



## All Things New

BY STEFANI MCDADE



**OLGA WESTFALL'S USUALLY BRIGHT AND SMILING EYES** are shut tight in earnest prayer. Before her, eight female veterans sit in a circle, their heads bowed. “Almighty God, You saw us the first day we came into the military”—Westfall’s words fill the small chapel, her warm voice marked by [Continued on pg 46](#)



a distinct Ukrainian accent. Every Friday, she leads this same group of women in a devotional—listening to their struggles and sowing words of life into their hearts.

Westfall is a chaplain in one of the busiest VA hospitals in the Southeast. Considered “essential personnel,” she provides spiritual counsel to hundreds of veterans admitted to the medical and psychiatric floors. Here, men and women are treated for various physical and mental health issues often associated with their service in the military. In addition to her daily rounds, Westfall also hosts several “spiritual groups” throughout the week—including one exclusively for women.

Whenever Westfall visits with veterans, the joy she brings into each room stays long after she leaves, lingering in the smile on their faces. Each time she makes her rounds, she brings a stack of In Touch devotionals to hand out—and always keeps an extra supply in the “Chaplain’s corner” for when someone stops by in a moment of need. At the end of every visit, Westfall always asks veterans if they would like her to pray with them. Very few say no.

Even the hospital staff have noticed a difference in the patients who are spiritually healthy and will often request Westfall by name.

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Many of their patients suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and some struggle with suicidal tendencies. Whenever the atmosphere is too heavy, Westfall relies on the joy of the Lord for her daily strength. And although she pours herself out day after day, she still finds the energy for family time at home with her husband and three sons, two of whom are adopted from the Ukraine.

Now, thanks to her discipleship and the support of their weekly groups, some veterans have begun to redeem their story and minister to others facing similar struggles. Noting that the Lord often chooses broken people to bring about healing in His kingdom, Westfall marvels that no matter how close someone is to death—whether on the front lines or facing enemies within—God is making all things new.



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