



HOPE IN THE TRENCHES

THE KATE W. MCDONALD MEMORIAL
MILITARY SCHOLARSHIP

Mallory Moffit's Story

Kate McDonald had a gift for being a really good friend. I had the privilege to witness Kate's kindness over and over again and continued to be in awe of her ability and commitment to loving other people. I can't think of a better way to honor Kate McDonald than through a scholarship for military spouses or active duty military for a Bible study, especially the study on friendship. Giving military spouses or active duty military a study that helps them grow and navigate friendships is a gift that will ripple through the military community and leave lasting blessings for so many women. Kate taught me countless ways to be a friend, which has been a universal thread that everyone who's known her has spoken over and over. She understood the hardships of being a military spouse and mother and knew how to show up for each person individually.

Kate's mother, Peggy, used the analogy of a garden to describe Kate's friends, and it's the perfect description of the legacy she left behind. She poured into women, each uniquely different and beautiful, nurtured them, and remembered them. For the ten years I got to deeply know Kate, I witnessed countless acts of generous love she gave to me and many wonderful women. She would show up in very small and large ways without any expectations and just share what she was able. Sometimes, it was a meal dropped off on my porch with a text to let me know it was there; other times, it was a much-needed coffee on her couch while our children played. She signed up for every meal train, sought out the new spouse who didn't know anyone, remembered birthdays or deployments; the list is endless. Since she has passed, new friendships have formed, born out of a shared love for Kate, and these women (mostly military spouses) continue to go out into the world, sharing acts of kindness in Kate's memory.

Before moving to Norfolk, I had prayed intentionally for like-minded Christian friends. I was a relatively new mom with an 18-month-old daughter and the hope for more children to come. Kate and I had met years before and had a Facebook "friendship" where we each knew the shared details of each other's lives but never spent much physical time getting to know each other. We met again shortly after we had both moved to Virginia, and I took a chance and invited her and her two children at the time over for a coffee playdate. The friendship instantly felt like an answer to my prayer. We had so many commonalities, and the more time I spent with her, the more I desired her friendship. We found out we were both expecting new babies, and our friendship grew quickly as we powered through morning sickness with toddlers, husbands with unpredictable work schedules, and replanting ourselves into yet another new community. She shared a faith so similar to mine, and she encouraged and taught me more than I was ever able to share with her about being a virtuous friend. We shared many high and low moments in each other's lives over that decade, and it cemented a friendship, unlike most others.

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Kate and I talked at length over the years about the challenges and complexities of being a military spouse and navigating friendships. Having to move regularly makes finding and maintaining meaningful relationships challenging. If you're not naturally an extrovert, you have to really dig deep to find a place for yourself, or it's a very lonely, difficult lifestyle. Neither one of us were immune to the insecurities that plague women and friendships. We would talk at length about this, and even after Kate's death, as her other friends poured into her family to support them, it was hard not to feel an overwhelming insecurity about our friendship. I took for granted that there would be another day to tell or show Kate how much she meant to me as a friend, and I longed to reverse time to at least tell her what a treasure she was. Kate did leave me with one gift that I have clung to, the Walking with Purpose Bible study *Reclaiming Friendship*. She sent me a copy a few months before she died. We were able to do a couple of the weeks and talk a little back and forth, but the reality was that she passed before we were each able to get into the depth of the study. I'd like to hope that the Bible study was an unspoken desire to grow our friendship even deeper, a gift that was intended to bless our friendship but also show me how I could better love the other women in my life. Since she's passed, I've clung to that hope that she knew how much I loved her and how much she was loved by so many other women. I've also learned to be more open about how much I value the other close friends in my life. The Bible study will always serve as a wonderful lesson on friendships that I can hopefully share with other women and a living gift from my dear friend.

Kate cultivated the most beautiful garden of friends over her life, a garden born out of her gifts that she generously gave to whomever she could bless. I'm sure she knew how special each person was to her, but having watched this community of women come together to support her and then ultimately mourn and celebrate her life was truly a testament to what God intended friendships to be. She was bold in her Christian faith and lived it out with a humble strength that drew people to her. Her friends were so important to her. I've gotten to know some of these women better since she died, and they are all beautiful and lovely women who were blessed by her life. I know that the friendship garden she cultivated continues to bloom and bless other people through the example she left all of us.