

WE ★ ARE

**STRONGER**

---

**GOING DEEPER**

**LEADER'S**

**GUIDE**

Carla McDougal & Robin Murray

**We Are Stronger** is a film produced by Reflective Life Ministries, a 501(c)3 corporation.

6606 FM 1488 Ste. 148-185  
Magnolia, TX 77354  
info@reflectivelifeministries.org

**We Are Stronger – Going Deeper Leader’s Guide** © June, 2018 by Carla McDougal. All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or any other – except for brief quotations in printed reviews or for educational purposes, without prior written permission of the authors.

**Disclaimer:**

This booklet is not a substitute for appropriate medical or psychological care for those experiencing significant emotional pain or whose ability to function at home, school or work is impaired. Chronic or extreme stress may cause a wide assortment of physical and psychological problems. Some may require evaluation and treatment by medical or mental health professionals. When in doubt, seek advice from a professional.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Other versions of The Bible used are:

**NAS:** New American Standard Bible. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

**NLT:** Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

**NKJV:** New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## *We Are Stronger* ***Going Deeper Leader's Guide***

Introduction and Background	Page 1
Facilitators—	Page 2
Pray	Page 4
Connect	Page 5
Encourage	Page 6
Small Group Schedule	Page 8
Week 1: Chapters 1-3	Page 12
Week 2: Chapters 4-6	Page 20
Week 3: Chapters 7-9	Page 26
Week 4: Chapters 10-12	Page 32
Week 5: Chapters 13-14	Page 38
Week 6: Review and Next Step	Page 44

To order *Going Deeper Workbooks* go to  
[www.strongermovie.com/store](http://www.strongermovie.com/store).

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The *Going Deeper Workbook* is designed to accompany the faith-based movie *We Are Stronger*. For best results, offer a viewing of the movie to watch as a group. Then encourage the moviegoers to join the six-week *Going Deeper* small group.

Chris and Rahnella Adsit – authors of this workbook – have had many years of experience in ministering to those recovering from trauma and PTSD. Robin Murray used the Adsit's books, *The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* and *When War Comes Home*, as resource guides for the movie *We Are Stronger*.

The *Going Deeper Workbook* is written as a follow-up to understand the concepts covered in the film. Carla McDougal, Founder/CEO of Reflective Media Productions and Executive Producer of the movie *We Are Stronger*, added the *Reflection Questions* to the workbook. Each chapter discusses subjects of trauma, offers discussion questions, and focuses on the Biblical path to healing. While it is written with examples from military combat, trauma and a need for healing is universal to all humans. The concepts presented in the *Going Deeper Workbook* can be applied to trauma recovery in general. The *Going Deeper Leader's Guide* was written by Carla McDougal and Robin Murray, screenwriter/director of *We Are Stronger*.

If participants don't have a local group that they are involved in please visit the Stronger Alliance at [www.strongeralliance.com](http://www.strongeralliance.com) to find an online support group.

To purchase more *Going Deeper Workbooks* please visit [www.strongermovie.com/store](http://www.strongermovie.com/store).

# FACILITATORS

## PRAY. CONNECT. ENCOURAGE.

Thank you for responding to God's call to facilitate the *Going Deeper* 6-week study. You may be leading a group for a church study, or perhaps after watching the *We Are Stronger* movie, you and some friends decided to go through the workbook together. Regardless of the setting, God called you to facilitate this group. He has so many exciting as well as challenging adventures ahead for you.

Below are the steps for leading the *Going Deeper* study...

### **Step 1 – Watch the movie - *We Are Stronger***

Viewing the movie is a must for small group participants. If possible, offer a movie night with popcorn and sodas. Watching the movie together allows the group to start bonding. If a movie night is not possible, encourage the participants to purchase the DVD or watch the movie via steaming through [www.strongermovie.com/store](http://www.strongermovie.com/store).

### **Step 2 – *Going Deeper* Small Groups**

Determine a start date for the group. If possible, find a church that has childcare and would allow your group to use their facilities. We recommend an hour and a half or two hours for the group session. One main downfall to small groups is not staying within the time schedule.

### **Step 3 – Next Step to Hope and Healing**

The *Going Deeper Workbook* and the small group serve as a bridge between the movie and healing. The goal of the *Going Deeper Workbook* is to move the participants to full healing through Jesus. After the 6-weeks, the group is encouraged to seek another study

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

or program to work through together. This will be discussed in detail in *Week 6: Review and Next Step*.

The *Going Deeper Leader's Guide* is designed to assist you in leading your group and is by no means an exhaustive manual. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is your counselor, helper, and teacher, and He will direct you each week. God knows each person in your group... the needs, spiritual condition, Bible knowledge, life circumstances, physical state, financial situation and their history. You are there to encourage and connect the people in the group. It's humbling to realize God chooses to use us, even with our flaws and sin natures, to participate in eternity while here on earth.

You might be thinking, "How can I lead a group? I am not worthy. I don't know where to begin. I'm not theologically educated. I'm too young to lead others." We must realize our enemy, Satan, continuously shoots fiery darts of fear and doubt in our direction. Be prepared to recognize the voice of uncertainty.

You may have served as a Bible study facilitator before, or it may be your first time to lead a group. Some members of your group might have more Bible knowledge than you or more leadership experience, but that is not relevant. God chose you to be the facilitator of this study.

Keep in mind you are the facilitator, not the teacher or lecturer. Your role is to create interaction in the group through prayer, discussion, tenderness, love, grace, listening, realness, encouragement, and joy. You have the blessing to lead by example.

Begin by praying before you know who is in your group. Then one-by-one, as people join the study, you will know God placed each one in the group for a reason. What a blessing to watch God puzzle people together for His purposes.

During the small group time, encourage participants to interact and

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

share in the discussion. However, if they are more comfortable just listening, give them the freedom to be silent in the group. Forward progress toward healing is the goal.

## PRAY

Prayer is the key to facilitating successfully. By God's design, prayer is an active way of communicating with Him. Prayer involves talking, listening, and acting. Prayer opens the door for God to mold and shape us for His purposes. As God's children, He gives us the privilege to participate in eternity here on Earth through prayer.

For the facilitator, we can't emphasize enough the importance of praying for and over your group... all week long. In addition to you praying, ask God to rise up a prayer team over your group. Let Him lead you to those who have a passion to pray for the small group. Remember, confidentiality is crucial in support groups. Be sensitive to what you share as prayer requests.

Let prayer be a significant part of the small group time. Be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. There might be times during the session that you sense a need to pray right then. Don't hesitate to take a moment to pray for a person or situation. Remember the Holy Spirit is your Guide... "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."—John 16:13-14

One of the biggest complaints about leading a small group is not having enough prayer time. In many cases, time slips away, and there is not enough time to pray together. One suggestion is to "pray your prayer requests" to God instead of discussing them in the group. Sometimes in small groups, they discuss the prayer requests

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

for forty-five minutes and then only have five minutes to pray about them. The enemy uses this tactic to distract us from communicating with God about the issues. For example, let's say you're standing in the grocery store line and share with the person in front of you about a product you wish the store carried. He can listen, but can't help you. By the time you get to the checkout counter, you forget to mention the request to the grocery clerk. As a result, your issue is still not resolved. So, take the group's requests straight to the Lord, the one who is the problem solver.

## CONNECT

People interact with each other better when they are part of a small group that is real and authentic. Realness begins with you as the leader... when you take off your mask, others feel the freedom to follow. So, the first time your group meets, you begin by telling your story. Condense your testimony to about five minutes or less. Your authenticity sets the tone for the group. As a result, the members feel the freedom to tell their stories.

As the facilitator, you are not expected to do all the talking. We can't stress this enough. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and to speak through you to the group. In the Bible, 1 Peter 4:11 says, "If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God..." Best practice is to read the questions and ask for answers. Don't automatically answer the questions yourself to fill the silence.

Sometimes, in the silence, God is doing His greatest work.

Let the group members have time to think and then share. Encourage answers from more than one person as a way to generate more interaction in the group. What seems like an obvious answer for one person may have another person going in an entirely different direction. The beauty of small groups is learning and growing together.

**Warning:** Occasionally there is one person in a group who answers all the questions and dominates the conversation. One answer to this dilemma is to talk with the person one-on-one. Express your appreciation for him/her, but share your desire to pull the others into the conversation. Then ask him/her to help draw others to take part in the discussion. For example, say something like this, “I need your help in the group time. As I ask a question, will you please pray for the others to have the confidence to share their answers?” Hopefully, this will create balance in the group conversations.

## ENCOURAGE

Encourage, encourage, encourage! Paul’s ministry is the perfect example of spurring others forward. For instance, in his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul says, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” —Philippians 1:3-6 (NKJV). Paul continually spurred others forward in their daily walk with Jesus. We are called to be leaders who encourage.

In His Word, God gives us everything we need to be an effective Christian leader. Below are some statements that might help motivate your group to not only share but also model what it is to be an encourager to others...

- I am so thankful you are here today!
- Thank you for your insight into the question.
- Wow, I never thought about it like that! God showed you a new way to look at this verse.

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

- Thank you for sharing your heartfelt testimony with us. I know it was difficult, but the Lord gave you the strength to share your heart with all of us.
- What a tender way to view your situation.

After a couple of weeks, it will be easy to identify the ones who are willing and often eager to give their answers. If no one says anything after a short period of silence, ask someone to answer. Sometimes, all it takes is eye contact with one person to start a conversation. If the same people seem to do all the talking, ask the Lord to show you someone else to call on. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting. Some people who are shy, or who lack confidence or assurance, don't want to be called on to answer a question. Trust the Lord to direct you through each session.

BEWARE of rabbit trails! Keeping the group focused on the week's study will be a challenge and goal for you. Pray for the Lord to help you keep the group centered on the material for the week. Remember, the enemy aims to distract us from God's purposes.

Ask the Lord to help the group laugh together. Laughter is medicine from the Lord that breaks down not only external walls but also internal barriers. By no means are we suggesting laughing at each other, but laugh with each other. Laughter is not to bring a lighter side to the lesson, but to bring tenderness to the hearts of the group. Keep in mind that the Lord knows your group inside and out. Be receptive to His direction and ideas as you lead.

Hopefully the movie, the questions, the focus character in the movie, the personal stories, and scriptures will springboard discussions about real-life situations. Don't immediately try to solve anyone's problems, but encourage a conversation where the group is willing to open up and identify real-life examples.

## SMALL GROUP SCHEDULE

First and foremost, ask the Lord to direct you in how to lead the group. One thing that is a must is for all participants to watch the *We Are Stronger* movie. The Leader's Guide offers suggestions on how to lead the small group. Each week your group focuses on a character from the movie and watches a one of the *We Are Stronger* scenes. You can access these scenes on the *We Are Stronger* website using this Leader's Guide passcode...

[www.strongermovie.com/leaders](http://www.strongermovie.com/leaders)      Passcode: leaderpass

### WE SUGGEST TWO OPTIONS FOR THE SMALL GROUP SCHEDULE

#### OPTION A: 7-Week Small Group Schedule (includes a Movie Night)

WEEK 1: Before starting the 6-week *Going Deeper Workbook* offer a showing of the movie. Make this a fun night with popcorn and soft drinks. Allow thirty minutes before the movie starts as an introduction time to the small group. If some of the small group participants are not able to attend the Movie Night please ask them to go online and digitally watch the movie at [www.strongermovie.com/store](http://www.strongermovie.com/store).

WEEKS 2-7: After the Movie Night, the group meets for the next six weeks and goes through the *Going Deeper Workbook* together. Determine the amount of time needed for the class. Many times the time is dependent upon childcare.

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

**OPTION B: 6-Week Small Group Schedule**

PRIOR TO WEEK 1: Ask everyone to watch *We Are Stronger* **before** the small group begins. Possibly, your church or organization previously offered a screening of the movie for the community and many of the participants already watched the movie. If they haven't viewed the movie, they can either borrow the DVD or digitally purchase it through the website...

[www.strongermovie.com/store](http://www.strongermovie.com/store)

WEEKS 1-6: Each week the group meets together and works through the chapters of the *Going Deeper Workbook*. Set a time schedule for your small group and work diligently to stay within that time frame. Follow the weekly guidelines suggested in this Leader's Guide as you prepare and facilitate the small group.

WE ARE STRONGER  
**GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE**



# WEEK 1

---

## GOING DEEPER WORKBOOK CHAPTERS 1-3

**We Are Stronger Focus Character: Victor Raphael “Vic”**

**Scene Selection Week 1: Vic’s Speech**

As people walk in the door, have a signup sheet available to collect names, email addresses, and phone numbers.

Welcome everyone to the *Going Deeper Small Group* 6-week study.

**Begin with prayer.**

Direct everyone to the Disclaimer at the beginning of the *Going Deeper Workbook*. Read it aloud.

Allow time for participants to introduce themselves to the group. Ask them to share their name, and how they heard about this *Going Deeper Group*. (Sometimes it helps if the facilitator begins by sharing first.)

**Read to the Group**

This small group must be a safe place to be honest, authentic, and real. What is said here stays here. I will be praying for God to keep us unified so that He can do a mighty work in each of our lives. Each week during the session time, we will work through the chapters together and focus on one main character from the movie *We Are Stronger*. The week following the session, each participant is encouraged to complete the *Reflection Questions*. One very

important step that must not be missed is for each participant to watch the movie.

## CHAPTER 1 WHAT IS NORMAL?

**Read Chapter 1 aloud.**

### ● **Ask The Group**

Can you identify with Vic and Michelle's conversation?  
If so, in what way?

### ● **Ask The Group**

What are some of the differences between PTS (Post-traumatic Stress) and PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder)?

### ● **Read to the Group**

The example below shows the difference between PTS and PTSD.

You hit your head when falling down the stairs causing you to become unconscious and end up in the emergency room at the hospital.

PTS – After recovering, you experience a mild level of anxiety when walking down the stairs.

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

PTSD – After recovering, you experience such a high level of anxiety that you can't walk down the stairs..

● **Ask The Group**

From the movie, give examples of how Vic lives with PTSD.

What components of PTSD are keeping him from moving forward?

**Look at page 4-5**

● **Ask The Group**

Which of these assets did you see used in the film?

Personally, which do you think are most effective?

**CHAPTER 2**  
**WHAT IS PTSD?**

**Read Chapter 2 - pages 6-7**

● **Ask The Group**

How helpful is it to understand how the brain functions during trauma? Explain your thoughts.

## ● Ask The Group

Once the “threat has passed, what needs to happen to move on from trauma to healing? (Top of page 8)

What happens if this processing does not occur?

### **PTSD Symptoms – Personal Time - Page 9-11**

Over the next few minutes, ask participants to read pages 9-11 and check the boxes that apply to them or their loved one.

**VERY IMPORTANT: Read through the Trauma Spectrum on page 12 together and discuss the chart. Ask the group to mark in their book where they are on the chart.**

## **CHAPTER 3 FOUR OTHER GATES**

The central part of Chapter 3 discusses different “gates” that can take a person into trauma. Briefly mention the other gates – TBI, Cumulative Stress, Derivative Stress, and Moral Injury.

Direct the group to read pages 13-17 at home.

## ● Read to the Group

**Read aloud The Way Out** (the bottom of page 17-18)

## ● Ask The Group

In the movie, why do you think Vic initially resisted the help offered to him?

## ● Read To The Group

Trauma changes lives. Along with PTSD, Vic was suddenly retired and injured. He was spending more time with Michelle than ever but as a dependent patient. Tommy called it the “Now What?” phase.

## ● Ask The Group

Have you experienced a time of trying to find a new normal or a new “identity?” Would anyone like to share your experience with the group?

What, if anything, have you done in the past to work toward emotional healing?

In the past, what obstacles have kept you from progressing in your healing journey?

## ● Pray for the Group

Pray for unity and a place of safety among the group.

## ● Ask The Group

At the end of Chapter 1, Ask them to complete this section before the next small group session.

WE ARE STRONGER  
**GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE**

\*Direct participants to look at page 21, *The Spiritual Stepping Stones Timeline* section. Briefly explain and then ask them to turn to page 74 in the back of the workbook. At the end of the six-weeks, this timeline will represent markers of life experiences, God moments, etc.

WE ARE STRONGER  
**GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE**



# WEEK 2

---

## GOING DEEPER WORKBOOK CHAPTERS 4-6

***We Are Stronger* Focus Character: Tommy Ortello**

**Scene Selection Week 2: Tommy's Story**

**Pray as a group.**

**Review *Week 1 – Reflection Time*.** Ask if anyone would like to share something they learned or God taught them in Reflection Time in Week 1?

### ● **Read To The Group**

Today our Focus Character is Tommy Ortello. Actor and military veteran, Don Ortolano played Tommy in the movie. When he shares his story in Dr. Dan's small group, this is Don's real-life testimony with a few changes to fit the timeline of the movie. Please grasp and understand this was Don's first time he'd ever shared his story with a group of people. Authentic, raw, and all filmed in one take. Because of Don's willingness to share his testimony, God has used his story to impact hundreds if not thousands of lives in powerful ways. Tommy's scene is the winner of multiple awards, like the "Best Biblical Message" from Christian Media Content17 Conference.

## CHAPTER 4 WHERE WAS GOD?

Read all of Chapter 4 together.

### ● Discuss the following

In the movie, Tommy said he realized that God didn't abandon him, but wept with him during the trauma. He was comforted and encouraged by this realization. Remember Tommy's heartfelt words, "Jesus was there all the time. He was with me under the stairs. He was with me all along. This wasn't His plan."

At the end of Tommy sharing his story with the support group, He says, "God loved us enough to give us free will. And free will is tough, man." God gives all people free will to accept or reject Him.

Think of a time in your life when you experienced trauma. Do you remember thinking these thoughts—

"Why did God let this happen to me?"

According to what we've read in Chapter 4 and what God says in His Word, why does God allow us the freedom to choose – free will?

Discuss the last sentence on page 25 and the first paragraph at the top of page 26.

Have you ever asked this question – Where was God during my trauma? Better yet, have you ever asked God that question?

In the movie, Aunt Hazel recounts a time when she was at her lowest point, and she prayed asking Jesus why the fire happened to her and her family. She felt He reminded her, "I have scars, too. It's by My stripes you are healed." (1 Peter 2:24) She realized Jesus' scars were the bridge between humanity and God.

## ● Ask The Group

Have you ever seen your own physical or emotional scarring become a bridge? If so, please share your experience with the group.

We will discuss Aunt Hazel more in Week 4 when we talk about losses, but what are your initial thoughts on Aunt Hazel's statement and 1 Peter 2:24?

## CHAPTER 5 ELEMENTS OF A HEALING ENVIRONMENT

Read all of Chapter 5 aloud.

## ● Ask The Group

As you read these nine elements for healing, are there some that seem more difficult for you than others. Why?

## CHAPTER 6

### HEALING ELEMENT 1: CONNECTING WITH GOD

Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6.

**Read Chapter 6 up to #3.**

#### ● Ask The Group

How do we connect with God?

What kind of relationship does God desire to have with us?

What stands in the way of our relationship with Him?

**Continue reading to the end of Chapter 6, page 32.**

In *We Are Stronger*, before visiting Vic the second time, Carson and Mia spent a week at Bible Camp. They learned how to share about connecting with God through Jesus. Carson is excited about the opportunity to practice and share with Vic what he learned. When Carson introduces his third point, he says, "And, this is the best part!" Then he quotes Romans 5:8, "Christ demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

#### ● Ask The Group

God used children to speak truth and love into Vic's life. Why is this important to Vic's healing process?

What did God do to bridge the gap to connect sinful man to Holy God?

What is our part in connecting to Him?

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

**Closing Prayer.** Ask God to help you be sensitive to each member of the group.

\*At the end of the discussion, let the group know that you are available to talk after the group session. Make sure they have your contact information if they would like to contact you during the week.

\*Direct them to look at the *Reflection Questions* and work on that during the week.

\*Extra – Possibly set up a Facebook group for your *Going Deeper Group*. Why? This offers a great way for the group to connect during the week and pray for each other.



# WEEK 3

---

## GOING DEEPER WORKBOOK CHAPTERS 7-9

***We Are Stronger* Focus Character: Michelle Raphael**

**Scene Selection Week 3: Discussion in the Kitchen with Aunt Hazel**

### **Review Reflection Questions from Week 2.**

We continue the *Elements of a Healing Environment* this week. Reread the list on page 27 of the workbook. This week we are studying *Healing Elements* 2-4 (The Bible, Prayer, and Community-Telling Your Story). Our focus character is Michelle. Think about moments in the movie where these elements were essential to Michelle beginning the healing process.

## CHAPTER 7 HEALING ELEMENT 2: THE BIBLE

**Read Chapter 7 as a group.**

### ● **Ask The Group**

What is the best way to know the teachings of God so we can “hold to” them daily?

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

What are some of the ways we can feed on God's word?

**Read Galatians 6:10-18.**

The Bible (God's Word) is our 'sword of the Spirit.' How does knowing that the Bible is a spiritual weapon encourage you to read the Bible more?

## CHAPTER 8

### HEALING ELEMENT 3: PRAYER

**Read Chapter 8 together.**

#### ● **Read To The Group**

Prayer is God's design for His children to communicate with Him. Prayer involves not only talking but also listening, acting, and waiting on Him. Prayer is not twisting God's arm to get what we want or manipulating Him. God gives His children the privilege to participate with Him here on earth through prayer.

#### ● **Ask The Group**

Basically, what is prayer? (Communication with God)

Why is it important?

In the back of the workbook is your *Spiritual Stepping*

*Stones Timeline.* Right now, mark on your timeline the first time you remember praying. Would anyone like to share that moment with us?

## ● Discuss

At the end of page 40, discuss the three possible ways that God answers prayer.

# CHAPTER 9

## HEALING ELEMENT 4: COMMUNITY

Read Chapter 9 together.

## ● Ask The Group

In the movie, Dr. Jamieson encourages Vic to go to the group meeting with other veterans who had difficult stories because “Pain shared is pain divided.”

Why do you think Vic does not want to go to the meeting during the first part of the movie?

What makes Vic finally choose to go to the group meeting?

How does the group setting make it easier for Tommy to tell his difficult story? How does hearing Tommy's story help Vic?

How did Michelle's first group meeting help her prepare for Vic to come home from the retreat?

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

From page 42, end your time together discussing the section "What Happens Underground?"

## ● Final Question

Discuss where Michelle applied all three of these healing elements to her life – Bible, Prayer, and Community – and how they helped her move forward in healing.

## ● Closing Prayer

End the group time in prayer. Take time to pray for each person or couple in the group. Ask God to help them desire to spend time in God's Word and prayer. Thank God for allowing this small group to be a safe community for each person.

WE ARE STRONGER  
**GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE**



# WEEK 4

---

## GOING DEEPER WORKBOOK CHAPTERS 10-12

**We Are Stronger Focus Character: Aunt Hazel**

**Scene Selection Week 4: Scars are a Bridge/Aunt Hazel and Michelle Eating Dinner**

**Open in Prayer.**

**Review *Reflection Questions* from Week 3.**

Take a few minutes to look and discuss the *Spiritual Stepping Stones Timeline* in the back of the workbook. Re-enforce the importance of looking back and recognizing God's hand in your life.

We are continuing the *Elements of a Healing Environment* this week. Read the list is on page 27. This week we will discuss loss and forgiveness.

## CHAPTER 10 HEALING ELEMENT 5: DEALING WITH LOSS

**Read Chapter 10 aloud.**

### ● **Ask The Group**

Several people in the movie experienced traumatic

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

loss. Name some of the losses that were suffered by the different characters in the movie.

### **Read to the Group**

Actress Justina Page plays Aunt Hazel in the movie. Justina is a real burn survivor. Her storyline in *We Are Stronger* is her actual life testimony. Not only did Justina sustain third degree burns over fifty-percent of her body but she also lost a son, twenty-two-month-old Amos, in the fire. She understands loss and grief. The back cover of her book, *The Circle of Fire*, reads, "Justina discovered that personal tragedy is not a life sentence to despair, anger, and continual pain and suffering. Instead, it can be a lesson in how something positive can be salvaged from every agonizing experience, even when your faith has been truly tried by fire." Justina is an encouragement to everyone who has the privilege of meeting her. She reflects the love of Jesus in such a powerful, yet gentle way.

### **● Ask The Group**

Discuss Justina's (Aunt Hazel's) attitude toward suffering and grief. Can you recall moments in the movie where Aunt Hazel demonstrates this attitude?

What happens when we grieve?

(We are authentically engaging in emotions, not denying them. We are facing the impact of the loss head-on, absorbing it and eventually mastering it rather than denying and pretending.)

If we do not grieve properly, our healing is delayed—put on hold. Why do people avoid grieving?

Where is God in our grief? What can He do with our pain? Use Aunt Hazel (Justina) as an illustration.

## CHAPTER 11

### HEALING ELEMENT 6: FORGIVING OTHERS

Read Chapter 11 aloud.

#### ● Read to the Group

Grief is the normal processing of the emotions surrounding loss. Forgiveness is part of the healthy processing of emotions surrounding betrayal. Neither grief nor forgiveness happens quickly or easily.

#### ● Ask The Group

What do you gain from forgiving others and working through the forgiveness process?

How does forgiving others allow a deeper understanding of our relationship with Jesus?

## CHAPTER 12

### HEALING ELEMENT 7: FORGIVING YOURSELF

Read Chapter 12 aloud.

Give examples of “false guilt” in the movie.

- Vic blamed himself for Carter’s death.
- Vic believed Michelle deserved more and should “move on” from him.

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

- Tommy felt guilt from having been abused and then from not intervening when he knew abuse was happening.
- Michelle thought she had not supported Vic well when, in reality, she did not understand what he was going through. She also had some real guilt from her choices.

If you feel comfortable, please share examples of “false guilt” from your own experiences.

In light of our relationship with God, how is guilt a good thing?

## ● Read to the Group

When talking with Aunt Hazel, Michelle hints that she feels guilty because she hurt Vic and doesn't think she deserves to talk to God. Aunt Hazel responds in wisdom with these words, “That sounds like guilt to me. You are believing a lie if you think you are too guilty to be forgiven.” God's love is unconditional and everlasting. We can never “out sin” God's forgiveness and love for us. Healing and freedom come when we acknowledge and confess our sins, repent, accept God's forgiveness, and make the changes necessary.

**Read “Steps to Freedom” (page 53-54) ask...**

How did Michelle show the steps to freedom from real guilt in the movie?

## ● Close in Prayer

Ask if anyone would like to pray for the group. Remind the group of God's forgiveness through His son Jesus. Like fishing, you catch the fish first and then clean the fish. God doesn't call us to clean up first and then He will accept us. No, He loves us just as we are. As He forgives us of our sins, we are to forgive others when they hurt or betray us. Likewise, we need to forgive ourselves as Jesus forgives us. Remind the group that we are to forgive our enemies – even if that enemy is ourselves.

This week, as a believer in Jesus, ask God to help you see yourself as He sees you... FORGIVEN!

\*Remind the group to work through the *Week 4 Reflection Questions*. Express how important it is to meet with the Lord on a daily basis.



# WEEK 5

---

## GOING DEEPER WORKBOOK CHAPTERS 13-14

**We Are Stronger Focus Character: Dr. Dan Jamison**

**Scene Selection Week 5: Dr. Dan's Intro to  
Small Group Session**

**Review Week 4: Reflection Questions.** Be sensitive to the answers and discussion. Also, direct the participants to look at the *Spiritual Stepping Stones Timeline* on page 74-75.

### ● Ask The Group

From the *Spiritual Stepping Stones Timeline*, do you see how God is working in and through your life? Would you like to share your thoughts?

This week we conclude our study of *The Elements of a Healing Environment*. Today we discuss Service and Mindset.

## CHAPTER 13 HEALING ELEMENT 8: SERVICE

**Read Chapter 13 aloud.**

## ● Ask The Group

“How can helping others who are hurting and broken provide healing power for the helper who also struggles with PTSD.”

## ● Read to the Group

In *We Are Stronger*, Dr. Dan stated two times, “Pain shared is pain divided.” A powerful statement that Vic and the others in the small group needed to hear. Dr. Dan served as a significant help for many suffering the invisible soul wounds from post-deployment and other traumatic experiences. The counseling sessions and support groups provided a place to share the pain of the past and work through the healing process. Dr. Dan continually encouraged small group participants and always pointed them to the hope and healing Christ provided.

## ● Ask The Group

What do you learn from Dr. Dan on how to walk alongside someone who has PTSD?

## ● Read to the Group

In the small group scene, after Tommy shares his story, do you remember how Vic responded to Tommy? Because Vic witnessed Tommy telling his testimony, we see a shift in Vic's attitude and heart. In the midst of

Vic's pain, he rises to help his fellow brother. Vic says that he will drive Tommy to the retreat, "Even if I have to drag you there myself. You are going!" Because Tommy shared his story, Vic was helped.

## ● Ask The Group

Take a few minutes to examine your life. How do you think your story can help others?

# CHAPTER 14

## HEALING ELEMENT 9: MINDSET

**Read Aloud— Chapter 14 Introduction and #1 Courage** (Page 63 and top of page 64)

## ● Ask The Group

When courage fails, where can we find strength?

## ● Read to the Group

**#2 Intentionality and #3 Optimism** (bottom of Page 64 – 65)

## ● Ask The Group

When Vic and Michelle had their heated argument in the movie, she asked him why he would fight and do

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

anything for his “brothers” but not for his family. She asked, “Where is our hero, Vic?”

In what ways was Vic’s life a “battle” when he came home?

Why do you think Vic didn’t answer Michelle at the time she asked that question?

How did courage, intentionality, and optimism come into play as Vic started working toward healing?

## ● Closing Prayer

Ask for prayer requests if you have time. Also, ask if anyone has a praise report. Pray for the participants and their time working on the *Reflection Questions* this week.

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Ask the group to look at the *Going Deeper Workbook Week 5 – Reflection Questions* (pages 66-68). Remind them to complete this section at home. **PLUS**, they need to finish *Week 6 – Review and Next Step* (pages 70-73) before the next small group time.

WE ARE STRONGER  
**GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE**



# WEEK 6

---

## REVIEW AND NEXT STEP SHARING AND MOVING FORWARD

**The Goal for Week 6**—Today is a critical session for your group. Why? Each one will need to decide their next step in the healing process. Throughout this session, discuss the variety of options available for the next step. The group may choose to take the next step of healing together and work through one of the programs recommended through the Stronger Alliance. Possibly, some of the participants may decide to find an online group through [www.strongeralliance.org](http://www.strongeralliance.org). More will be discussed at the end of this week's study.

As the facilitator, your main objective is to re-enforce the need to stay connected to a biblically based community.

## Final Group Session – Week 6

**Focus Characters: The Children – Carson and Mia**

**Scene Selection Week 6 – Both Scenes with the Children**

**Begin with Prayer.**

Review the **Week 5: Reflection Questions**. Discuss each question. Encourage participants to share if they feel comfortable.

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

**Discuss the scenes with the children.**

How did God use Carson and Mia to bring hope to Vic?

Discuss the moment in the first scene with the children when Vic's actions reflect a glimmer of hope.

List at least three lessons we can learn from Carson and Mia. How can we apply them to our lives?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 6: Review and Next Step Questions.**

Discuss the *9 Healing Elements* and encourage the group to share how they have applied these elements to their lives.

● **Ask The Group**

What changes have you seen in your life?

## STEPS TO HOPE AND HEALING BATTLE PLAN

### ● Ask The Group

Would anyone like to share their *Steps to Hope and Healing Battle Plan* with the group?

**VERY IMPORTANT:** After each person shares the battle plan, take a few minutes to pray specifically for that person. Praying for each other's needs shows the importance of standing in the gap for each other and asking God to lead the battle for that person.

## SPIRITUAL STEPPING STONES TIMELINE

Ask everyone to turn to the *Spiritual Stepping Stones Timeline* in the back of the workbook. Direct the group to examine their timeline. Ask them to take a few minutes to pray and talk to God about the events written on their chart.

Afterward, ask if anyone would like to share their healing journey with the group?

**In the *Going Deeper Workbook* read the Final Challenge on pages 72-73 to the group.**

Discuss this section in detail with the group. Read Matthew 26:31-35 and 69-75; Matthew 27:1-9.

(Before the group session, find other passages that point to people who experienced soul wounds in the Bible such as David, Job, Jesus, etc.)

## NEXT STEP TO HOPE AND HEALING

### ● Read to the Group

Your group may decide to take the next step of healing together and work through one of the programs below. Possibly, some of your members may choose to go a different direction and find an online group through the Stronger Alliance, a church, or another organization. Just like Tommy, Vic, and Michelle demonstrated in the movie staying connected to a biblically based community is vital for the healing process.

Below are some suggestions for your group and/or individuals in taking the **Next Step to Hope and Healing**.

#### **Military/Veterans**

For groups who decide to continue meeting together, we suggest using the *Reboot Recovery* 12-week course for your next study. Information about *Reboot Recovery* is on the Stronger Alliance website.

After the group completes the *Reboot Recovery* course, we suggest using the *CRU Military* resources for the group study...

*The Combat Trauma Healing Manual* – military/veteran

*When War Comes Home* – spouse

WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE

The Going Deeper small groups who have followed this **Next Step to Hope and Healing** protocol are experiencing great success in helping trauma survivors recover.

### **First Responders**

The next step we recommend for First Responders and their families is called *Firstline*, a faith-based program, which connects the hurting to the Healer. *Firstline* is a powerful program making a difference in hundreds of families across the county. Please check out the Stronger Alliance website for details and to connect to *Firstline*.

### **Burn Survivors, Sexual Abuse, Abortion, and more.**

For those desiring to focus on specific areas of healing please checkout the Stronger Alliance for programs and organizations associated with specialized resources.

Once program we highly suggest is called *Re-generation*, recovery in Christ when life is broken. *Re-generation* is for anyone needing to heal from emotional trauma. *Re:generation* is 12-step discipleship through recovery. By working through these biblical steps within an authentic community, people have found freedom from substance abuse, codependency, pornography, eating disorders, depression, fear, control, emotional/physical abuse, anger, obsessive thoughts and many other personal struggles.

Again, all of these programs and organizations are listed on the Stronger Alliance website. Be prepared to discuss the option with the group during the session.

[www.strongeralliance.com](http://www.strongeralliance.com)

## ● Close in Prayer

Leave extra time for prayer. Open it up for those who might like to thank God for all He has done through this group over the past six weeks.

---

*We Are Stronger* is a production of *Reflective Media Productions*, a subsidiary of the nonprofit organization *Reflective Life Ministries*. The Stronger Alliance, a division of RLM, is a hub for helping trauma survivors find Christ-centered resources, organizations, and connections.

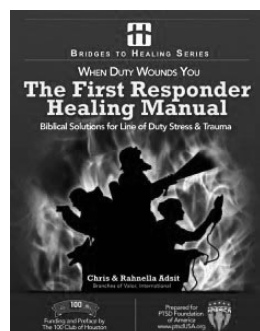
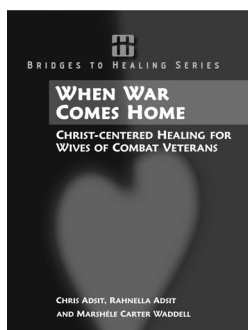
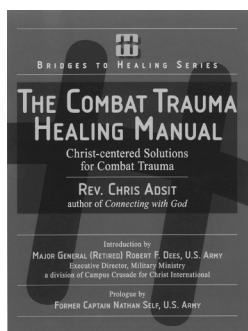
[www.strongermovie.com](http://www.strongermovie.com)

[www.strongeralliance.com](http://www.strongeralliance.com)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We hope the *We Are Stronger* movie, *Going Deeper Workbook*, and the *Going Deeper Small Group* has aided in your healing journey. We encourage you to take the next step and go even deeper in the healing process by using one of these manuals below...

More work may be required for you! You may be interested in going even deeper using one of these manuals.



WE ARE STRONGER  
GOING DEEPER: LEADER'S GUIDE



## **THE STRONGER ALLIANCE**

---

At the core of this film is a ministry initiative known as *The Stronger Alliance* - A place to find Christ-centered resources, organizations, trauma support groups, prayer support, and more. For more information, please visit:

**[WWW.STRONGERALLIANCE.COM](http://WWW.STRONGERALLIANCE.COM)**



