Bob: As a military chaplain, Todd Gangl realized quickly, that if he was going to be effective, one of the issues he was going to have to be able to address effectively was the issue of struggling marriages in the military.

Todd: The people I was dealing with were younger and were also finding themselves in stepfamilies more often. They were divorcing and remarrying at a much younger age. Instead of the civilian counterparts being 25, 30, 40 years old—find themselves divorced/ find themselves remarried—these people were 20, 24, 25 years old—divorced already / remarried—dealing with problems that they needed some maturity to really handle. They just didn't have it.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Friday, October 23rd. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. How can men and women effectively help build stronger marriages in the military? We’ll talk with folks who are on the frontlines today. Stay tuned.

Bob: And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. I’m kind of excited about what we’re going to get to share with listeners today, but this also feels a little bit like a shareholder report to folks who have supported the ministry of FamilyLife.

Dennis: I want to say, “Thanks,” to our Legacy Partners and our donors who keep FamilyLife Today on the air and also support FamilyLife in the process. You have no way of knowing this, but we touch the world together—not only around the world, however—but we’re touching military bases and military marriages and families. Well, I don’t know in how many bases—we’ll ask the couples who are joining us, here on the broadcast—Mike and Linda Montgomery join us, along with Todd and Tammy Gangl. Todd/Tammy, Mike/Linda—welcome to the broadcast.

Todd/Tammy, Mike/Linda: Thank you.

Dennis: Anybody here know the number of military bases that FamilyLife and Cru® Military serve on? —and how many military personnel we’re touching a year together?

Mike: Not directly. It’s a really hard number to come up with; but I can tell you, that of the 2.8 million currently serving—that was about a 2008 number—there are about 60
percent of those who are married. They are the ones who really benefit from our
resources.

**Dennis:** No doubt about it. We’ve scholarshiped a ton of military personnel, over the
years, to our *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaways.

**Bob:** Can I just say, since I’m going to be speaking at the *Weekend to Remember* in
San Antonio next month—and I know there happens to be a little bit of a military
presence in San Antonio at Lackland, and at Ft. Sam, and at some of the other military
installations—I hope to see some of our listeners, who are military, out at the *Weekend
to Remember*.

**Dennis:** I’m going to be speaking at one next spring—I think it is next April—in
Indianapolis, Indiana. I’d welcome the military personnel to come out in force. We’d love
to put a brick or two on the foundation of your marriage and family and encourage you
in the process.

Let me just tell you a little bit about our guests on the broadcast. Mike and Linda
Montgomery have been married for 45 years. They have a 23-year career in the Air
Force. They have two adult children / eight grandchildren and currently serve and have
served with Cru Military since 2005.

I just say, at this point, *FamilyLife* and Cru Military have had a relationship/partnership
over the past 20 years, where we’ve trained personnel, who go on to military bases, and
equip marriages and families on an ongoing basis. Frankly, it’s one of my favorite ways,
Bob—we give back to the military for what they do to protect us.

**Bob:** We’re cousins—because *FamilyLife* is a part of Cru; and Cru Military, obviously, a
part of Cru as well.

**Dennis:** A brand-new Cru Military staff couple, Todd and Tammy Gangl, join us on
*FamilyLife Today*. They have been married 11 years. They have a blended family—had
six children together. Todd served in the Air Force for 14 years in the Reserve and has
been deployed how many times?

**Todd:** Just once.

**Dennis:** Just once. I think what a lot of people don’t realize is—we go to church with
military personnel, probably every Sunday, without realizing it. A lot of our service men
and women work full-time, but they’re in the Reserve or the Guard.

**Mike:** That is true. Of the total force of the U.S. military, 38 percent are either Guard or
Reservists. Those people have pulled over 50 percent of the rotations, during the last
10-plus years, in the war on terror.
Bob: Mike, explain for our listeners how FamilyLife and Cru Military have been working together. What are some of the ways that we’ve been able to partner together?

Mike: First of all, we’re really a force multiplier because FamilyLife shares the same heart that we have for ministering to military families. As Dennis has implied, we have the Guard and Reserve all over this country; so almost every church has Guard and Reserve people in it. The other thing is that Cru Military staff has really been kind of the subject-matter experts for producing HomeBuilder® studies and other materials that FamilyLife has published—just really powerful materials that are available to put in people’s hands. We’ve already talked about Weekend to Remember. We partner at the Weekend to Remember to do specific military outreaches to those who attend—and to really encourage military to attend these very significant marriage getaways.

Dennis: Linda, I think, sometimes, we can really miss how urgent the needs are in military marriages and families. I think you have a great story from your own life of how you came to faith in Christ, while Mike was deployed, early in your marriage?

Linda: I do. The stresses and challenges that military families face are very real to us because we lived them from Vietnam on. It was during one of the times that Mike was gone—and he was gone quite a bit during the early years of our children’s lives—that I was feeling very lonely and very isolated. The Lord drew very near to me / I really felt His presence—I was not a Christian, and that was when I surrendered my heart and my life—and the rest—my life has never been the same. I thank God for that opportunity.

One of our first assignments, a few years later, we were overseas in Europe. We had the opportunity to attend a marriage conference. I thought, “Well, I don’t need to go to a marriage conference.” It was at the base chapel. One of my neighbors said: “No. Let’s go. Let’s go.” Mike couldn’t go—I think he was, again, TDY—he was off on an assignment somewhere else at the time. I went. For the first time, I heard that marriage was not just about Mike and Linda growing old together and living happily ever after. It was about so much more than that. It was about God, who instituted marriage, and that He had a plan for marriage, and He had a plan for Mike and Linda’s marriage, which was going to include more than just them. I had never heard that presented before.

I’m very big on saying to military families that: “Deployments can be the time when God really speaks to you.”

Bob: That distinction that you talk about—understanding marriage differently / having a God-centered perspective rather than a man-centered perspective—that makes a difference when you’re facing the challenges that a lot of military couples face—whether it’s deployment, or someone being in harm’s way, whatever you’re dealing with—when you understand marriage is less about my happiness and more about God’s agenda. Mike—that is a paradigm shift for a lot of couples; isn’t it?
Mike: Absolutely. People always think that they’re the only ones struggling. We like to encourage them that really strong marriages struggle well and when you’ve begin to understand the sovereignty of God, that this life isn’t easy in this world, big life change starts to happen.

Dennis: Mike, when you came home after being deployed, were you a little surprised at who you came home to?—here, she’s been away at a marriage conference—[Laughter]—with, now, a new agenda for your marriage. What did you think?

Mike: I thought it was great! I was—

Dennis: You saluted! [Laughter]

Mike: I did; I did. [Laughter] It was—we had both been “churched,” but it just all didn’t seem to make a lot of sense. It wasn’t until that experience in that chapel program in Germany that we really started to mature, as believers. That’s where my hat is really off to chaplains who first introduced us to expository preaching and the truth of God’s Word.

Dennis: You went on to join Cru staff / Cru Military staff in 2005. Why did you do that? Was it a desire to make an impact on other military marriages and families?

Mike: It was. It was kind of interesting—we were very involved in church at that time. I was serving as chairman of the deacons. We were both teaching Sunday school, but we felt compelled to do something outside the walls of our church for people who might not necessarily come to church. We knew it had to do with marriages, and it had to do with military, and it was going to be something out of our home. We didn’t know anything about HomeBuilders at that time—imagine us when we ran across this incredible tool.

Dennis: Small group—

Mike: Small group—out of our home, hospitality-driven, addressing the very needs of the people group that we love so much.

Dennis: You liked it so much that you ended up writing a HomeBuilders to prepare couples for deployment.

Mike: We had the great privilege of being able to write Making Your Marriage Deployment Ready. That was such a great experience because we really spent two years researching it, because we didn’t want to presume that we knew about this current lifestyle. Our experience was Vietnam/Cold War, and we just didn’t have all those demands that couples do today.

Dennis: Todd and Tammy, I want to speak a little bit about your blended family. You’re operating now in Cru Military so you have a fresh perspective on this whole subject of
the blended family. FamilyLife and Ron Deal have created materials and help that, I think, are going to have a huge impact on military families because a good number of them find themselves in a stepfamily or blended family.

Todd: That’s true. They find themselves there, younger, and they find themselves there, more often, than they do with civilian counterparts—divorced already / remarried—dealing with problems that they needed some maturity to really handle. As chaplains, we didn’t have the tools. So Ron’s *Smart Stepfamily, Smart Stepdad, Smart Stepmom*—fantastic tools the chaplains can now use to understand them and help them out—provide better help for them.

Bob: This is really why you joined Cru Military—because your experience, as a blended family, your awareness of the tools that can help, and your awareness of the need inside the military. It was kind of like you looked at this situation and said, “How can we not help when we know where the help is?”—right?

Todd: Well, Ron kind of set us up with the Montgomery’s, and I think the Montgomery’s set us up for Cru Military. [Laughter] We had our ministry—Tammy and I started a ministry in 2006 with our own kids. It was very unique in that we met Ron three weeks before we got married. We actually, last night, had dinner with Ron and Nan.

I brought the workbook from that first conference, where Tammy and I literally thought we had everything figured out—I’d been a chaplain/ master’s degree in seminary—“We got this!” We had a list of everything we were going to do. Friday night [of the conference], it was like Ron saw our list and said: “Don’t do that. Don’t do that. That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever seen.” [Laughter]

Dennis: How long had you been married, at that point?

Todd: We hadn’t been married—we were three weeks from getting married.

Dennis: So that’s why you thought you had it covered.

Todd: Exactly! [Laughter] What I showed Ron and Nan last night—I opened the book and I said, “You can see the pages that were Friday night,”—it had big, bold letters that I had written to Tammy that said: ‘DON’T QUIT! I’M REALLY COMMITTED TO YOU AND THE KIDS!’” [Laughter] Just things where we were—we really just reset and had to start over in our whole idea of ‘How do we do stepfamily?’

Dennis: Tammy, was it a wake-up call for you, at that point?

Tammy: Yes it was. I sat there and I thought: “Oh my goodness! I haven’t even thought about some of these things.” It was quite a challenge; but when you actually go into the marriage, then you realize: “Wow! I really need this information.” It’s so much information, at the time. You can’t catch everything; but once you’re married and you’re
dealing with the children and dealing with the issues, it is like: “Okay. I need to go back, and look at the book, and decide how to handle this,” because, sometimes, issues just come up—you don’t just have scarred children / you have scars yourself.

**Dennis:** Right.

**Tammy:** When Todd would go to work, to me, that was the hardest thing in the world for me because he would give me the safety net: “If anything goes wrong / if anything happens, listen to what Tammy says.” But at the time, when he left, I was so nervous because I was looking at six kids; and they were looking at me.

**Todd:** Four of which were mine, not even hers—it’s a difficult thing. That’s why we ended up following Ron around those first two years. If he was within 200 miles of us, we went and found him. That’s why I think he thought we were stalking him, at that time. [Laughter]

**Dennis:** As you look at the military, do you see this as a tremendous opportunity for you all to take these materials and training and help military families—again, not just survive, but thrive?

**Todd:** It’s a fantastic opportunity because we take our kids to every seminar. From the time our kids were—2006—they would have been considerably younger, we’ll just say, than they are now. They stood in front of all these parents at our seminars—that we asked for the whole family to come to this seminar, including the kids. Our kids spoke to their kids about how they were making it / about the things that they thought were going to happen that didn’t happen.

**Dennis:** Powerful.

**Todd:** We’re taking it and rewriting it into a seminar that we’re calling *Stepfamily Bootcamp*. We’re going to, once again, be bringing as many of our kids as we can. We can’t get them all anymore because they’re in college, or we have one that is still a senior. Letting those kids still talk to the kids that are coming up, talking to the parents, having the parents and the kids actually switch positions and role play and helping them understand because there are three things that really stand out—that civilian stepfamilies don’t deal with—we [civilians] don’t deal with deployments; we don’t deal with distance-parenting; and we don’t deal with the rigorous demands of the military—but the military does. We have to bring that into the stepfamily and realize—for instance, deployments, which we’ve talked a lot about—stepparents have no legal authority, at all. If I’m a deploying, biological parent, and I leave Tammy with four kids that are not hers, she cannot even sign a parent-teacher permission form, legally. She can’t sign medical release forms, legally. There’s no legal authority for her to do that, as a stepparent.
These are issues we have to work through. We've already started doing that, now, with some academic cooperation and with some schools of law that we're dealing with in helping stepfamilies find answers that they need so that, when they deploy, they know they're legally doing the right thing.

**Bob:** I think this is critical—what you're talking about—because we understand that blending a family / creating a stepfamily—there's a degree of difficulty there that is higher than just getting married. If getting married is hard, creating a blended marriage is hard times 2, or 3, or 4 / figure your multiplier in there; right? If you say, "It's harder to form a stepfamily." Now, if you're going to say, "The military is harder on a marriage than civilian life is,"—a blended family in the military / you've just taken the degree of difficulty up to something that's really challenging!

**Todd:** It's astronomical! We stole a sentence from Dr. Dobson, where he said, "Parenting Isn't for Cowards" on his book. Tammy and I, in our seminars, would tell stepparents, "If parenting isn't for cowards, then step parenting is for super heroes."

**Bob:** That's right.

**Todd:** So you've got to put on your cape—and some days, even though you don't want to do it—you just got to go in like you're invincible and do it anyhow, because it hurts, but you still have to do the next right thing. You don't get to kind of go have those pity parties. You push through and go do the next right thing. Tammy calls it, "stretching," and gives some wonderful analogies on that.

**Dennis:** It would seem, to me, that a couple in military—and specifically, that spouse, who was serving in the military, would find it difficult to be in training, all day long, for battle and being military-ready/wartime-ready—to go home to be facing a domestic war there. You'd really understand why it might be difficult for those marriages to go the distance.

I'll never forget a couple, who came to the *Weekend to Remember* in Dallas. I have no idea how many *thousands* of military couples we've scholarshipped to the *Weekend to Remember*, but some of the couples are there on scholarship that FamilyLife provides—that's because Legacy Partners and donors make it possible for us to continue to do this.

One of the couples that was there, in Dallas—the dad came up to me / the husband came up—it was right after we have a straight conversation to the men about being a husband and being a father. He came up to me—and it's impossible to reenact the intensity of this—but this was a guy who was a special ops guy, about to go on deployment for the fifth time. He came up and shook my hand. Here's a big, burly guy, who's as tough as nails, weeping—thinking about his assignment at home and what God has asked him to do there. He said: "You have no idea what you have just helped
me clarify in my mind. I’ve been four times, about to go the fifth; and this will be my last one because I get what my priorities are now."

That’s really what both you couples are doing with the military. You’re trying to bring the appropriate priorities of the family, according to the Scripture, to bear on those who are, in many cases, providing the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our nation.

I just want to thank both of you for your service—first of all, in the military, but then secondly, for your service of the military and their marriages and families. Thank you, guys, for being difference-makers. It is indeed a great privilege to partner with you in this ministry.

**Mike:** It truly is a great honor to serve with FamilyLife, and again, to be able to pour back into these young people that we’ve had the privilege of working with and leading for our careers.

**Bob:** We should mention—Todd and Tammy, you guys are going to be at the *Blended and Blessed™ Summit* in Southern California next month that Ron Deal is leading for people who are engaged in ministry to blended families. If our listeners would like to join you, we still have room available. You can go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, and click the link that says, “GO DEEPER.” Find the information about the *Blended and Blessed Summit* and register to attend. The summit dates are November 12th through the 14th. Again, the information is available, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com.

Let me just say here, too—if you live near a military base or if you have a number of people in your church who are in the military—and you’re looking for resources where you could proactively help these folks in your community or in your church, FamilyLife has got some small group studies, *Defending the Military Marriage or Making Your Marriage Deployment Ready*. These are small group studies that anyone can host, whether you’re military or not. You could invite military couples into your home, and go through these studies with those folks, and really build into their marriage and help strengthen them.

If you’d like to find out more about the resources we have available, and how you can get involved, go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link in the upper left-hand corner—again, that says, “GO DEEPER,”—and look for the information on the small group studies we have for military personnel.

As Dennis mentioned earlier, “Thanks,” to those of you who make things like what we’ve been talking about today possible—our outreach to military marriages and families. We appreciate your engagement with us in these kinds of efforts. FamilyLife is committed to providing practical biblical help and hope for marriages and families, all around the world. You help make that possible, and we’re grateful for your partnership with us.
If you’re able to help with a donation today, we have a thank-you gift we’d like to send you—a new resource from Barbara Rainey called “Untie Your Story” that is designed to promote great conversations at the dinner table, either during the holidays or anytime. You can donate, online, today at FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link in the upper right-hand corner of the screen that says, ‘I care,’ to make an online donation. We’ll be happy to send you the thank-you gift from Barbara Rainey. Or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY—make your donation over the phone. Of course, you can mail your donation to us. Our address is FamilyLife Today, PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; and our zip code is 72223.

With that, we’re wrapping things up for this week. Thanks for being with us. Hope you have a great weekend. Hope you and your family can worship together in your local church this weekend. And I hope you can join us on Monday. The NBA season kicks off next week. We thought we would start things off by introducing you to the man who coached LeBron James when he was in high school. You will meet Coach Dru Joyce on Monday. He’s got a great story to share. Hope you can join us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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