

Benefit from Best Practices

A church's approach in ministry to the military can vary widely. Some churches want a specified "program model" complete with designated classes, agreed upon procedures and assigned pastoral staff. Others prefer an "assimilation model" and are intentional about getting the military members and families "plugged-in" and using their spiritual gifts in service to the church body. And there are variations—everything in between! Just realize that the military member/family is there at your church for a reason . . . but only for a season! What are you going to do to minister to them in this special, privileged season when they are part of your fellowship? Here are a few practical ideas used by leading churches.

Strength Area	Best Practices
Prayer	If your church has a prayer meeting, a prayer team, or a prayer list, make sure your military members and families are on it. They need your prayers!
Hospitality	Practice hospitality. Military members and families are delighted to be included in meal times at members' homes—after church or during the week.
Small Group	Consider offering a small group Bible study or "life group" for your military members, both as in-reach to provide fellowship with a common bond and as an outreach to bring in other military members searching for spiritual growth.
Ask Good Questions	A church needs to approach a military member or family and ask good questions: "How can we serve you during your time here?" "What can we do to get you to the next level of spiritual training before sending you to your next assignment?" "How can we pray for you?"
Marriage Enrichment	Form a Marriage Enrichment Team in your church to serve your married couples with small group and seminar training. Military couples (singles, too) particularly need training in their relationships because of the unique challenges they encounter. FamilyLife and Military Ministry offer three HomeBuilders' Bible studies designated for military, but remember that "anything that helps a marriage will help a military marriage." Any small group couples' Bible study, or marriage conferences like "Weekend to Remember," "Love and Respect," "Five Love Languages," and "Art of Marriage" provide invaluable training.
Special Days	Special emphases (or banquets) on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and 4th of July are always appropriate times to honor our military. Suggest that the military wear their uniforms on one of these days—even the veterans!
"Commissioning"	Before military members and families PCS, invite them to the front of the church during or at the close of worship for a special time of prayer. This can be considered a "commissioning" as you send them off to minister/serve at their new duty station.
Staff Training	Provide periodic education to your pastoral staff to ensure they remain keenly aware and appreciative of the unique challenges of military life. Hopefully they will be supportive, encouraging, and open to new ideas for helping.
Childcare	Anytime a study is formed or group is organized with military members and families include a plan for childcare.

Support Groups & Bible Studies	Consider offering a support group/Bible study group for those with combat trauma, or those who have a loved one with combat trauma. The books <i>The Combat Trauma Healing Manual</i> and <i>When War Comes Home</i> are excellent resources for these groups. A <i>Bridges to Healing</i> seminar might pave the way for this group to begin in your church.
Establish a Reputation	Sign on to the Military Missions Network (MMN) as a “military friendly” or a “military focused” church. Acquaint your Missions Team with MMN’s “The 4 th Missionary Journey” and the new web portal MilitaryBeliever.com
Relocation Services	<u>Before</u> they PCS, make sure that your military member and families are pointed to a like-minded church from your denomination or the Military Missions Network at their new duty station. This helps them to take steps to get connected immediately upon arrival. See www.militarymissionsnetwork.com .
People of Calling	Be aware that the calling of First Responders is very similar to the military calling. Your church may desire to incorporate First Responders into ministry to military. There is also a FamilyLife HomeBuilders’ written specifically for the First Responder marriage.

Deployment Related Actions for a Church

Action	Before	During	After
Schedule a time for the military member and spouses to spend with the pastoral staff, Sunday school teacher, or deacons. This is a time to set up accountability, to encourage, and to make sure that the needs of the family at home are discussed and assigned to appropriate church members. Make sure that the family members have church phone numbers so that they know who to call when a need arises.	X		
Call the service member and family up to the front of the church for a special time of prayer.	X		
Assign someone to email daily or weekly prayers, devotions and/or sermons to the deployed service members as a group. (We use Oswald Chambers’ daily prayers.)		X	
Remember the Holidays! The Sunday School classes can send each deployed member care packages and holiday greeting cards. Don’t forget to honor the family at home with special giftings.		X	
Support those at home. Consider offering a support group for the wives/husbands of those deployed. It might be a good opportunity to do a Bible study like <i>Loving Your Military Man</i> .		X	
If the military member agrees, make their addresses available to the church body either in the bulletin or on the A-V screen for further communication and as a prayer reminder.		X	
Recognize the service member and family for their sacrificial service after the deployment. You may want to give them an opportunity to speak, to thank the church for support, and/or to give their testimony of how God worked in their lives during their time of deployment.			X