashbacks—where the past invades the present with visceral intensity. Nightmares—where sleep offers no refuge from the battlefield. Anxiety—the nameless dread that something terrible is about to happen.

These are not signs of weakness. They are wounds—evidence that your brain and body did exactly what they needed to do to survive. In combat, hypervigilance kept you alive. Hair-trigger responses saved your life and the lives of those around you. Your nervous system learned to treat every moment as potentially lethal, and it hasn't unlearned that lesson yet.

When God commands "Do not be afraid," He is not dismissing your fear or commanding you to simply stop feeling it through willpower. He is inviting you into a reality where fear, though present, does not have the final word. He is offering Himself as the ground of security that your soul desperately seeks.

The Terror of Night

Psalm 91, the Soldier's Psalm, specifically addresses "the terror of night." Every veteran knows this terror. The darkness brings dreams that are not dreams—they are

re-livings. The unconscious mind, no longer occupied with tasks, returns to the unprocessed horrors. Sleep becomes another battlefield.

The Psalmist's answer is not denial but refuge: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). Rest is possible—not through the absence of threats but through the presence of the Protector. The promise is not that nothing bad will happen, but that nothing can separate us from the unending love of God in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:38-39).

From Survival Mode to Living

Your nervous system may be stuck in survival mode—operating as if the war is still happening, as if every moment requires maximum alertness. This is exhausting. It strains relationships, undermines health, and prevents the peace that should come after the fighting stops.

Healing involves retraining your nervous system to recognize safety—a process that takes time, often professional help, and always the grace of God. Practices like deep breathing, grounding exercises, and meditation on Scripture can help activate the parasympathetic nervous system, signaling to your body that it's safe to stand down.

This is not weakness. This is wisdom. Even warriors must learn when the battle is over and when to rest.

Personal Exercises

Exercise 1: Mapping Your Fear

In your journal, describe your fear responses in detail. When do they occur? What triggers them? How do they feel in your body? Writing these down brings them out of the shadows and into the light, where they can be addressed.

Exercise 2: Grounding Practice

When anxiety rises, practice the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique:

Name 5 things you can see

Name 4 things you can touch

Name 3 things you can hear

Name 2 things you can smell

Name 1 thing you can taste

This technique anchors you in the present moment, reminding your nervous system that you are here, now, safe.

Exercise 3: Scripture Breathing

Combine deep breathing with Scripture. Slowly breathe in while thinking "The Lord is my shepherd." Slowly breathe out while thinking "I shall not want." Repeat with Psalm 23:1 or another calming verse for 5 minutes. Practice this daily and use it when fear rises.

Discussion Questions

1. How has combat changed the way you experience fear and threat? Give specific examples if you're comfortable.
2. What situations in civilian life trigger your fear responses? How do you typically cope with these triggers?
3. How do you understand God's repeated command "Do not be afraid"? Is it a rebuke? An invitation? Something else?
4. What would it look like to "dwell in the shelter of the Most High" in your daily life?
5. What steps might you take to help your nervous system learn to recognize safety?

Scripture Memory

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

— Psalm 23:4

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, You slept in a boat during a storm that terrified seasoned fishermen. You knew peace that circumstances could not disturb. Teach me that peace. When the terror comes at night, be my shelter. When hypervigilance exhausts me, be my rest. Retrain my body to know safety in Your presence. I trust You with my fear. In Your name, Amen.

MODULE 4

"Do Not Be Discouraged"

Confronting Depression, Guilt, and Moral Injury

Opening Scripture

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

— Romans 8:1

Opening Prayer

Merciful Father, You know the weight I carry—the things I've seen, the things I've done, the things I failed to do. Meet me in my discouragement. Speak to the guilt that haunts me. Show me the path from shame to grace. In Jesus' name, who bore my sin on the cross, Amen.

Teaching: The Weight of War

"Do not be discouraged" may be the hardest command for veterans to obey. Discouragement in the Hebrew carries the sense of being shattered, dismayed, broken apart. Many veterans know this experience intimately—the shattering that comes not from enemy fire but from moral injury, survivor's guilt, and the cumulative weight of war.

Moral injury is a wound to the soul that occurs when someone violates their own moral code—or witnesses such violations—in ways that cannot be undone. It might be killing in combat, even when justified. It might be failing to save a comrade. It might be following orders that, in retrospect, seem wrong. It might be the things seen that can never be unseen.

Unlike PTSD, which is primarily a fear-based condition, moral injury is a shame-based wound. It's not just "something bad happened to me" but "I did something bad" or "I am bad." This shame drives isolation, self-punishment, and in too many cases, suicide.

The Complexity of Combat Guilt

Military ethics are complex. In combat, you made life-and-death decisions with imperfect information under extreme pressure. Sometimes there were no good choices—only less bad ones. The rules of engagement provided a framework, but applying them in chaos-filled moments was never simple.

In hindsight, mistakes become clear that were invisible in the moment. Decisions that seemed right under fire look different in peaceful reflection. And some things—legitimate acts of war that nonetheless ended lives—simply never sit easy with the human conscience.

Veterans carry this complexity alone, often unable to articulate it even to those closest to them. "You wouldn't understand" isn't dismissiveness—it's the recognition that the gap between combat experience and civilian life is almost unbridgeable.

Grace for the Warrior

Into this weight steps the grace of God. The gospel does not minimize the seriousness of sin or the reality of moral failure. It acknowledges that we are more deeply broken than we know. And then it declares that Jesus has borne it all.

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24). This is not cheap grace that dismisses what you've done. This is costly grace that took your sin seriously enough to die for it.

King David understood this. After sins that included adultery and murder, he wrote: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). God's forgiveness is complete—not partial, not conditional, not dependent on our ability to forgive ourselves.

Survivor's Guilt

"Why did I make it when others didn't?" This question haunts countless veterans. The randomness of who lived and who died defies meaning. And the guilt of survival can be as heavy as the guilt of action.

Scripture doesn't give easy answers to why some live and some die. What it does give is purpose: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). You survived because God has work for you yet to do. Your life is not an accident—it's an assignment.

Personal Exercises

Exercise 1: Naming the Weight

In your journal—or in conversation with a counselor or chaplain—name the specific sources of your guilt and shame. What do you carry? Be as specific as you can. Naming what you carry is the first step toward laying it down.

Exercise 2: Writing a Letter of Confession

Write a letter to God confessing what you carry. Hold nothing back. Then read 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Mark the letter "Forgiven" and, if helpful, burn it or bury it as a physical act of release.

Exercise 3: Survivor's Purpose

Write the names of comrades you lost. For each one, write something you honor about them. Then write: "I will honor their sacrifice by..." and complete the sentence. Let their memory propel you toward purpose rather than drowning you in guilt.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between guilt (I did something wrong) and shame (I am something wrong)? Which do you struggle with more?
2. How do you understand "moral injury"? Have you experienced it, and if so, how has it affected you?
3. What makes it hard to receive God's forgiveness? What would it take to truly believe Romans 8:1?
4. How can we honor fallen comrades without being destroyed by survivor's guilt?
5. What "good works" might God have prepared for you—things that only a combat veteran could do?

Scripture Memory

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

— Psalm 103:12-13

Closing Prayer

Father, I bring You what I cannot carry alone—the guilt, the shame, the memories that accuse me. I confess my sins and my failures. I receive Your forgiveness, bought at the price of Your Son's blood. Teach me to forgive myself as You have forgiven me. Transform my guilt into purpose, my shame into testimony. I am Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MODULE 5

"For the Lord Your God Will Be With You"

Experiencing God's Presence in Isolation

Opening Scripture

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

— Psalm 139:7-8

Opening Prayer

Ever-present God, I confess that I often feel utterly alone—even in crowds, even in my family, even in Your church. Break through my isolation. Reveal Yourself in the darkness where I hide. Teach me that Your promise to be with me is not just words but reality. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Teaching: The Lie of Isolation

The promise at the heart of Joshua 1:9 is presence: "The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." This is the answer to every fear, every discouragement, every challenge—not that circumstances will be easy, but that we will never face them alone.

And yet isolation is one of the most pervasive struggles veterans face. You came home, but part of you stayed over there. You're surrounded by family who love you but don't understand. You watch civilians stressed about traffic and deadlines, and something in you wants to scream about what real stress looks like. You feel like an alien in your own country.

So you withdraw. You stop sharing because no one gets it. You self-medicate to numb the feelings. You disappear into work or screens or substances—anything to avoid the ache of disconnection. The isolation feels safer than vulnerability.

But isolation is a lie. It promises protection but delivers destruction. It says "no one understands" while cutting you off from the very relationships that could bring healing. And most dangerously, it tells you that God is distant too—that even He cannot reach you in the darkness.

God Who Enters the Darkness

The Christmas story is not about a distant God sending instructions from heaven. It's about a God who enters. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"

(John 1:14). Jesus didn't observe human suffering from a safe distance—He entered it fully. He knew hunger, fatigue, grief, betrayal, abandonment, and violent death.

This matters for veterans because it means there is nowhere you can go that God has not been. No darkness too dark. No experience too terrible. No memory too shameful. "If I make my bed in the depths, you are there" (Psalm 139:8). Even in the deepest pit, God is present.

The promise "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5) is not conditional. It doesn't say "I will be with you if you get your act together" or "I will be with you when you feel My presence." It's absolute. God is with you whether you feel it or not, whether you believe it or not, whether you deserve it or not.

Building Authentic Community

God's presence often comes through His people. We were not made to heal alone. The New Testament vision of the church is a body—interconnected, interdependent, sharing burdens (Galatians 6:2). Isolation is not just practically harmful; it's theologically wrong. It denies how God designed us to function.

For veterans, the most powerful communities are often those who share the experience—other veterans who don't need explanations, who understand the dark humor and the heavy silence, who can sit with you without needing you to be okay. Whether through church veteran groups, organizations like Team Rubicon or the Mighty Oaks Foundation, or informal networks, finding your tribe is essential to healing.

But community requires vulnerability—the very thing isolation protects against. Stepping out of isolation means taking the risk that someone might not understand, that you might be hurt again. It's easier to stay safe behind walls. But those walls are also a prison.

Personal Exercises

Exercise 1: Isolation Inventory

Honestly assess your level of isolation. Answer these questions in your journal:

- a.** How many people know what you're really going through?
- b.** When was the last time you were honest with someone about your struggles?
- c.** What walls have you built, and why?
- d.** What would it cost to let someone in?

Exercise 2: Practicing Presence

Set a timer for ten minutes. Sit in silence and simply be aware of God's presence with you. Don't pray with words—just be present. If your mind wanders, gently return it to the awareness that God is here, now, with you. After ten minutes, write what you experienced.

Exercise 3: One Step Toward Community

Identify one concrete step you can take this week to move out of isolation and toward community. This might be attending a veteran support group, reaching out to an old battle buddy, being honest with your spouse, or simply sitting in a church service. Write it down. Schedule it. Do it.

Discussion Questions

1. What does isolation look like in your life? How do you hide?
2. What makes it hard to believe that God is truly with you—especially in your darkest moments?
3. Describe a time when you experienced God's presence in an unexpected way.
4. What barriers prevent you from experiencing authentic community? What would it take to overcome them?
5. How can this group become a place where veterans can be truly known and truly safe?

Scripture Memory

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

— Romans 8:38-39

Closing Prayer

Lord, forgive me for the walls I've built, the isolation I've chosen, the lie that I'm safer alone. You promise to be with me wherever I go—help me believe it. Lead me out of hiding and into community. Give me the courage to let people in and the wisdom to find my tribe. Be real to me. Be present. In Jesus' name, Amen.

MODULE 6

"Wherever You Go"

Moving Forward in Hope and Purpose

Opening Scripture

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

— Jeremiah 29:11

Opening Prayer

God of Hope, as I complete this study, I ask for a vision of the future. Where I see only darkness, give me light. Where I feel only purposelessness, reveal Your calling. Make me a wounded healer, using what I've suffered to help others who suffer. Lead me forward. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Teaching: From Surviving to Thriving

"Wherever you go." These final words of Joshua 1:9 point forward to a future with God's presence. Joshua was standing at the threshold of the Promised Land, looking toward battles yet to fight and a nation yet to build. God's promise was not just for that moment but for every moment to come.

For too many veterans, the future feels like a blank wall or worse—a continuation of struggle without end. Depression steals hope. Trauma steals imagination. The question "What's the point?" haunts too many quiet hours.

But Scripture speaks a different word. God has plans for you—not plans for mere survival but plans for flourishing. Not plans that ignore your past but plans that redeem it. The future is not a void; it's an open door.

Wounded Healers

One of the most powerful Biblical principles is found in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

Your suffering is not wasted. The wounds you carry qualify you to help others who are wounded. The very experiences that felt meaningless can become your greatest ministry. This is the economy of God's kingdom—nothing is lost; everything can be redeemed.

Veterans helping veterans is some of the most powerful healing work happening today. Who better to sit with a soldier wrestling with survivor's guilt than one who has wrestled with it themselves? Who better to understand the sleepless nights and the hypervigilance than one who knows them intimately? Your wounds become your credentials.

A New Mission

In the military, you had a mission. It organized your life, gave structure to your days, and provided a reason to push through hardship. Without a mission, many veterans drift.

God has a mission for you. It might be serving other veterans. It might be raising children who know what courage and sacrifice mean. It might be building a business, serving your church, entering politics, or simply being faithful in small things. The specific mission will vary, but the call is universal: "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

Your mission isn't given all at once. It unfolds as you walk with God—one step of faithfulness leading to the next. The key is to start moving. Take what's in front of you. Serve where you are. Trust that God is leading even when the path is unclear.

The Hope Set Before Us

Christian hope is not wishful thinking. It's confident expectation based on God's character and promises. It looks forward to a day when "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

This hope doesn't minimize present suffering—it puts it in perspective. The worst day here is not the final day. The pain now is real but temporary. The healing is coming, whether in this life or the next. And God, who has been with you through the darkest valleys, will be with you forever.

You have survived what many cannot imagine. You have carried burdens that would crush others. And you are still standing. This is not accident—it's calling. The story isn't over. The best chapters may yet be written.

Personal Exercises

Exercise 1: Vision Casting

Set aside time to dream and pray. Ask God: "What do You have for my future?" Write whatever comes—goals, hopes, visions, callings. Don't censor yourself. This is

between you and God. Some will be practical, some will seem impossible. Capture them all.

Exercise 2: Your Story for Others

Write a brief version of your story—what you've experienced, how God has met you, what you're learning. This is not for publication; it's for preparation. There will come a day when someone needs to hear what you've walked through. Having your story ready makes you ready to share it.

Exercise 3: First Steps

Based on everything you've explored in this study, identify three concrete next steps for your healing journey. These might involve professional help, spiritual disciplines, community involvement, or lifestyle changes. Write them down. Share them with someone who will hold you accountable.

Discussion Questions

1. What has this study meant to you? What shifts have occurred in your thinking, feeling, or believing?
2. Where do you see hope in your future? What makes it hard to hope?
3. How might your experiences—even the painful ones—be used to help others?
4. What is God calling you to do next? How will you respond?
5. How can we continue to support one another beyond this study?

Scripture Memory

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

— 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for walking with me through this study. Thank You for meeting me in fear and discouragement, in guilt and isolation. As I move forward, go before me. Give me hope when despair whispers. Give me purpose when meaninglessness threatens. Make me a wounded healer—one who has received comfort and now extends it. I will be strong and courageous, not because I feel strong, but because You are with me wherever I go. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

APPENDIX A

Scripture Memory Cards

The following verses are provided for memorization. Consider writing each on an index card to carry with you, or saving them on your phone for easy access. Scripture memorized becomes a weapon in spiritual battle—immediately available when you need it most.

Foundation Verse

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

— Joshua 1:9

Module 1: Identity

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

— 2 Timothy 2:3-4

Module 2: Strength

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

— Isaiah 40:29-31

Module 3: Fear

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

— Psalm 23:4

Module 4: Discouragement

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

— Psalm 103:12-13

Module 5: Presence

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

— Romans 8:38-39

Module 6: Hope

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

— 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

APPENDIX B

Daily Battle Rhythm

In the military, "battle rhythm" refers to the daily routine that maintains readiness and effectiveness. The spiritual life benefits from similar discipline. This daily devotional structure is designed for veterans, using familiar language to establish sustainable spiritual habits.

0600 — REVEILLE: Morning Stand-To

Before checking your phone or starting your day, take five minutes for spiritual stand-to.

Acknowledge God's presence: "Lord, You are here."

Submit to His command: "I report for duty."

Request orders: "What do You have for me today?"

Read a short Scripture passage (a Psalm works well).

Pray for strength and guidance.

Throughout the Day — SITREP: Situation Reports

At natural transition points in your day (after meals, between tasks), pause for a 60-second SITREP with God:

How am I doing? (honest internal assessment)

Where is God in this moment?

What do I need right now?

A quick prayer: "Lord, be with me in this next hour."

When Triggered — IMMEDIATE ACTION DRILL

When anxiety, anger, or flashbacks hit, execute this immediate action drill:

STOP — Recognize what's happening. Name it: "I'm being triggered."

BREATHE — Three slow, deep breaths. Inhale: "The Lord is my shepherd."
Exhale: "I shall not want."

GROUND — Use 5-4-3-2-1 technique. Anchor to present reality.

PRAY — "Lord, be my refuge right now."

PROCEED — Take the next small step forward.

2100 — EVENING DEBRIEF: After Action Review

Before sleep, conduct a brief spiritual AAR:

What happened today? (honest review without judgment)

Where did I see God at work?

Where did I struggle or fail?

What can I learn for tomorrow?

Confess any sins. Receive forgiveness. Release the day to God.

Pray: "Lord, guard my sleep tonight. Be with me in the darkness."

Weekly — MAINTENANCE CYCLE

Just as equipment requires regular maintenance, so does the soul:

Sabbath Rest: One day per week for genuine rest and worship.

Community: Connect with fellow believers—church, small group, or veteran fellowship.

Review: Look back on the week. What themes emerged? What needs attention?

Plan: Look ahead. What challenges are coming? How will you prepare spiritually?

APPENDIX C

Resources for Crisis

If you or someone you know is in crisis, help is available. You are not alone. Reaching out is not weakness—it is the courage to take one more step when the path is darkest.

Immediate Crisis Resources

Veterans Crisis Line: 988 (then press 1)

Available 24/7. Staffed by trained responders, many of them veterans. You can also text 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net. Confidential support for veterans in crisis and their families.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988

Available 24/7 for anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

Free, 24/7 support via text message.

VA Mental Health Services

VA Mental Health Services are available to all enrolled veterans. Services include:

Individual and group therapy

Medication management

PTSD treatment programs

Substance abuse treatment

To connect: Call your local VA Medical Center or use the VA's mental health services locator at VA.gov/find-locations.

Veteran Service Organizations

Wounded Warrior Project: woundedwarriorproject.org

Team Red White & Blue: teamrwb.org

The Mission Continues: missioncontinues.org

Team Rubicon: teamrubiconusa.org

Give an Hour: giveanhour.org

Christian Veteran Ministries

Mighty Oaks Foundation: mightyoaksprograms.org

Point Man International Ministries: pmim.org

Reboot Recovery: rebootrecovery.com

Warriors Set Free: warriorssetfree.org

A Word of Encouragement

You may feel like you're beyond help, that you've tried everything, that no one understands. These are lies. Recovery is possible. Thousands of veterans have walked through the darkness and found light on the other side. The road is hard, but you don't have to walk it alone.

*"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."
— Psalm 34:18*

APPENDIX D

A Word to Group Leaders

Thank you for stepping into this role. Leading a veterans Bible study is sacred work. You will be creating space for warriors to process deep wounds in the light of God's Word. The following guidance will help you lead well.

Understanding Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care recognizes that participants may have experienced significant trauma that affects how they interact, learn, and heal. Key principles include:

Safety: Create an environment that feels physically and emotionally safe. Meet in consistent locations. Start and end on time. Establish clear ground rules.

Trustworthiness: Be consistent, follow through on commitments, maintain confidentiality, and avoid surprises.

Choice: Allow participants to control their level of engagement. Never force sharing. "Pass" is always an acceptable answer.

Collaboration: This is not a lecture—it's a shared journey. Honor participants' expertise about their own experience.

Empowerment: Focus on strengths and resilience, not just deficits. Help participants recognize their own progress.

Group Ground Rules

Establish these ground rules in the first session and revisit as needed:

Confidentiality: What's shared in the group stays in the group. The only exception is if someone expresses intent to harm themselves or others.

Respect: We may disagree, but we will treat each other with dignity. No interrupting, no advice-giving unless requested.

Voluntary sharing: No one is required to share. Silence is okay. "Pass" is always acceptable.

No fixing: We're here to support, not solve. Resist the urge to offer solutions unless specifically asked.

Phones away: Create distraction-free space. Phones on silent and out of sight.

Managing Difficult Moments

Emotional flooding: If a participant becomes overwhelmed, gently offer them the option to take a break. Have a designated quiet space available. Don't rush to "fix" their emotion; often presence is enough.

Conflict: If participants disagree sharply, acknowledge both perspectives and refocus on the topic. "We're seeing this differently, and that's okay. Let's return to the Scripture and see what God might be saying to each of us."

Crisis disclosure: If someone discloses suicidal thoughts or immediate danger, take it seriously. Connect them with crisis resources (Appendix C). Follow up privately after the session.

Silence: Long silences can feel uncomfortable but are often productive. Resist the urge to fill every pause. Deep processing often happens in silence.

Your Own Care

Leading this type of group can be emotionally demanding. Practice what you teach:

Don't lead alone. Have a co-leader or mentor you can debrief with.

Know your limits. If stories or themes are triggering your own material, seek support.

Practice self-care. What fills your tank? Make sure you're doing those things.

Pray. You cannot lead people into God's presence if you are not dwelling there yourself.

Session Structure Suggestion

Welcome and opening prayer (5 min)

Check-in: Brief sharing on how each person is doing (10 min)

Review of personal exercises from previous week (10 min)

Teaching content from module (20 min)

Discussion questions (30 min)

Scripture memory and closing prayer (5 min)

Assign at-home exercises for coming week

Thank you again for your service to these veterans. May God bless your leadership and bring healing to those He places in your group.

*Have I not commanded you?
Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid;
do not be discouraged,
for the Lord your God
will be with you
wherever you go.*

— Joshua 1:9

The mission continues.