

GOD Strong: **A Military Wife's Spiritual Survival Guide**

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Group Guide

Welcome...

Thank you for your interest in leading or taking part in a GOD Strong study group! This study, designed to be used with my book, *GOD Strong: A Military Wife's Spiritual Survival Guide*, has been written to help military wives go even deeper into what it means to truly be GOD Strong – taking the spiritual truths we've discussed in the book and figuring out how to apply those truths to our everyday lives.

Application can only go so far without accountability, and for this reason I think it's great to go through *GOD Strong* with a group of other military wives. So grab some ladies from your Wives of Faith or PWOC or MOPS groups, some friends from your FRG or spouse club, and make plans to study this book together.

This guide should be printed out for both the group leader *and* those participating in the group.

To group leaders: If you find yourself a little nervous about leading a group, let me assure you: you do not have to be a theologian to lead this study! You are a facilitator, leading other ladies in discussion, and everything you need is in this guide, including questions to ask and points to make. If you have a heart to see military wives grow in God's strength and not their own, then you can lead.

We have two objectives we want to see achieved through this study: 1) women spending time and heart with God's Holy Scripture and 2) those same women sharing their thoughts and experiences with one another as God's Word works through their minds, their lives, impacting them, their families and everyone around them.

I am praying for you as you lead your group, that God will give you confidence, wisdom and compassion to serve those who come. Expect God to use you and your group in a powerful way these next 10 weeks and be open to what He has planned.

To military wives: This Group Guide is to be used for each weekly session. If you would like to have additional study time between sessions, please visit godstrongbook.com and download the *GOD Strong Study Guide for Military Wives*.

May God bless your time together each week as together, you begin to learn that we don't have to be Armies of One when we are GOD Strong!

Sara Horn

Before We Start...

This group study is designed for new material to be presented at each weekly meeting for the group with reading and follow up study to be done by the individual at home afterwards.

Plan for a 90-minute session each week: a 15-minute warm-up, a 60-minute session, and a 15-minute "post stretch".

Things you will need to think about before your group can start: Your location, day and time, and childcare needs. If you decide to do it at your church, consider scheduling your group meetings when other church activities are already going on. This may make childcare options a little easier.

If you choose to hold the group at your home or at a friend's, consider asking everyone to contribute to hire a babysitter and keep the children either in another part of the house or at another friend's house so your time together isn't disturbed, or perhaps there is a church or military base childcare program where the children can be dropped off. Babies have a great way of pulling the attention of any woman who is a mother and we want women to have this time to focus specifically on God and what He is trying to teach them.

Each member of the group will need a copy of *God Strong* and a printout of this group guide (see my website, godstrongbook.com to download). I would also suggest a binder with extra paper for journaling and notes. As noted on the previous page, those ladies wishing for extra study during the week may access the *GOD Strong Guide for Military Wives* at godstrongbook.com.

Don't forget to prepare a sign-up sheet for the first meeting so women can write down their names, email and phone numbers for you to follow up with during the week.

It's okay if wives have already read the book or if they choose to read just a chapter at a time to go with the study or if they read ahead some weeks. This guide is meant to offer additional discussion and material that is not included in the book.

Small groups work best when you have 6 to 8 people. If you have more than this in your group, consider dividing into smaller groups when it's time to answer discussion questions; then bring everyone back and have each group appoint a spokesperson to share a summary of what they thought about each question.

Session 1 – Are You God Strong?

As military wives, our strength can only go so far. But God's strength has an endless supply. We can experience His strength when we accept that it has absolutely nothing to do with us but everything to do with God.

Becca Swanson wears the title of "World's Strongest Woman." She certainly has the stats to prove it! Becca can

- Squat lift 843 lbs
- Bench press 501 lbs
- Deadlift 650 pounds
- Weighs 240 pounds (think most of that is muscle?!)

As military wives, we have our own special stats. We can

- Keep house and home going for 12 to 18 months by ourselves
- Move our families across country, with or without our husbands by our sides
- Juggle kids, jobs, community service and church activities
- Be our husbands biggest cheerleaders and our children's best teachers

Physical strength eventually wears out. Bodies get tired and no matter how much muscle we have, eventually we will tire. Physically, emotionally, and even spiritually.

Warm-Up 15 minutes



1. Each military wife should introduce herself to the rest of the group. Share your name, military branch, whether you're going through a deployment or you've been through one in the past and in two minutes or less, how you and your husband met.
2. Share with the group one thing you enjoy about being a military wife and one thing you struggle with as a military wife.
3. All of us need outlets for dealing with stress and finding ways to relax. What's your favorite thing to do that's fun and something you enjoy doing?

Strength Training

60 minutes



The Old Testament mentions the Hebrew word for “strength” more than 264 times. We often think of strength in terms of physical ability but in most of the cases mentioned in the OT, spiritual strength is what is being referred to.

When we think about the challenges we face as military wives, many times we convince ourselves that we just need to be stronger. That we’re too weak emotionally and we just need to pull on our Big Girl Panties (the feminine equivalent of “picking up our boot straps”) and forge ahead.

Core Test

Kelly’s husband, a Marine reservist, recently deployed for his first deployment. She’s read as much information as she can find online and on military wife message boards, though she doesn’t know one other military spouse in person.

Lots of her civilian friends and family have offered their own thoughts about her situation. “You are so strong, Kelly,” they tell her. To which she automatically thinks... *do I really have a choice?*

Still, she knows strength is important. She knows she’ll need to be strong for her husband, that it’s important to keep everything running smoothly while he’s gone, though she worries for his safety and that he will continue to be the same sweet man she married when he returns. She knows she has to be strong for her two small children, keeping them connected with their daddy as much as possible. And then there’s the house and the cars and church... she’s starting to wonder how long her strength can hold out.

1. Kelly is focused on being strong during her husband’s deployment. What does being strong look like?
2. What are some of the challenges Kelly may encounter as she starts living through this deployment? What advice would you give her about being strong?

Habakkuk is one of the minor prophets we read from in the Old Testament. He writes only three short chapters. We don’t know a lot about Habakkuk except that he lived sometime around 612 BC. In the first two chapters of his book, he asks two main questions of God: how could God let evil spread so far throughout the land, and how could God use such godless people as the Babylonians to give judgment? The prophet

does not get all of his questions answered, but he does manage to bring together two very important concepts by the time he writes Chapter 3: faith and strength.

Read Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NIV) –

- ¹⁷ **Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,**
- ¹⁸ **yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.**
- ¹⁹ **The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to go on the heights.**

Even as he dealt with the fact that God didn't seem to be doing what Habakkuk wanted Him to, the prophet confidently continued to wait on God, living by faith and rejoicing in his Lord and Savior because God was his strength.

But sometimes as military wives, we convince ourselves that it isn't God's strength, but our own that we really need and it becomes easy for misperceptions to raise their sneaky heads.

Misperception #1: God doesn't give me more than I can handle so it's up to me to handle it!

When we buy into the belief that God won't give us more than we can deal with, we convince ourselves that everything *is* up to *us*.

3. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us:

- ¹³**The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.**

This verse is often the source for the phrase "God won't give me more than I can handle" but it's talking about temptation – nowhere in this scripture does it say God won't let us experience great stress or hard challenges.

What happens when our strength *doesn't* work? How do we feel? How do we act? How do we react?

4. Is it hard to change our thinking from being strong for ourselves to relying on God's strength? Why or why not?

Misperception #2: God helps those who help themselves so I should do as much of it as I can!

"God helps those who help themselves" is a quote from Benjamin Franklin. Though many of us have said this to ourselves and to others, if we look closely, we realize that the Bible actually teaches the opposite. God loves to help the helpless. He delights in being our strength.

Look what Romans 5:6-8 says (NLT):

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

The Message version phrases that last part as "while we were of no use whatever to him."

Let's read some more.

**¹⁻² I look up to the mountains;
does my strength come from mountains?
No, my strength comes from GOD,
who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.
- Psalm 121:1-2 (The Message)**

God does the most when we can do only the very least.

5. Do you agree with the above statement? Why or why not? What does God's strength look like?

6. Go back to Kelly's story. What are some ways she can make God the source of her strength?

7. Read Deuteronomy 31:6 from The Message.

⁶ "Be strong. Take courage. Don't be intimidated. Don't give them a second thought because GOD, your God, is striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. He won't let you down; he won't leave you."

What does the verse above mean to you? How can you apply it to your life right now?

8. In Deut. 31:6, "them" refers to the enemy nations of the Israelites. Name some of the enemies you face today. Is it fear of the unknown? Is it the unrealistic expectations you

place on yourself? What areas of your life feel like the weakest? Share only what you feel comfortable in sharing with the group.

9. What's hard about being GOD Strong?

10. What changes do you need to make in order to rely more on God's strength and less of your own?



Are you starting to see what being God Strong really means? It doesn't take much as we live the military spouse life to fall into the trap of believing we must take care of everyone and everything around us, but that isn't what God wants for us. He truly desires for us to lean on Him. Yes, we have responsibilities and yes, people who depend on us, but it is a different perspective God wants for us. Instead of asking "How am I going to do this?" let's ask "How is God going to help me do this?" or even better, "How is God going to do this?"

He doesn't mind our repeated prayers. He doesn't frown when we get something wrong. He wants to help us and carry us and most of all, He wants to love us.

Next week we will talk more about the difference between "ME Strength" and being GOD Strong, but for now, let's close this session by looking at one last verse, this one in the words of Jesus Himself.

28-30 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." – Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message).

Jesus wants so much to carry your burdens and hold your hurts. What would it look like to "recover your life"? What would a "real rest" look like? No, we're not talking about a vacation with palm trees and sand, we're talking about something more, something deeper and longer lasting. A relationship with God that leaves you feeling light in your spirit and in your heart. Peace. Joy. Love.

1. Name one thing you're going to do this week to make a step toward being more GOD Strong.

2. Deployments and PCS moves are two of the toughest seasons a military wife experiences. Take a moment to think about and compare a deployment that's GOD Strong to a deployment that's not. What differences do you see?

Like What You See So Far?

To download this entire study FREE, please go to godstrongbook.com where you will be asked to fill out a quick registration form. You will then be taken to the God Strong document.