

# Armor of Battle,

*Separation has always been one of the biggest challenges military families face. Nevertheless, families can find comfort and unity as they strive to grow closer to the Savior and to each other.*

**F**ive Latter-day Saints from military families share where they turned for comfort during the time they were separated.

## Turning to the Lord

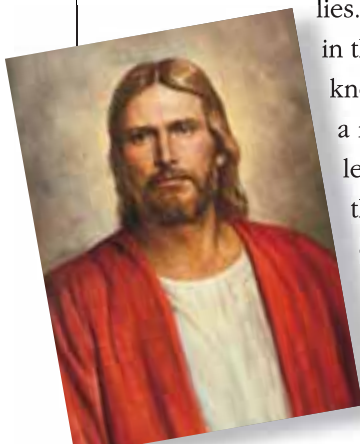
I grew up in a military family. My father served in the Vietnam War. At that time I was a young adult but old enough to know the effects that military life has on fami-

lies. I married a man who serves in the military, so I also know what it is like to be a military wife. I have learned that though the names and places of the wars may change, the impact on the human heart is the same.

I have great compassion for all who are

facing the challenges of maintaining a marriage and family while a spouse is on military deployment. As a Latter-day Saint, I have learned that I must first seek to learn of Jesus Christ before peace comes. He is the source not only of my spiritual well-being but also of my mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

As I have learned more about the Atonement, I see that it not only includes the redemption of our sins but that it is the means by which our Savior



THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY DEL PARSON

# Armor of God



helps us through our trials and heals us. Alma taught that Christ “will take upon him [our] infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12).

There are still times when my challenges overwhelm me, but knowing gospel truths gives my life and my experiences a spiritual significance and they become a source of strength. I strive to keep my focus on remembering the One who can truly help. The Lord has provided a rich array of spiritual tools to help in times of adversity. He has blessed me with the things I have needed and wiped away my tears.

*Brenda McDonald, Germany*

## **Turning to the Scriptures**

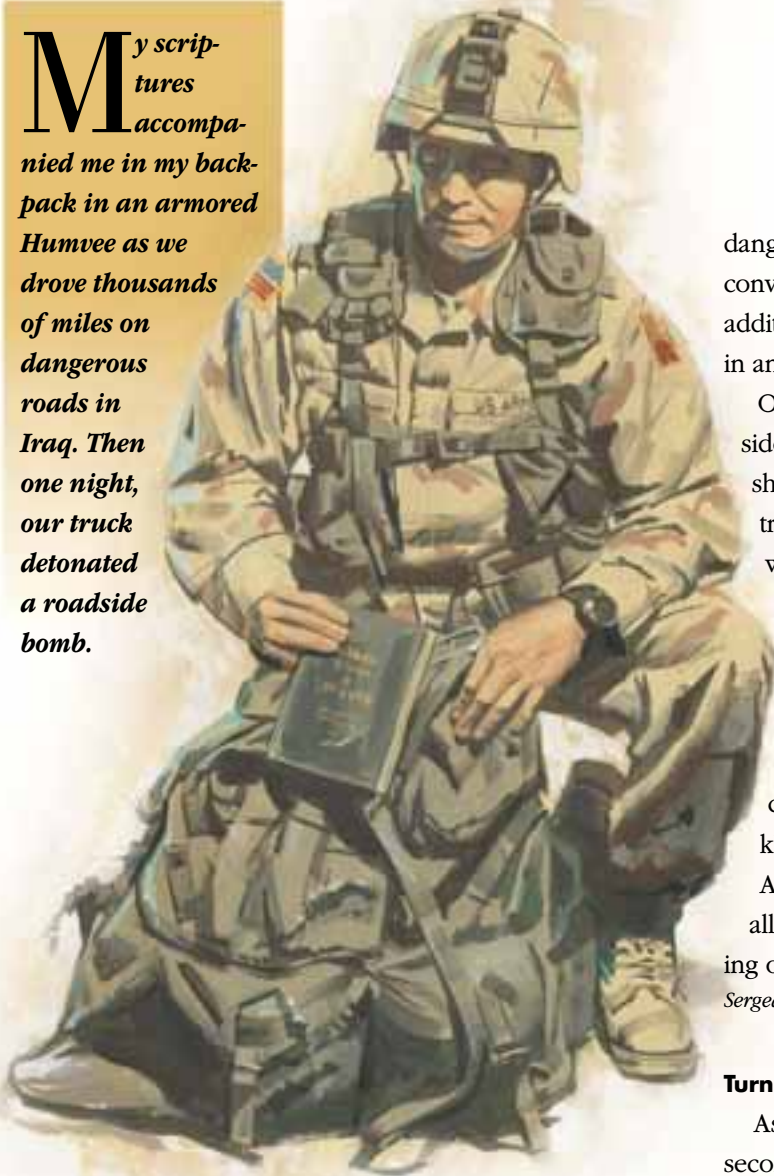
When I joined the military, I packed my inexpensive scriptures. They had come into my life near the end of my mission when my expensive leather scriptures were stolen. These scriptures have been with me through a lot of experiences.

They accompanied me to the deserts of Utah, where I was teaching at-risk youth. During that time my scriptures acquired a campfire

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL MANN



**M**y scriptures  
tured  
accompanied me in my backpack in an armored Humvee as we drove thousands of miles on dangerous roads in Iraq. Then one night, our truck detonated a roadside bomb.



smell as I spent late-night hours reading next to a dwindling pile of coals.

As I was beginning military training, my scriptures were with me. On days when our drill sergeants would allow us extra “cleaning time,” I would sneak off to my bed to read my scriptures. Over time they became the means of inviting inquiry from friends, teaching investigators the gospel, and leading a few of my fellow soldiers into the waters of baptism. My scriptures provided comfort and enlightenment during a stressful time.

After my marriage, these same scriptures spent many nights with us as we read from their pages. It wasn’t long before my scriptures were again forced into an over-packed army duffel bag destined for the sands of Iraq. They would accompany me in a backpack in the rear of an armored Humvee as I drove thousands of miles on very

dangerous roads in the world helping provide security for convoys. My scriptures accumulated new markings and additional scribbles; they continued to teach and edify me in an otherwise hostile environment.

On a night like any other, the detonation of a roadside bomb found us and we rocked back and forth as shrapnel and debris pierced through the armor of our truck. We were towed to safety. After the incident I went through the wreckage trying to recover my gear.

It seemed like everything had been destroyed in the explosion. Then I found what looked like my backpack containing the shattered remnants of my sleeping bag and personal hygiene kit. I also found my scriptures and dusted off the dirt and debris. The cover had only a small tear and the pages were wrinkled a little bit, but they were in amazingly good shape. As I flipped through the familiar pages, I remembered all that we had been through together and a deep feeling of gratitude filled my heart.

*Sergeant William M. Deveraux, Utah*

### **Turning to Family**

As my husband, Brian, was preparing to leave for his second deployment to Iraq, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do. Many of my friends were going home to stay with their families for moral and emotional support. A few nights before my husband was set to leave with his unit, I sat quietly on our porch swing and prayed. As I did so, I felt at peace with the idea that I should go stay with my parents and brother in Woodinville, Washington.

While at home I rediscovered a true blessing—family. My dad taught me so much about life and shared his passion for a variety of hobbies. My mom encouraged me daily to keep my head up and make it until the day Brian would come home. My brother, whom I had taken for granted growing up, was a ray of sunshine. On my “Woe is me, I miss my husband” days, he would call and say, “Stop moping and meet me for a movie.”

When my parents sold their house that summer, we

stayed with my grandparents in Idaho. I am so thankful for that opportunity to get to know my grandparents better. I learned home repair skills from Grandpa and improved my quilting and cooking with Grandma. I learned the story of how my grandparents met and fell in love. All the while, I rekindled relationships with my cousins, aunts, and uncles from both sides of my family.

I am so thankful that I had been taught to turn to my Heavenly Father in times of need, especially that night my prayers were answered while sitting on our porch swing.

Now I can honestly say that, along with my husband, my family are among my best friends.

*Tania Marble, Kentucky*

### **Turning to Service**

Every summer the same annual orders arrived in the mail for my husband to go to Fort Lewis, Washington, and serve as ROTC advance camp staff chaplain. Every summer I had resented the orders and the 3,000 ROTC cadets who

filled my husband's time. However, this year our youngest child was serving a mission in Italy, so I decided to accompany my husband to Fort Lewis. It turned out to be a summer worth waiting for. Why? Because I made up my mind to get involved with others.

I started by volunteering at the army thrift shop. Soon I was attending the Seattle Washington Temple weekly. Before long, I had developed friendships among the military wives.

The turning point in my attitude, however, came on one extraordinary evening when my husband invited me to go with him out into the field and say a few words to the cadets at an all-faith service. Seven evenings a week, chaplain teams drove to combat training sites to ensure each cadet an opportunity to worship. The cadets were under extreme pressure, and many felt the need for the

***A*** *s I began speaking, a petite female cadet appeared distressed. After the meeting she put her arms around me, and we wept together. I realized how much cadets needed my husband as a chaplain.*





## HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Share some of the stories from the article with your family. Discuss the fact that even though the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches peace, there are times when righteous individuals need to defend their homes and families. Consider using examples from the scriptures such as David and Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17) or Moroni and the title of liberty (see Alma 46:11–13).
2. As a family discuss how we can always find peace in the Savior.

### Turning to One Another

Our children were young when I left on my first hardship tour of duty. As a family we talked extensively about Korea, where I was going.

At that time, letters were the only means of communication between service personnel and their families. Modern technology

has greatly improved the ability of soldiers to communicate with their families through e-mails, teleconferencing, phone calls, the Internet, and a more efficient postal system for letters and packages. Most family members usually hear from a deployed family member once a week, sometimes more.

For most military families, separation is a way of life, in times of peace as well as in times of war. Separation has always been one of the biggest challenges. For most, it is a struggle to keep significant relationships alive and well while separated.

But Latter-day Saints with an understanding of eternal families can grow closer to God. As their relationship with Him grows stronger, so does their relationship with each other. During my time away, I reassessed my priorities and my roles so that I could be a better husband and father when my family was together again. When I returned, I think the relationship between my wife and me was stronger than when I left.

Belief in the eternal nature of families is a significant factor in maintaining a positive family attitude. Although separations are never easy, positive experiences can take place in the lives of those affected as they strive to grow closer to the Savior and to one another. ■

*Colonel Ronald Hill, U.S. Army Chaplain, Georgia*

**NOTE:** Military families can find support at [LDS.org/Serving](http://LDS.org/Serving) in the Church/Military Relations/Resources for Military Members. Go to “Learn More . . .” and click on “Supporting Military Families.” From this screen, follow each of the six topics under “Learn More . . .” for information.

Find additional support on the DVD *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled: A Message of Peace for Latter-day Saints in Military Service* (item no. 54616) available at Church distribution centers.

Lord, some for the first time. These services meant so much to the cadets that even after a 24-hour maneuver they were willing to meet in heavy rain amid the tall, wet grass and mud.

Fortunately, that night we were meeting in a forest clearing under a full moon.

Suddenly, it was my turn. My eyes adjusted enough in the moonlight to see the young faces of the cadets as they stood or sat reverently dressed in green camouflage among the grass and ferns. One petite female cadet appeared distressed as though wanting to cry out, “What am I doing here?”

With a prayer I turned the flashlight onto my notes and spoke of how much these chaplains and interfaith leaders loved them. “With the love of Christ you are their common cause,” I said. “They’d let you down if they didn’t look beyond their religious differences to see your needs. Perhaps their camaraderie is rare, but you are precious to them and that is what unites them.”

As I sat down, I began to feel like a member of my husband’s team, the Lord’s team. Before the cadets divided into religious affiliation groups, the petite cadet came to me, put her arms around me, and we wept together. Other cadets also came to share their tears.

I knew this brief experience would help me remember how much these cadets needed my husband as a chaplain. I realized that whether my husband and I were together or not, we were a team. We were both needed and could serve others.

As our ministry team drove back through the forest that night, I felt the love of Christ more than I had ever felt it before. The resentment I once harbored was gone. As my husband and I drove the last part of the trip home alone, I realized something more—the love of Christ surpasses everything.

*Marilyn Nash Hull, Utah*