

THE JOURNEY

Returning from the Journey

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When you return home you find a revelation: home has moved. Instead of arriving home you may very well have left it. Someone has said, "Your home will always be the place for which you feel the deepest affection, no matter where you are." Home is where your heart is! Your home is likely wherever you long to be.

The paradox is when you are on the field you may want to be home. When you are home you long to be on the field. You no longer truly feel at home in either place. Home has changed. The picture of home has become blurred.

"For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:14-16).

Frank T. McAndrew in his *Psychology Today* article entitled "Home is Where the Heart is, but where is 'Home'" said, "It is no secret that individuals develop very strong emotional attachments to the places that they live. These affectionate bonds between people and places go by a variety of names, including Topophilia, 'Rootedness,' and 'Attachment to Place.' A strong attachment to the place that you live results in greater satisfaction with your home and expectations of future stability in that place. These feelings transcend attachments to other people in the area and represent a genuine affection for the physical location itself, and the passage of time strengthens our attachment to the places that we live. Because our physical surroundings play such an important role in creating a sense of meaning and organization in our lives, it is not surprising that our sense of the place we live is closely tied to our sense of who we are."

"Home is the center of the world and a place of order that contrasts with the chaos elsewhere. When asked to draw a picture of "where you live," children and adolescents

worldwide invariably center their drawings around the home, making it the anchor for everything else” (McAndrew)

Home is “...the place where you feel control and properly oriented in space and time; it is a predictable and secure place....the primary connection between you and the rest of the world” (McAndrew)

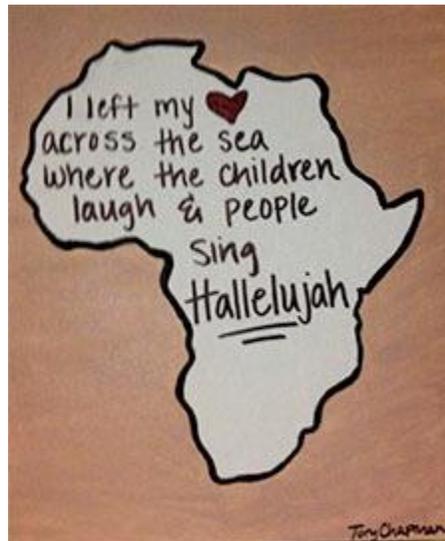
Kenna Graves said, “After being up for thirty-seven hours straight and then getting between twelve to thirteen hours of sleep, I made my way to the kitchen and opened up the screen door. It was empty and quiet and it hit me all over again. My family is no longer here. That’s what you all became to me.”



Melinda Poitras in her *Culture Shock* article wrote “I also own a jar of dirt. It’s my most prized possession. My past is in that jar. My roots are in that jar. When I first came here I would lay in my room and curl myself around it. It was all I had left of my dreams. All I’d ever really dreamed about in the last couple of years—was home. I know that’s odd. But my home, well it was familiar. It was exotic. It was diverse. It was entertaining. Things were always changing. Things were always happening. I was always involved. I was always important. I was always loved.”

Elizabeth Pitman, a Next Steps participant in Guam wrote, "We were blessed to also be able to have farewell Fiestas with both churches during our last weeks there. Surrounded by my new family felt like home, and I left a piece of my heart nestled on the island of Guam."

I wrote in "Where is Your Heart this Morning" concerning the Next Steps participants in Togo, "If it's true 'home is where the heart is' I have a feeling there is a group of young people today with bodies in one continent and hearts at home in another."



David Livingstone arrived in Cape Town, South Africa at the age of twenty-seven. He spent over half his life in Africa while he explored one-third of this vast continent. He had responded to Robert Moffat, a missionary, when he heard him as a young man back in Scotland. Moffat said, "There is a vast plain to the North, where I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been." He would never forget those words, "the smoke of a thousand villages." Later he stated, "I had rather be in the heart of Africa in the will of God than on the throne of England out of the will of God." One night, late, Chuma and Susi, his faithful African companions, entered his hut and found the old man kneeling at his bed, his head buried in his hands on the pillow. He had been praying when he died. These African men carried the body of David Livingstone for eleven months across Africa to the Indian Ocean arriving there in May of 1873. April 1874, his remains arrived in Europe and were buried in Westminster Abbey in London. However, his two friends buried his heart at the foot of a nearby tree in Zambia. They said his heart does not belong in England, for he had a "heart for Africa."

A common activity used when people prepare to go to the field or debrief from a term involves using blue and yellow play dough. Yellow represents your home culture and blue

your host culture. Once you have gone to the field, you'll never be completely yellow again because parts of you will change. But you'll also never transition completely to blue and be an insider to your host culture. (Looming Transition, Amy Young, 19-20)

Marion Knell in *Burn-Up or Splash Down: Surviving the Culture Shock of Re-entry* stated, "The use of the word 're-entry' makes the assumption that this is a return to something familiar, something you left and desire to return to...there is nothing familiar or repetitive in the experience. Rather, they are entering a new world, not re-entering the old" (8). She feels this is because things have changed in their absence and the traveler has changed by virtue of living in a different cultural context.

Knell continues, "We all have our own ways of responding to change, trauma, and transition. Universally, the emotion that dominates the return home...is grief. Moving back is just one more loss added to all those that have gone before....This is a form of death, and death requires mourning, saying goodbye, acknowledging the pain and hurt, facing the future without what you have lost, and taking the time to process all the emotion" (96).

One experiences a reverse-culture shock with the same set of culture shock indicators experienced with the initial arrival on the field. The best preparation for transition may very well be in the knowledge and expectation that there will be just that—transition.

She mentions a poem written by Ruth Goring Stewart entitled "I am Green." She likens the experience "to having a pair of yellow glasses that represents your home culture, and having a pair of blue ones that represents your host culture; the resulting combination lens which you see the world is green" (84). She realized that she was a unique blend between the two—passport culture and host culture.

Other metaphors or word pictures concerning those that have returned from a mission's assignment:

Stuck:

You may feel stuck, in a rut, trapped in your present circumstances. Mark Jobe in *Unstuck: Out of Your Cave into Your Call* said concerning Elijah, "In his blackest hour he ended up in a cave. Elijah's cave experience, however, turned out to be the most transformative episode of his life...This cave would prove to be the setting for one of the most dramatic encounters recorded in all of Scripture. Here Elijah would confront his deepest issues and face the forces that had driven him into darkness" (29, 34).



Buffering:

I once heard Kristen Keller speak concerning the stage in life she currently finds herself and she described it as "buffering." You know the drill. You are watching something online only to have it stop while your computer buffers the video content. The techies reveal that "buffering" generally speeds up what you are trying to do on a computer. It can prevent lag when streaming video. A "Data buffer" is a region in a computer's memory storage used to temporarily house data while it is being moved from one place to another.

1. The condition is not permanent. Hold on, the next phase of life and ministry is coming.
2. The aggravating circling round and round that appears to slow us down could invariably be speeding us to our next destination.
3. The apparent pause may very well be designed to bring God's plan into sharper focus.



Holding Pattern:

This is a state or period of no progress or action. In aviation it is a maneuver designed to delay an aircraft from landing. Typically the aircraft has a circular or oval path flying around the airport awaiting permission to land.

“Ladies and Gentlemen; this is your captain speaking. We are currently in a holding pattern. We will circle the airport until the control tower gives us permission to land.”

At other times, airplanes are put in a holding pattern to burn off fuel as it lessens the chances of crash and burn.



What do you do when you feel God or the circumstances of life have you circling the airport, refusing to allow you to move on or even land, and you feel you are in a holding pattern, vulnerable, and in limbo?

Learn contentment:

Note the words of Paul from a dark, dreary, prison cell: "Not that I speak from [any personal] need, for I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances. I know how to get along and live humbly [in difficult times], and I also know how to enjoy abundance *and* live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret [of facing life], whether well-fed or going hungry, whether having an abundance or being in need" (Philippians 4:11-12, AMP).

Learn to wait:

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Learn to trust:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Memorize it. Embody it.

"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:4-45).

Wilderness:



“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (Luke 4:1).

“**Now** Jesus, **full of [and in perfect communication with] the Holy Spirit, returned** from the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit in the wilderness**” (AMP, Emphasis mine).

You may return from a mission’s trip on Cloud Nine ready to take on the world and find yourself on Ground Zero looking up from the dust. How did you get there? Are you under satanic attack? No, being full of the Spirit, and in perfect communication with Him, you may be led into the wilderness for a purpose. God has a pattern, purpose, plan, and process for you. You will come out of the wilderness strengthened.

John Ortberg talked about how God was going to take His people out of bad place (Egypt) to a good place (Promised Land) that should have involved a short walk that could be done in a week. He led them into the wilderness.

Like the children of Israel you may be aware of your promised land but it seems so far away and the journey there seems unclear. Brad Bailey in his online lesson wrote, “If you were to picture your life in terms of what happened to the people of God, I believe you would be able to identify times in which you relate to God’s calling you out like Abraham... to a new land and life. Times when you feel enslaved in Egypt. Times of deliverance. Times you stepped into the Promised Land. But also times in life when you may identify with wandering in the wilderness.”

Pastor Aaron Batchelor recently mentioned in one of his sermons, “Don’t waste your wilderness.” Excellent advice! What is God’s purpose for leading you into the wilderness? What can you learn from the experience? Many times people are concerned about their location: where am I going? Other times, their vocation: what has God called me to do? God is more interested in who you are becoming as a person. What will you be? He may be most concerned about who you are rather than where you are.

Here are ten points to prevent you from wasting your wilderness.

1. Wilderness experiences are critical to our spiritual growth and formation. Thrive in it!
2. In the wilderness experience don’t be surprised when the devil comes alongside to tempt you.
3. Don’t merely ask, “How do I get out of the wilderness?” But, “What can I get out of the wilderness?” What lessons can be learned from the experience?
4. God is not in a hurry. He cares about what you are learning and becoming.

5. Like Jesus' temptations in the wilderness depend on God's Word. Quote it. Believe it.
6. Take life one day at a time. Have faith for the daily provision. Lean on God. He is your anchor.
7. The Torah was given in the middle of the wilderness experience perhaps as a reminder while the Promised Land is delightful and amazing, we learn our greatest lessons in the wilderness.
8. There is a great need to better understand the processes of God. Follow God's process in order to gain God's promise. You will survive between the season of promise and fulfillment.
9. In the wilderness we learn to trust God for everything: shoes, water, food, warmth—everything.
10. In Hebrew, the word for wilderness is *midbar* which at its root has the meaning of "speak" or "word." God speaks to us in the wilderness. Have open ears to listen and an open heart to obey.

"The wilderness is not just a place of disappointment. It's also the furnace of transformation" (John Ortberg).