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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—The first six weeks of motherhood can be one of the most difficult seasons in a woman's life, author Rebecca Ingram Powell believes.

To help encourage new mothers during this physically and emotionally draining time, Powell uses military themes to help moms cultivate their relationship with Jesus Christ in "Baby Boot Camp."

The book, subtitled "Basic Training for the First Six Weeks of Motherhood," is published by New Hope Publishers, a division of Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The first six weeks are especially tough ... your own personal boot camp for moms," Powell writes. "Your body continues to be tried as healing begins and hormones readjust. More mood swings are on the way, with

postpartum depression at the front lines. Your drill sergeant wears a diaper and screams every command, waking you at all hours of the night and keeping you on your toes all day."

As a mother of three children ranging in age from 6 to 12, Powell believes motherhood often is glamorized in a way that leaves new moms with an inaccurate view of the days and weeks ahead.

"You get so much attention when you are pregnant and when you bring the baby home"—prior to the times when "nobody else is around when the baby is up," Powell said. "It is the hardest and loneliest time when you are a new mom. I'd like to think that women are reading 'Baby Boot Camp' when they are up at night and they need a friend."

Originally written to encourage expecting friends in Powell's Sunday school class, "Baby Boot Camp" consists of 42 brief devotionals—one for each day of the first six weeks—reminding mothers this season of life is only temporary and God knows and understands their needs.

"The best part about this boot camp is that you don't have to struggle through it alone," she writes. "Jesus Christ wants to walk the floor with you, climb the walls with you, jump for joy with you and run the race with you. ... This is your heritage from the Lord, straight from his riches in glory."

Using military themed chapters like "All in the Line of Duty," "Holy Warrior," "AWOL: My Paycheck" and "Earning Your Stripes," Powell reveals lessons learned through her own parenting experiences. She draws parallels between the training endured by soldiers and the difficulties new mothers face.

"My goal in writing this was to encourage women to establish and maintain a daily quiet time even if it is just five minutes," Powell said. "Spending daily time with the Lord is vitally important. Any attempt at parenting without Jesus Christ is in vain. If you don't introduce your children to Jesus,

then your parenting has no eternal value."

Powell also hopes churches will use "Baby Boot Camp" to reach unchurched parents.

"Today, we are facing the most unchurched generation ever. But when people become parents, that is a window of opportunity for the church," she said. "New parents realize how inadequate they are for the task (and) they are reaching out to God for biblical answers, ... and I think we need to capitalize on that."

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