

Before You Get “Home”: Preparing for Reentry

Ronald L. Koteskey

Member Care Consultant
New Hope International Ministries

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Ronald L. Koteskey
122 Lowry Lane
Wilmore, KY 40390
USA

ron@missionarycare.com

www.missionarycare.com

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Preface

Several years ago Bonnie and I wrote *Coming “Home”*: *The Reentry Transition* to use in our reentry retreats for people returning to their passport cultures after serving in other cultures for several years. We wrote that book for people to read after they had returned to their passport country, so those reading it were looking back to remember what had happened in the past as well as looking at where they were at that moment as they faced the future.

Recently I was asked to participate in a reentry workshop in another country for people planning to return to their passport cultures in several months. Although people conducting the workshop gave the participants copies of *Coming “Home,”* I realized that those participants were dealing primarily with a different set of issues. They were looking only ahead at what was coming in the future rather than looking back at what had already happened. They had time to change what they were doing so that they could leave “right” making it easier for them to enter “right.”

Modeled after *Coming “Home,”* this book is written to address these issues which need to be faced before returning to one’s passport country. Each chapter includes two major parts. Part 1 considers the reentry of the Israelites as they returned from Egypt centuries ago, and Part 2 considers reentry today. You may read just the first part if your interest is historical/Biblical, just the second part if your interest is current, or the full chapter if you are interested in both.

I want to thank James Smith, Victor Hamilton, Art Nonneman, and Yvonne Moulton for their comments on the manuscript.

Have a great reentry!

Chapter 1

Introduction

Moving from one culture to another is not a new phenomenon. Though recent advances in transportation have made it easier to do so, people have crossed from one culture to another for thousands of years. At some times they moved to a different culture because they were carried there as captives. At other times they moved to a different culture because they wanted something found in the culture.

Part 1: The Longest Reentry

The move resulting in the longest reentry transition recorded in the Bible began as a way for a people to survive, a way to get food during a widespread famine. We find the record of this move in the last few chapters of Genesis.

- Joseph was sold as a slave in Egypt (Genesis 37).
- About twenty years later ten of Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt to buy grain during a famine (Genesis 42).
- A couple years later those brothers again went to Egypt to buy more grain (Genesis 43-45).
- Soon Joseph’s parents as well as all of his brothers and their families moved to Egypt (Genesis 46).

- The Israelites (family of Israel) settled in the district of Rameses in the region of Goshen where they could pasture their flocks and herds (Genesis 47).

From the beginning the Israelites were a scorned minority even though Joseph himself was in charge of distributing all the available food in Egypt. In fact, Joseph told his family to answer honestly that they tended livestock, and they would be allowed to settle in Goshen even if “all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians” (Genesis 46:34).

The Israelites lived there another seventeen years buying property, increasing the number of their livestock, and having many children to greatly increase the size of the family (Genesis 47). Even though they lived there for many years and the children born there had never seen their passport country (Canaan), those who had moved to Egypt still saw it as their host country and longed ultimately to return home.

- Israel (Jacob) made Joseph promise not to bury him in Egypt, but to take his body back to their passport country for burial (Genesis 47:29-31).
- After Israel (Jacob) died and the seventy days of mourning were over, Joseph and his brothers took Israel’s (Jacob’s) body back to their passport country for the funeral and burial (Genesis 50:1-14).
- Years later after several more generations of Israelites were born, Joseph was about to die. He also made his family promise to take his bones with them when they returned to their passport country (Genesis 50:24-26).

At that same time Joseph again noted that God would somehow get them back to their passport country, the land He had promised to their great-grandfather Abraham, their grandfather Isaac, and their father Israel. That reentry did not take place until more than 400 years later, and the reentry itself took nearly 50 years.

Part 2: Reentry Today

Reentry in the 21st century usually takes far less than 50 years. Though it may take several years, most reentries occur in a matter of months. However long it takes, we may think of it in several phases.

- **Involved.** Though not a part of reentry itself, we need to begin at the time people are involved in their host culture.
- **Leaving.** From the time they first seriously consider returning to their passport country until they actually close the door as they start on their way is a time of leaving.
- **In Transit.** From the time they actually walk out the door to the time they unpack their minds (not just their suitcases), people are in transit.
- **Entering.** From the time they get their mind unpacked until they are fully involved in their passport country which usually takes months or even a year or more, people are in the entering stage.
- **Involved (again).** People are now fully re-involved in a culture, their passport culture.

Following you will find at least one chapter about each of these phases.

Chapter 2

Involved (Belonging)

People who drive across the border into a neighboring culture for a day of shopping do not need to prepare for reentry. Likewise, people who fly to a vacation spot in another country and spend time seeing the major tourist attractions do not need to prepare for reentry. Those who need preparation for reentry are people who have lived for some time in a host culture and become immersed enough in it to feel at home there. This book is for people who have come to feel like they “belong” in their host culture.

Part 1: The Longest Reentry

The seventy Israelites who had come down to live in Egypt settled in the region of Goshen where, generation after generation, they raised their families. While there they prospered and grew to a population of several hundred thousand people. These people were all Third Culture Kids (TCKs), people who grew up between cultures. On the one hand they internalized some of the Israelite culture found in their family enclave in Goshen, and on the other hand they internalized some of the Egyptian culture in the country surrounding them.

The Israelites continued to serve in construction and agriculture. Though, as shepherds, they were still despised by people in their Egyptian host culture, their needs were met. They had plenty to eat, stable employment, and life was quite predictable. They probably seldom thought about returning to their passport country. The Egyptians did not particularly like the Israelites, but they tolerated them because they wanted their labor.

However, after a few hundred years circumstances changed for the worse for the Israelites when new people rose to power in Egypt. The new politicians did not understand about Joseph and the relationship the Israelites living in Goshen had with past Egyptian leaders. These new politicians were worried that the increasing number of Israelites providing labor for them would join an invading army to fight against them and then leave the country (Exodus 1:1-10).

The Israelites went from being a despised, but accepted, minority group to one actively discriminated against. The Egyptians first tried to use slavery to keep the Israelites “in their place.” The writer of Exodus describes their treatment as

- oppressive,
- forced,
- ruthless,
- bitter,
- hard.

The worse they were mistreated, the more the Israelites grew, and the Egyptians came to dread them. Then they attempted genocide to keep the Israelites from increasing. This, however, did not work because the midwives refused to kill the baby boys when they were born. When the Egyptian leaders commanded all boy babies to be thrown into the Nile, it actually resulted in an Israelite boy being raised in the Egyptian palace (Exodus 1:11-22).

By this time nearly 400 years had passed since the Israelites had first come to Egypt to survive the famine. During all this time they had maintained their identity and the culture of

their passport country. Although they did not enjoy their role, they knew where they fit in the Egyptian host culture around them. In a sense Egypt had become home to them, a place where they “felt at home.” It was a place that at least some of them wanted to return to after they did leave, probably because it provided more security, or so they thought.

Part 2: Reentry Today

Likewise, the longer you have lived in it, and the more you have become involved in it, the more your host country becomes home to you. When you first arrived, you converted many things into the units of your passport country. You did this with money, temperature, lengths, weights, and a host of other things. You did this with the host country language when you translated what you read or heard into your mother tongue, thought about, and then translated your answer back into the language of your host country. You had to concentrate on your actions including everything from how close to stand during a conversation, to where to look as you talked to others, to gestures with your hands.

Now these things have become “automatic” for you so that you do them without converting, translating, or concentrating on them. You now “feel at home” in your host country. An old saying says, “It takes a heap of living to make a house a home.” Just as a house is not “home” until you have lived in it a long time, a culture is not “home” until you have lived in it a long time. Mark each of the following that you can do without concentrating.

Home is where you automatically do many things.

- Know whether or not a price is fair in the local currency.
- Count your change in the local currency.
- Cross streets automatically and safely.
- Drive across town.

- Bargain well for a lower price (or pay the price without question).
- Hear the temperature in Celsius (Fahrenheit) and know how warm or cold it feels.
- See the distance in kilometers (miles) and know how long it will take to get there on a freeway.
- Carry on a conversation in the language of the host country without mentally translating in into your mother tongue.
- Talk without concentrating on avoiding offensive nonverbal movements.
- Hear the address of a store on a major street in your city and know about where it is.
- Expect the majority of people with appointments to come a half hour late (or precisely on time).
- Make last minute changes in your schedule.
- Let work go to build relationships.
- Accept a colleague who got the position because she or he is the member of a particular family, not the one best able to do the work.
- Know others and are known by them.
- Accept others and are accepted by them.
- Can be yourself and allow others to be themselves.
- Feel safe with others and they feel safe with you.
- _____
- _____
- _____

Time Orientation

Home is where you live in the “now.”

- Your emphasis is on the present.
- You remember events from your past but do not long to go back to that past.
- You anticipate things coming in the future, but those things do not dominate your thinking.

- You can think about yesterday and tomorrow, but you are living today to its fullest.
- _____
- _____
- _____

Social Characteristics

Home is where you know your place socially.

- You feel like you belong.
- You are part of a group.
- You know where you “fit” in that group.
- People in the group know your position.
- People know your reputation, and you know theirs.
- You can confide in friends.
- Friends confide in you.
- You feel committed to your friends, and they to you.
- You feel responsible for your friends, and they for you.
- _____
- _____
- _____

Spiritual Characteristics

Home is where you can worship without distraction.

- The worship style brings you to God.
- The music glorifies God and leads you to him.
- The preaching and teaching edifies your spirit.
- The service is long enough, but not too long.
- You can share freely in smaller groups.
- _____
- _____
- _____

Psychological Characteristics

Home is where you feel psychologically “comfortable.”

- You experience intimacy.
- You feel affirmed.
- You feel secure.
- People feel safe.
- Your worship expressions are the same as others.
- _____
- _____
- _____

Above all else, home is where things are familiar.

- Familiar places: You know the layout of rooms in your home, squeaks in the floors, shrubs in the yard, fences or walls around the yard, streets in the neighborhood and thoroughfares in the city or town.
- Familiar faces: You may know people intimately. Or you may know them by the roles they play, such as the clerk in the store, the yard man next door, the driver, or the children who go by your house each day on the way to school.
- Familiar graces: Interactions with others are predictable, courtesies (or the lack of) are expected, tact (or the lack of) comes naturally, and mercy (or the lack of) is predictable.
- _____
- _____
- _____

The longer you have lived in a culture the more you feel at home. The more you are involved in the culture, the more you feel at home. If you live on a base or in a compound where your interaction is primarily with other expats, you may never feel really at home; however, if you live in a national

neighborhood with no expats within several blocks, you will feel really at home.

Chapter 3

Leaving

Preparing for reentry begins when you first think seriously about returning to your passport country. Of course, everyone thinks or dreams about going “home” from time to time, but there comes a time when returning becomes a real factor in one’s life. This leaving stage begins when you first seriously consider leaving and ends when you actually walk out the door on your way to the airport.

Part 1: The Longest Reentry

The Israelites chaffed under the ruthlessly oppressive behavior of the Egyptians and called upon God to deliver them, but the years passed and nothing seemed to be happening. Decades passed after those prayers, but God still did not seem to be doing anything. The Israelites continued on in their familiar, but difficult, circumstances—not really seriously considering returning to their passport country. However, during this time God was preparing one of their own, Moses, to lead them back (Exodus 2-4).

We can pinpoint the time when the Israelites entered the leaving stage. Moses and his brother Aaron called a meeting

with the Israelite leadership. At that meeting Aaron told the leadership what God had said to Moses and performed miraculous signs right before the people. At that moment the people believed, and they bowed to worship God. They knew that God was concerned about them; they were actually going to leave (Exodus 4:29-31).

Of course, the leaving stage takes time, and during it people may face many obstacles as seen in Exodus 5.

- Moses and Aaron told the King that God said, “Let my people go...” (v.1).
- The King replied, “I don’t know God and I will not let you Israelites go” (v. 2).
- Moses and Aaron said, “Our God has met with us. Let us go for three days...” (v. 3).
- The King replied, “Get back to your work...” (v. 4).
- The King then ordered the Egyptians to stop supplying straw for making the bricks but not to reduce the quota—to make the work harder (vv. 6-14).
- The Israelite foremen appealed to the King (v. 15).
- The King said, “You’re just lazy! Get back to work” (v. 17-18).
- The Israelite foremen went to Moses and Aaron and said, “May God judge you. You have made us a stench to the King” (vv. 19-21).
- Moses came to God asking, “Why? Why? Why?” Moses pointed out that his obedience had only made things worse saying, “You have not rescued your people at all” (v. 22-23).
- God gave Moses wonderful promises and specific instructions. However, when Moses told the Israelites, they would not listen because of their discouragement (Exodus 6:1-9).

During the next year or so Moses and Aaron, now in their 80s, did exactly what God commanded, and the already discouraged Israelites lived through the period of the plagues,

averaging about one a month. The Bible (Exodus 7-12) is not always clear on how much the Israelites were affected by the plagues; however, it does say that God, beginning with the fourth plague, made a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites on more than half of the plagues: The Egyptians suffered, but the Israelites did not. Even though the Israelites were not directly affected by many of the plagues, it still must have been a stressful time for them.

During the last plague the Israelites had to take specific action to avoid being affected by the plague. They had to kill a lamb, put some of its blood on the sides and top of the doorframes, and eat the roasted lamb and bread made without yeast. When God saw the blood, he passed over that house without harming the firstborn within (Exodus 12:1-13).

In the next verse (v. 14), God tells them to remember this for generations to come, and the Israelites have done so for thousands of years. Closely related to this day of Passover is the sacrament of communion celebrated by Christians for nearly two thousand years.

That very night permission was granted for them to leave, so the Israelites quickly packed for their reentry. They took some of their own possessions and asked the Egyptians for items as well.

- Flocks and herds (v. 32)
- Dough before the yeast was added (v. 34)
- Silver and gold (v. 35)
- Clothing (v. 35)

Then we read that the Israelites “journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children” (Exodus 12:37). Although it sounds like they were at the end of the leaving stage that is not quite the case. Note that ALL of them left together, but that rarely occurs today—you just cannot get 600,000 men plus wives and children on one flight. The Israelites have yet to say goodbye to their teammates, and since traveling together that separation does not happen until years later. Today most

people leave their teammates and other friends as they leave their host country, so in the next chapter we will jump ahead in the Bible to the place where the Israelites leave theirs.

Part 2: Reentry Today

When you begin the leaving phase, you start living in “two worlds.” Of course, you are still in your host country, but thoughts of your journey home and of your passport country become more frequent. It may be a temptation to essentially “check out” of what you are doing in your host culture before you actually complete your work there. In addition, as just noted with the Israelites, things may get worse before they get better.

Finishing well

It is important to be sure that you complete whatever is left of your task in your host country in the time you have left. Such completion takes different forms depending on the nature of your task. Sometimes the form is obvious, but at other times it is not so clear

If you are a teacher, your task is to finish the semester or academic year you agreed to teach and turn in grades. Teachers may continue to meet classes but spend little time in preparation. They may receive papers or tests and just put grades on them without supplying helpful comments for the students. Finishing well means staying fully involved until everything is over; otherwise the teacher is like the student who works hard until the week before the end of the semester then does not turn in the term paper and fails the final exam.

If your task is a continuing one with your agency, such as serving as treasurer, finishing well means training your replacement for the task. Delegating your work to others is like passing a baton to the next runner in a relay race—your task is not completed until the next person is carrying the baton.

If your task is a one-time thing, such as building something, finishing well means completing what you are building—or delegating that work to others if you have not been able to complete it in the time you have, which is often the case in countries where supplies may not be readily available.

In the space below, write down what you have to do to finish well.

Four months to go:

Three months to go:

Two months to go:

One month to go:

Stress

During the leaving phase stress nearly always increases. One reason for this is that more things demand your attention—you need to make preparations for your return to your passport culture. In addition, something may occur in your host culture to make completing your task more difficult, such as we saw with the Israelites in Exodus 6. They had to make just as many bricks, but with no straw supplied. Then they had about a year of being present when God sent the plagues upon the Egyptians. Many times things get worse before they get better.

Additional tasks such as filling out your agency debrief form and having an exit interview with your director take additional time. You may find that the person delegated to take over your task really has other interests, and you realize that your project may get lost in the change. You may find yourself becoming critical of your replacement and then feel guilty for being critical. The list of stressors that arise may seem almost endless, but list some of them below.

Discouragement

After seeing things get worse and experiencing the stress, people may get so discouraged that they will not even listen to God’s wonderful promises, just as the Israelites would not listen to Moses. As they delegate responsibilities to others and finish their tasks, people may find themselves left out of discussions about what will be done in the future. Although this is done because they will not be there, some people feel left out, rejected, and unappreciated so they become discouraged.

As people withdraw more and more they may become disillusioned with the whole enterprise in which they have been involved and wonder whether or not their effort was worth it all. This may develop into resentment toward other people or their agency. In the space below write down some of your discouragements.

Memories

God told Moses to begin a festival that would remind the people of the good things God had done for them. This time of stress and discouragement is a good time to gather things that will bring back good memories. Take some things with you that will remind you and your children of good things that have happened in your host country. These may be small objects that you carry with you, recipes for favorite national foods, recordings of favorite national music, and so forth. If you do this, when your children are asked about moving into a new home, they will be able to say, “We have our home with us. We are just looking for a house to put it in.”

In this digital age, you can carry thousands of pictures and hours of video on DVDs, CDs, and flash drives. Take pictures and video of people, places, pets, and favorite things of all kinds. List below some of the items you want to collect to take with you as well as things you want to take pictures or videos of.

Time Orientation

The present is now viewed as somewhat temporary and the future begins to demand more attention. Rather than living primarily for today and devoting your energy to that, you begin devoting more and more of your energy to tomorrow and plan for what you will be doing then.

The further you progress in the leaving stage, the less you focus on the present and the more you focus on the future and what you will be doing then.

Spiritual Characteristics

As you enter this time of change, remember that God is the unchanging anchor of your life.

- I the Lord do not change... (Malachi 3:6).
- He will never leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6).
- Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).
- I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:13).

When you sense yourself being overwhelmed with the changes, make a specific point of centering your life in God’s stability.

Social Characteristics

During the leaving stage you are socially separating yourself from the people around you and disengaging from the roles you have been filling. You are closing a chapter in your life and going through ceremonies to bring closure to this period of time. People give recognition for what you have done and

make presentations of token gifts that you can take home as memories.

As you loosen ties with friends and coworkers, you sense them withdrawing from you because they now see you as being a temporary person in their lives, one who will soon be leaving. As you are excluded from more and more things, you may feel less and less part of the work going on.

Psychological Characteristics

Though you may have looked forward to less responsibility as the end of your time of service neared, you may interpret what is happening as rejection and come to resent it. You no longer feel needed, but you feel more and more in the way of the action taking place.

You also begin to feel the loss of many things that have been important to you during your time in the host culture. The grieving process begins as you mourn the loss. Finally, as your colleagues take over some of the roles you have been playing, you may feel guilty for adding to their already heavy loads.

This stage is “messy” and filled with conflicting feelings. You are happy as you anticipate seeing family again but sad as you say goodbye to friends; relieved to have responsibility taken by others but anxious about what you will do when you get “home,” and so forth. All of this is normal. Everyone feels this way during the leaving stage, and your ambiguous feelings indicate that you are OK.

The leaving stage includes many things that you have to do, so the next chapter is really a continuation of the leaving stage. It includes many actions you need to take.

Chapter 4

Building a RAFT (Part of Leaving)

During the leaving stage most people today leave their teammates when they depart from their host countries. It is a part of the leaving stage and needs consideration. The Israelites parted years later as they went to their homes as described in Joshua 22, so we turn to that now.

Part 1: The Longest Reentry

After the Israelites left Egypt, they traveled several months until they received the Ten Commandments and then traveled several more months to the border of their passport country, but they were afraid to enter it. Then they wandered for many years in the wilderness until they finally did cross the border into their passport country. After several years of taking possession of their country, they were ready to settle down and live there.

The Israelites were divided into twelve tribes which were to settle on different sides of the Jordan River. Nine and a half of the tribes were going to remain on the west bank, but

Moses had promised the east bank to the other two and a half tribes. Joshua called the two and a half tribes together and commended them for not deserting their brothers and said, “You have carried out the mission the LORD your God gave you,” and told them, “Return to your homes...on the other side of the Jordan” (Joshua 22:3-4).

Joshua then gave them a reminder to “be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses” gave, to

- love the Lord your God,
- walk in all his ways,
- obey his commands,
- hold fast to him,
- serve him with all your heart and all your soul (v. 5).

Before he sent them off to their homes he blessed them and reminded them of their

- great wealth,
- large herds of livestock,
- silver, gold, bronze, and iron,
- great quantity of clothing (v. 8).

On their way over to the east bank, they stopped and built a large altar on the west bank of the Jordan (v. 10). This was probably very near the spot they had camped and built an altar with stones from the bottom of the river when they entered the country several years earlier. The next few verses are the classical “good news”—“bad news” scenario.

- Good news? The two and a half tribes built an altar (v. 10).
- Bad news! The other Israelites on the west side of the river gathered to go to war against them (v. 12).
- Good news? The Israelites did not attack immediately, but sent Phineas and a committee of 10, one from each tribe on the west bank. (v. 12).
- Bad news! Phineas was not one to negotiate, but one to take drastic action (Numbers 25:1-9).

- Good news? Phineas and his committee spoke rather than speared (v. 15).
- Bad news! The speech was accusatory rather than conciliatory (vv. 16-20).
- Good news! The two and a half tribes had a peacemaker among them.

As you get ready to part from your friends in your host country, your leader or leaders will probably gather everyone together to express appreciation and give you a blessing. As you part you may be surprised at some of the things that happen and find yourself caught in a “good news”—“bad news” scenario yourself.

Part 2: Reentry Today

The advice that Joshua gave to the Israelites thousands of years ago is still good today: Love God, walk in his ways, obey his commandments, hold fast to him and serve him with all you are. Cross-cultural workers today probably do not return to their passport countries with the same things that the Israelites had, but they return with eternal wealth that moths, rust, and thieves cannot steal or destroy.

Dave Pollock pointed out that if you wanted to enter right, you had to leave right. To leave right he suggested that you build a RAFT, an acronym for Reconciliation, Affirmation, Farewells, and Thinking destination. At this point in Joshua it was certainly time to build a RAFT!

Although Phineas was not a good one to build a RAFT, fortunately someone in the two and a half tribes was. The first step in building a RAFT is Reconciliation.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation means doing whatever it takes to heal any broken relationships before you leave. Phineas had not

taken a good approach to healing a relationship. Rather he came pointing an accusing finger saying, “How could you? How could you?” Looking at the reply by the two and a half tribes (Joshua 22:22-29), we find five things that can lead to reconciliation. The vowels of the English language help us remember what they are.

Acknowledge the Almighty. First, their reply begins with, “The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows!” Beginning with acknowledging that you both serve the same God, that you are both building the same kingdom is very important. This way you establish a common ground for both parties, a point of agreement from which you can rebuild the relationship.

Explain your Excogitations. Yes, “excogitations” really is a word—it begins with “E” and means your thoughts. The second thing you need to do is to explain, clarifying your intentions and motives. Notice how they attempted to do that over and over at the beginning of many verses.

- “No! We did it for fear that...” (v. 24).
- “That is why we said...” (v. 26).
- “On the contrary, it is to be...” (v. 27).
- “And we said...” (v. 28).
- “Far be it from us to rebel...” (v. 29).

Giving these repeated explanations, they were trying to get the other Israelites to understand what they intended while doing what they had done. Of course, at the same time they were trying to understand how the other Israelites interpreted the same things. Likewise, as you explain your intentions when misunderstood, remember to make an effort to understand how the other person perceived them. Paraphrasing them by saying something like, “What I hear you saying is _____” (you say the same thing in different words). Until you understand how they view things, you will not be able to help them understand your thinking.

I-messages on the Issue. The third principle is to speak in first person (“I” if singular and “we” if plural) and

concentrate on the issue separating you rather than making personal attacks on other individuals. If you count the words “we,” “us,” “our,” and “ours” in verses 22-29 (NIV), you will find these first-person pronouns used 22 times in these eight verses, nearly three times per verse. On the contrary, you will find the second-person pronouns “you” and “your” used only five times, less than one per verse. How different this is from the “How could you? How could you?” used by Phineas in earlier verses. Using “I” does not mean that you are self-centered, only that you are talking about things as you see them. If you accuse others by using “you,” they are likely to become defensive and never understand what you are trying to get across.

Open to being the Offender. Fourth, admit that you may be the one in the wrong. You may be the one who has committed the offence. Notice that they tell other Israelites not to spare them “If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the LORD...” (v. 22). They go on asking God to hold them responsible “If we have built our own altar to turn away...” (v. 23). Being open to being in the wrong tends to diffuse emotions and lead to productive discussion.

Understanding before Unanimity. Finally, keep in mind that your goal is understanding on both sides. You are not trying to convince others that your position is the “right” one and to agree that theirs is wrong. You want to understand their viewpoint and help them understand yours. This really happened in Joshua 22. When Phineas and his committee of ten finally understood, “they were pleased” (v. 30). If you do not reach understanding, the problem will surface again and again. People want to know that you understand them. They usually don’t care about how much you know until they know how much you care.

On the lines below write the names of people with whom you need to reconcile.

On the lines below (and an additional sheet of paper) write out a sample apology to one of the people you listed above.

Go over your apology to make sure that you

- A _____ the Almighty
- E _____ your Excogitations
- Used I- _____ on the Issue
- Were O _____ to being the Offender
- Sought U _____ before Unanimity

Finally, have a trusted friend critique your apology and make suggestions for improving it.

Affirmation

Affirmation is the second step in building a RAFT. It is just a matter of letting others know that you appreciate them. It is saying “Thank you” for being who you are or what you have done. When giving their explanation, Phineas and his committee noted that, the two and a half tribes had “rescued the Israelites from the LORD’S hand.” In fact, when Phineas returned and explained it to the other Israelites, “They were glad to hear the report and praised God” (v. 33).

Telling others you appreciate them may be difficult in many cultures. Perhaps this is because it may be interpreted as trying to make the person indebted to us in some way so that

they feel obligated to do something for us. Rather than telling people how much we appreciate them while they are alive, we may wait until they are dead and give the compliment at a memorial service. How much better to say it when they are right there with you!

This appreciation may be expressed verbally face to face, over the phone or skype, in a letter, or in an email. It may be expressed in other culturally appropriate ways, such as a special small gift, an embrace, a pat on the back, or a special favor. Doing it sets us free to leave, helps others let go, and sets the stage for a warm reunion in the future.

Leadership is often a thankless position. As people often say, “It’s lonely at the top.” Every leader knows that it is impossible to please everyone under their authority all of the time. Even though you may have disagreed with many decisions your supervisor made, your affirmation can be a huge blessing for him or her. You may be quite surprised how grateful your leader may be for your thanks.

Being thankful is good for you as well as for the ones you thank. Thankful people have the following characteristics.

- More alert and enthusiastic
- More determined and attentive
- More energetic and optimistic
- More progress toward goals
- More exercise and better sleep
- More forgiving and helpful to others
- Higher immune response
- Closer family ties
- Less stress and envy
- Less resentment and greed
- Less bitterness and depression

On the lines below write the names of people you want to affirm.

Go and actually tell these people how much they have meant to you.

Farewells

Saying your farewells is the third step in building a RAFT. Don’t just leave. Say goodbye to people in a culturally appropriate way to bring closure to your time together. Do it in a setting that is comfortable for all involved. This may be having coffee together in your favorite shop, taking a walk together through a meaningful place, eating lunch together at a familiar restaurant, or having them over to your home for dinner.

List the people you want to tell goodbye.

In addition to people, say goodbye to special places. Of course, you do not need to do this verbally, but visit those places remembering things that happened there. You may want to visit the university where you taught, the fellowship where you worshiped, the school your children attended, the hospital where you had a child, and so forth. Your children may also want to say goodbye to playgrounds, parks, and their rooms. List places you want to visit before you leave.

Goodbyes to pets may be more emotional than you expect. Dogs and cats which have been around your house for several years almost become members of the family. Children may become attached to the goldfish they have been feeding for years. As you leave them in someone else’s care, remember the good times you had with them.

Other possessions you have may just be too large to take with you. So say goodbye to the table you sat around as a family, to the entertainment center where you saw great movies, and to the favorite dresser in your bedroom. As you sell or give these things away, be thankful you had them and think about what is ahead.

Think Destination

The final step in building your RAFT is to think about your destination. What are your expectations in going home? Just as you have said goodbye to many people, places, pets, and possessions, what do you look forward to saying hello to when you reenter your culture? This is the time to plan for the future.

Just as you are saying goodbye to some people, now is the time to begin reconnecting with other people in your passport country. Email and skype in this digital age make it easier to plan when and where you will reunite. Begin to plan a schedule to greet family and friends when you get “home.”

Likewise as you bid goodbye to some places, now is the time to “look” for new places in your passport country. Where do you want to live geographically? Do you want to live in the north, south, east, west, or central part of the country? Urban or rural? What kind of housing do you want? A house to buy? To rent? An apartment? A dorm room? The Internet makes it possible to “look” for these while still in your host country—but it is a good idea to have a friend back home personally look at whatever you pick out.

As you say goodbye to your current position, plan for your new one. What kind of work/study/ministry do you see in the future in your passport country? Again, you can explore what is available on-line and even fill out applications for employment or further study and send them as email attachments.

After you have built your RAFT, you are ready for the end of the leaving stage. If we return to Exodus 12 which we left to build our raft, we read that the Israelites “journeyed from Rameses to Succoth...At the end of the 430 years, to the very day” the Israelites left Egypt (Exodus 12:37, 41). The leaving stage was over. When they had first come to Egypt 430 years earlier, they had settled in Rameses (Genesis 47:11). Now they left Rameses as they ended the leaving stage which had lasted about a year.

Chapter 5

In Transit

Transit is defined as the act of passing over, across, or through something. Knowing that they are “in transit” and waiting between flights, passengers often look for the transit lounge as they are passing through the airport. The transit stage of reentry begins when you leave your house in your host country and ends when you unpack your mind, not just your suitcase, in your passport country. It may last only a few hours or days, but it may last a few weeks or even longer.

Part 1: The Longest Reentry

When the people began their transit stage by leaving Rameses (Exodus 12), they had seen God’s incredible work in setting them free. Though they were armed for battle, God did not lead them along the shortest route to their passport country because war was more likely there. God said, “If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt” (Exodus 13:17).

Using the pillars of cloud by day and fire by night, God led them to camp near the Red Sea. When the politicians in Egypt realized anew that their labor force was leaving, they

pursued them. When the Israelites looked up and saw the Egyptians approaching, they were terrified and asked Moses, “What have you done to us.... Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?’ It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” (Exodus 13:11-12).

The ups and downs continued chapter after chapter. When the Israelites saw God’s power in allowing them to cross on dry ground and drowning the Egyptians as they tried to cross, they put their trust in God and Moses again (Exodus 14). Moses and Miriam sang songs of exaltation to God, but three days later the people grumbled against Moses saying, “What are we to drink?” (Exodus 15). God sweetened the water, but then the people complained about food so God gave them quail and manna (Exodus 16). They quarreled and grumbled against Moses about the water, so God had Moses strike a rock at Horeb (Exodus 17). Talk about ups and downs!

In the third month of the transit stage (Exodus 19:1) they camped in front of Mt. Sinai. God had Moses make sure that the people would obey fully, and they said they would. After a special ceremony, he led the people out of the camp to meet with God as God called Moses up to the top of the mountain where he gave the Ten Commandments inscribed with his finger on two pieces of stone (Exodus 31:18). Talk about a mountain-top experience!

Unfortunately, but true to form, in the next verse the people got so tired of waiting for Moses to come down that they asked Aaron (Moses’ brother) to make them gods who would go before them. Aaron took their gold and made an idol in the shape of a calf, building an altar in front of the calf. When Moses approached the camp and saw the idol worship, he threw the stones tablets breaking them at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 32). Talk about spiritual ups and downs!

In the fourteenth month of their transit stage (Numbers 10:11) the cloud started moving again, so the Israelites left Sinai and headed for their passport country. After more ups and

downs Moses sent the leaders of each of the twelve tribes to explore their passport country before taking everyone in. These twelve men spent forty days exploring and came back with a report. At this time the Israelites seemed to be nearing the end of their transit stage.

They began their report by saying that “the land flows with milk and honey” (Numbers 13:27). They were amazed at the prosperity they found and brought back a bunch of grapes that was so large it took two of them to carry it on a pole between them. They brought other fruit as well.

However, they went on to say that the people were powerful and the cities large (Numbers 13:28). They felt overwhelmed by what they saw. Caleb wanted to go in and take over their passport country, but the others pointed out reasons not to go.

- People there are stronger than we are (v. 31). They felt inferior.
- They gave a bad report about the country (v. 32). They became judgmental.
- They said the land devours those living there (v. 32). They were disappointed.
- We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes (v. 33). They had low self-esteem.
- The Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron (14:1).
- We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt (14:2).
- The whole assembly talked about stoning them (14:10).
- Only Moses’ intercession prevented God from striking the people dead immediately (14:13-19).

Though God did not do that, he did say that all over twenty years of age, except for Joshua and Caleb, would die before the group reached their passport country, and their children’s transit stage would be another forty years, the longest in the Bible.

They did not start to enter until we reach Joshua 1. There Joshua, one of the men who wanted to go in and take

their passport country, was telling his people to get ready, that in three days they would “cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own” (Joshua 1:10). Note that God is giving the land to them, but they have to take possession. At this point they are ready for the entering stage.

Part 2: Reentry Today

Note that the transit stage lasts until you unpack your mind. Unpacking your mind involves considering the good and difficult things that happened during your time in the other culture, and then fitting these experiences into your life story. After you have done this, you are ready to move on with the next chapter in your life. This may be days or weeks after your suitcases are unpacked. It is certainly longer than the time needed to fly to your passport country and drive to your dwelling there. This travel can usually be done in forty hours or less today.

The transit stage certainly includes travel time and the familiar physical jet-lag which takes anywhere from a few days to a couple weeks, depending on how many time zones are crossed. In addition, it includes the time to unpack our minds, kind of a psychological jet-lag not handled with air travel. From the time Paul, Barnabas, and Silas traveled by ship through the middle of the twentieth century, people usually had several weeks at sea on ships to think and talk about what their time as an expatriate meant to their lives. Today people are home in a matter of hours, and they usually “hit the ground running” rather than taking time to process what has happened to them.

The transit stage is a time of emotional high and lows. The Israelites were elated to leave Egypt, and a few days later they wished they were back. They sang songs of exultation to God, and days later they were grumbling and complaining against Moses. One has to be very careful during this time. For

example, grumbling and complaining may generalize from people to God and result in your turning your back on him. Or you may be dissatisfied with your housing, think you deserve something better, and wind up buying a house that is way out of your price range.

Following are several things that may occur as you begin to unpack your mind. You may be overwhelmed and disoriented, feel inferior and lose self-esteem, and become disappointed and even judgmental while you unpack your mind.

Overwhelming abundance

When you return to your passport country, you (like the Israelites) may be amazed at the abundance of things you find there. You may be dazzled and love what you see. You may feel overwhelmed by seemingly simple things such as buying groceries in a store. Some people find it nearly impossible to buy something as “simple” as toilet paper or cereal. For the last few years there were just one or two kinds of toilet paper or cereal, and in their passport country there are entire aisles stacked six feet high on both sides with different kinds and sizes. One person was unable to even buy a jar of ketchup.

You may also find an abundance of things your children are “expected” to do. The church may have something on for children of different ages nearly every afternoon or evening. The community may have Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys Clubs, Girls Clubs, 4-H,.... Even preschoolers are in leagues for soccer, basketball, football, baseball, track, cross-country.... Most elementary kids are taking lessons of some kind after school, such as piano, tennis, swimming, karate....

Poor thinking

We saw God was right in Exodus 13 when he said that if the people faced war they might want to return to Egypt. A general principle here is that one should not make important

decisions at any time while in the transit stage. Make those decisions while in the leaving stage or after you enter the entering stage. You cannot think clearly while in the chaos of transit. At times you may feel disoriented or “lost,” kind of like you are a spectator rather than a participant.

Feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem

The Israelite spies felt inferior to the people they saw in their passport culture. Since your passport culture has changed, you may not know how to do even “simple” things that were automatic when you left. You may not know what to do with your credit card to complete (or begin) a transaction or you may not know the difference between debit and credit cards. You may not know how to unlock your car or to turn the ignition off—the radio just keeps playing after you take the key out. You may feel inferior when you cannot do these things, but you are not—you just have not had the opportunity to learn these changes as they occurred.

People returning to their passport cultures may have low self-esteem because they cannot carry on conversations about recent TV shows, political issues, or humor at “home.” Of course, they feel like fish out of water because they really have been out of their culture for some time. This is normal, not a sign of some character or intellectual defect.

Growing Disappointment

Just as the spies were disappointed in their passport country, you may become disappointed with yours. People there tell you how much they missed you and how good it is to see you, but they only wrote a few times during the time you were gone. They tell you how good it is to see you but have little interest in what you have done. After asking you how “your trip” was, they may listen for a few minutes and then begin telling you about the exciting football game they were at last night.

Judgmentalism

The Israelite spies gave a bad report about their country. You too may be tempted to become judgmental about your passport culture. You may see it as superficial and materialistic because relationships mean so little and people have so much wealth. You may have so much to share about the things you have experienced that have broadened your view, and they are interested only in insignificant things. Be very careful not to become critical, cynical, and dismissive.

Time Orientation

Probably no one really likes the transit stage, so they are oriented toward the future. How many people have you met ten hours into a flight who said, “I sure hate to think that we have only two more hours to go—I wish it would last another ten!” No one likes the normal emotional ups and downs, the fuzzy thinking, the feelings of inferiority, or the disappointment of being in transit. People are just glad when it is over and they can begin to get on with life.

Patience is a needed virtue during this time. No one likes to have a cold, but they know that the runny nose and coughing are “normal” for that time and will go away relatively soon. Likewise, no one likes transition, but people should know that transition will not last forever. Patience during this time shortens the emotional upheaval.

Social Characteristics

While in transit, people are unsure of their status, they simply do not know where they fit in the society. In a sense, they have no status. They feel clueless because they do not seem to fit anywhere in the social structure they have “returned”

to. Social groups have all changed, and they do not “belong” to groups they remember leaving.

This is a time of chaos, a time of ambiguity and misunderstandings. People feel isolated. It only seems logical that people would reach out to you and make you feel at home, but you find that you have to initiate relationships. It is often a very lonely time. Again, this is normal. Remember that life has been moving on for others while you were gone, and people are busy. Patience is again the key. You were the one to leave, and you are the one who will probably have to take the initiative to reconnect. It would be nice if others invited you, but the fact is that you may need to invite them.

Spiritual Characteristics

During the leaving stage you re-centered your life on the unchanging God. During this transition stage, with the chaos going on all around you so that you are overwhelmed and cannot think clearly, now is the time to emphasize remaining (abiding) in him. Jesus discusses remaining in John 15.

- He commands remaining in him (v. 1).
- Those who do not remain are destroyed (v. 6).
- Meditating on his word leads to remaining (v. 7).
- Obeying his commands leads to remaining (v. 10).
- Answered prayer is a result of remaining (v. 7).
- Bearing fruit is another result of remaining (v. 4).

As always, the best way to “remain” is to have a daily devotional life, especially in this time of chaos. In John 15 Jesus emphasizes

- study of the Word,
- obeying his commands,
- prayer.

In addition it is helpful to have a team of people praying for your reentry so that the enemy does not keep you from remaining.

Psychological Characteristics

The most characteristic emotions of being in transit are anxiety and depression. People have left one culture and have not even begun entering another yet. They are literally people without a culture, not belonging to any group. They are still grieving the loss of leaving their host culture and do not have the sense of being a part of their passport culture.

As mentioned earlier they feel overwhelmed, know that they are not thinking clearly, are disappointed, feel inferior, and have low self esteem. Fortunately, this stage is usually only a few days or weeks, and then they begin entering their passport culture.

Chapter 6

Entering

The entering stage begins when your mind is unpacked, and it lasts until you are fully involved again. Just crossing the border into your passport country does not mean that you are really back into your passport culture. It takes time and energy to reenter the culture, get updated, and become a part of social groups again. In the last chapter we saw that the Israelites were to “take possession” of their passport country which “God was giving” them. God was giving it to them, but it was not theirs until they took possession of it. It took them several years to do so.

Part 1: The Longest Reentry

In preparing Joshua to help the Israelites enter their passport country, God gave him several wonderful promises in the first five verses of the book. He followed these up with several commands.

- Be strong and courageous (v. 6). Be strong and very courageous (v. 7). Be strong and courageous (v. 9).
- Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you (v. 7). Be careful to do everything in it (v. 8).

- Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night (v. 8).
- Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged (v. 9).

The Israelites had seen God’s power displayed as they left Egypt by walking on the dry ground at the bottom of the Red Sea (Exodus 14). They saw it displayed again in a similar way as they entered their passport country by walking on the dry ground at the bottom of the Jordan River (Joshua 3:14-17). God had them build a memorial from stones taken from the river bottom so that their children would remember it forever (Joshua 4:20-23).

God told Joshua, “I have delivered Jericho into your hands”—and then told Joshua what he had to do for the next seven days to actually take the city (Joshua 6:2). It was a “done deal”—as long as he obeyed. Joshua obeyed and reminded the people about keeping away from the “devoted things” that were to belong only to God, and they had a wonderful victory as they took the city. Unfortunately, Joshua 7 begins with, “But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things.” The ups and downs continue during the entering stage as well.

Of course, the Israelites did not receive a warm welcome when they moved onto the west bank. In fact, most of the people there prepared to go to war with them (Joshua 9:1-3). Likewise, you may be disappointed in the welcome you receive in your passport country—though war is not likely.

One thing that happened to the Israelites was that a group of people deceived them. Those people pretended to be from far away and spoke favorably about God. The Israelites made a peace treaty with them without consulting the Lord and later realized they had been tricked. You may well be disappointed in people back home even if they do not deceive you.

Again and again Joshua comes back to what God told him at the beginning. “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 10:25). This is a great verse to remember as you go through the entering stage yourself.

Part 2: Reentry Today

Though it took the Israelites about seven years to enter their passport culture, it usually takes about a year, a full annual cycle. Keep in mind that many things have changed while you have been gone. You have changed, as have your friends, your family, your church and your culture. It takes time to reenter the culture. Of course, things are never be the same as they were, but if you remain long enough, they reach a new state of equilibrium where you are again be “at home” in your passport culture.

Your have changed

Living in another culture and learning another language makes you realize that people view the world in different ways. Though you may have thoroughly disliked your host culture as you went through culture shock while becoming part of it, you now may find that you dislike things about your passport culture, things that you thought were good when you left. You may find that you do not “feel at home” when you get “home” and view it through your new framework.

Your friends have changed

You were so much looking forward to picking up where you left off with your close friends, but you may not be able to do that. You see familiar faces, but not familiar people. Just as you have been changed by your experiences overseas, so they have been changed by their experiences at home. You may be unable to “be yourself” and relax around them, and neither can they around you. You get together with a group of old friends and find out that the social network of the group has changed, and different people are now best friends in the group. You just

aren’t able to break into the group or even carry on a lengthy conversation because you have so little in common.

Just as the Israelites were not joyfully received in their passport culture, you may not be enthusiastically welcomed in yours. Though war is not declared on you, you may find the welcome home more polite than joyful, and you may be disappointed in your underwhelming welcome. You have to be the one to initiate relationships rather than waiting for others to do so. Invite people over for dinner or table games. Suggest that you all go for a hike or some other activity together. Doing this several times will likely result in connecting with new friends or reconnecting with old ones.

Your family has changed

When you meet family, you realize that the middle aged members are heavier, the retired ones are grayer and aged ones are feeble. In addition to the obvious outward changes, some have also changed inwardly. Just as you have been changed by your experiences, so have they.

Some members of your family may no longer be alive; you miss them, and you realize that you have never really grieved for them, but everyone else is past that. Others in your family may have married since you left, and you now have new in-laws as part of the family, people you do not really know.

Your church has changed

You really loved your church when you left, but you are disillusioned by it now. People in it have such narrow perspectives. It seems like members are just apathetic and there is little spirituality there. You have a new pastor and the governing board of the church has new members. Long-time members of the church are gone. You want to share in a service, but the pastor will not allow you to since you did not serve with the denominational mission. You may find yourself

becoming judgmental of the church and even developing disappointment, resentment, and bitterness against God.

Your culture has changed

Elections held while you were gone may have put new people with new policies in power. Moral standards may have changed so that you are appalled at what you see on television and see on magazine covers at the checkout counter.

Underlying philosophical changes may have taken place that change the way people think as they make decisions. You may notice more wealth and materialism. You may notice how superficial many relationships are. Of course, some of these “changes” may really be changes in you.

Time Orientation

During the entering phase, you begin to change from the future orientation of transit back toward an emphasis on the present. As you do this you realize that the confusion and loneliness of the early part of the entering stage is temporary, that you will ultimately be able to live in the present again.

Social Characteristics

You may find yourself a marginal person on the edge of groups, observing more than participating. Your relationships are mostly superficial since you are not sure exactly where you fit, and you are not quite sure how to interpret nonverbal behaviors when you interact. No one is quite sure how long you will remain where you are since you are new, so acceptance is tentative and relationships are often viewed as temporary. You would like to find a “mentor” to help you break into the social network, but the ones most interested in befriending you seem to be marginal persons too.

Spiritual Characteristics

The commands of Joshua 1 are as relevant for reentry today as they were thousands of years ago. While obeying these specific commands, here are some other things to be aware of as you enter your passport country and take possession of it.

- The Israelites were not to ignore God’s Word but to “meditate on it day and night.” In the chaos of transit and the busyness of entering people are tempted not to have their daily devotions, a big mistake.
- In addition to meditating on God’s Word they were to obey it all, to do everything it said. God speaks through his Word as you meditate on it, and your responsibility is to do what he says.
- People who give God’s Word priority in their lives are less likely to be discouraged or terrified and more likely to be strong and courageous. They realize that they are not facing life alone, but as a child of a loving heavenly Father who will guide them.

Psychological Characteristics

You may tend to feel rather fearful and vulnerable, not sure what is going to happen and not wanting to do something offensive. Mainly you feel lonely and somewhat confused. At times you are rather miserable and even depressed. Of course, you know that sometime you will find your place, but you hope it will be sooner rather than later.

Chapter 7

Involved (Again)

Although it may seem like it will never happen, months later, often up to a calendar year, you notice that you feel more and more at home. Once more you belong, and you are again fully involved in your passport culture.

Part 1: The Longest Reentry

After entering for several years the Israelites reached the point where they were again involved in their passport country. At the beginning of the last chapter we found that God was giving the land to them, and all they had to do was go in and possess it (Joshua 1).

Near the end of the book of Joshua, we find that the giving and possessing are in the past.

- God gave the Israelites all the land he had promised. (21:43).
- They had taken possession of the land and were settled there (21:43).
- God gave them the promised rest (21:44).

- All of God’s promises to the Israelites were fulfilled (21:45).

Part 2: Reentry Today

Just as God eventually brought the Israelites back to their passport country and fulfilled all his promises to them, so he will do for you. By the time you are fully involved again, you will have taken possession of what God has given you. Reentry is an opportunity to trust God, an opportunity for spiritual growth. As you see how he has worked in your life and is working in it during reentry, your faith will increase. When you are fully involved in your culture again you are really home. You have become a part of the culture and again know where you fit, and you feel at ease with yourself where you are.

If you want to further reflect on what has happened to you, you may want to work through *Coming “Home”: The Reentry Transition* which leads you to contemplate on how your experience as an expatriate fits in with the rest of your life story. It is available on www.missionarycare.com.

Time Orientation

Finally you are living in the present with good memories from the past and hopes for the future, but you are living in the “now.” You can think about yesterday and tomorrow, but you are living today to its fullest.

Social Characteristics

Finally you know your place socially and feel like you belong and are part of a group. You know where you “fit” in that group, and so do others. You have friends who confide in you and you in them. They are committed to you and you to them.

Spiritual Characteristics

Finally you can worship without distraction because the worship style brings you to God, the music glorifies God and leads you to him, the preaching and teaching edifies your spirit, the service is just the right length, and you can share freely in smaller groups.

Psychological Characteristics

Finally you feel psychologically “comfortable” and “at home.” Within your group you feel affirmed, secure, and safe—real intimacy. You move through familiar places where you see familiar faces and interact with familiar graces. Your world is once more a place with few surprises and a place where you can automatically interact with it and within it.

Finally! You are home!

Appendix A**Home Assignment**

People have different experiences in reentry depending on how long they will be in their passport country. The chapters of this book are about what the majority of people do, and that is return to their home country to stay for long periods of time. However, some people reenter every few years to remain there a limited amount of time. Their experience may be quite different.

This appendix is about those who return to stay for about a year, a common time to be assigned at home. Of course, they are not likely ever to fully reenter, to be fully involved in their passport culture. Since it often takes about a year to reenter, they enter the leaving stage to return to their host country before they are through the entering stage into their passport country.

These people quite literally are entering and leaving simultaneously. At times they don’t know if they are coming or going—because they are doing both. People who return to their passport culture for a year every three or four years literally spend from half to three-fourths of their lives in reentry—to their passport culture, back to their host culture repeatedly.

They never fully become a part of their passport culture because they are going as they are coming. In addition, people in their passport culture know that they are soon going to leave, so they do not attempt to build lasting relationships—why should they since the other person is planning to leave soon anyway?

Often people on home assignment are expected to report back to people who have donated money to help your organization and those people want to hear success stories. They want to know that their donation, no matter how small, relieved the suffering of many people or resulted in a large number of converts. Those who have been working among the poor often have wonderful stories and pictures of smiling children, but those teaching in a university or translating the Word have little to show that will result in further help.

Of course, donors expect you to travel all over the country to represent the needs of the people you serve in other countries so this travel is sometimes called “deputation.” This travel to raise funds often results in families being apart as one parent is gone much of the time you are on home assignment. Some people home school and just take the whole family along.

In addition, the same people who expect you to travel widely to raise funds may conclude that you are not really serving nationals overseas. As a result, they may stop donating to pay your salary and travel expenses while in your passport country!

Ironically, home assignment is sometimes called “furlough” implying that it is a temporary absence for rest and relaxation from the work you have been doing. Most people find it much more stressful than serving in their host countries and long to be back in their host countries. Since they live in their host countries the majority of the time and put down deep roots there, it often is much more home to them than their passport country, the reason “home” is in quotation marks in the title of this book. Of course, it is difficult for people in your passport country to understand how home could be somewhere

else. As a result, they may not offer much support for your longing for another place. They may feel rejected, and you may feel alienated from friends and family who simply cannot understand why you would want to leave them again.

Since you have a broader worldview and see yourself as nonjudgmental, tolerant, and caring, it is difficult to reconcile this with your feelings of judging their provincialism and rejecting their intolerance of your feelings.

Appendix B

Home Every Year

Some people return briefly to their passport country each year, but they never return to stay. They most often return for a few weeks or a couple months during the time of school vacations, especially if they are teachers or if they have children in school.

These people usually do not really make any attempt to reenter their passport culture. They are basically in “vacation mode” while there, perhaps visiting relatives and “getting away from it all” to rest a bit. They may catch up on the technological changes, see physicians and dentists, update their financial affairs, and so forth.

However, they never develop any really close relationships. There is just not enough time to do so. They pick up where they left off with people there, but the relationships remain relatively superficial ones.

Appendix C

Recommended Books

Jordan, Peter. (1992). *Re-Entry: Making the Transition from Missions to Life at Home*. YWAM Publishing, P.O. Box 55787, Seattle, WA, 98155. (Written by a missionary for returning missionaries)

Storti, Craig. (2002). *The Art of Coming Home*. Intercultural Press, Inc. P. O. Box 700, Yarmouth, ME. (Written by a Peace Corps volunteer specializing in cross-cultural adjustment and repatriation)

Pascoe, Robin. (2000). *Homeward Bound: A Spouse’s Guide to Repatriation*. Expatriate Press, 1430 Terrace Avenue, North Vancouver, BC, Canada V7R 1B4. (Written for women in reentry)

Miller, Susan. (1995). *After the Boxes Are Unpacked: Moving on After Moving in*. A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60189. (Written for women moving in our mobile society, but applicable to returning missionaries as well)

Pirola, Neal. (2000). *The Reentry Team: Caring for Your Returning Missionaries*. Emmaus Road International, 7150 Tanner Court, San Diego, CA 92111. (858) 929-7020. (Best available to give to your church—helpful to read yourself)

Pirola, Neal (1991). *Serving As Senders*. Emmaus Road International 7150 Tanner Court, San Diego, CA 92111. (858) 929-7020. (Excellent general book for your church, includes reentry as well as many other topics)

The following E-books are available on www.missionarycare.com free of charge.

Koteskey, R. L., & Koteskey, B. R. (posted November 2003). *Coming “home”: The reentry transition*. www.missionarycare.com. (This book is written to be used by people after they reach their passport country.)

Koteskey, R. L., & Koteskey B. R. (posted February 2007). *We’re going home: Reentry for elementary children*. www.missionarycare.com. (This book is written for children 6-12 years of age.)

Koteskey R. L. (posted February 2007). *I don’t want to go homes: Parent’s guide for reentry for elementary children*. www.missionarycare.com. (This book is for the parents of children 6-12 years of age.)

...about the Author

Ron Koteskey and his wife, Bonnie, are often asked who they are and what they do. They have prepared the following information to answer those questions.

We taught for 35 years in Christian colleges as well as in public and Christian elementary schools . Bonnie taught elementary school as well as teacher education at the college level, and Ron taught psychology at the undergraduate level in college. Our three children are all married and have families of their own. As member care consultants with New Hope International Ministries of Wilmore, KY, we are now retired and, as volunteers, we provide member care for cross-cultural workers. We are not licensed health care professionals, but we emphasize care, encouragement, growth, and prevention of problems rather than treatment of severe problems. We provide such care to anyone, anytime, and anywhere at no charge for our time, usually providing our own transportation to the nearest airport and asking that those we are helping provide ground transportation, lodging, and food. Rather than working as professionals for pay, we provide member care as amateurs in the original sense of the word—out of love rather than for money. We have a mailing list of about 165 prayer supporters as well as about 55 financial supporters.

We do whatever we can to help cross-cultural workers. We do not belong to any sending organization but help others as someone with no official connection to their organization. Listed below are things we are currently doing, but we are always open to new ways to help. Let us begin with the most

general forms of help, continue with helping cross-cultural workers through their years of service, and end with specific ministries.

Books. Six E-books are available on the website and can be downloaded free of charge by anyone, anywhere, anytime.

- *What Missionaries Ought to Know...: A Handbook for Life and Service* is a compilation of many of the brochures about cross-cultural life.
- *Coming “Home”: The Reentry Transition* can be used as preparation for debriefing in a group, when being debriefed by an understanding person, or to debrief yourself.
- *Third Culture Kids and Adolescence: Cultural Creations* is written specifically for adolescent TCKs. Of course, the information in it is also applicable to other adolescents.
- *Understanding Adolescence* is a companion book written specifically for parents of adolescents.
- *We’re Going Home: Reentry for Elementary Children* is a story and activities for children 6-12 years of age.
- *I Don’t Want to Go Home: Parent’s Guide for Reentry for Elementary Children* is a companion book written specifically for parents to help them assist in their children’s reentry.

Twenty-five of the brochures have been translated into German and published in a book, *Was Missionare wissen sollten...*,” translated by Friedhilde Stricker and published by Verlag fur Kultur und Wissenschaft, Bonn, Germany (2003). It is available online at www.haenssler.de.

Brochures. The brochures on the website are also available in printed form for cross-cultural workers who do not have email or who have to pay the kilobyte for downloading their email. We mail one copy of any brochure (or all of them)

to anyone anywhere in the world who requests it. We give permission on each brochure for it to be copied and distributed as long as it is given to others free of charge.

Cross-Cultural Worker Care by Radio. Trans World Radio broadcasts in 180 languages to reach people through radio... TWR it has begun a daily 15-minute program in English aimed at Christians working in situations where communication through any other means may expose the workers and jeopardize their lives and ministry. The program is broadcast so that it reaches from Central Asia through North Africa, and you can find out more by visiting www.twr.org and www.memcarebyradio.com. TWR is adapting the brochures to a format suitable for broadcast to let Christians working in this area of the world know that they are neither alone nor forgotten.

Orientation. In an effort to decrease attrition, we participate in the training of new cross-cultural workers. We have made presentations on expectations, generational differences, moral purity, and conflict resolution. Of course, during our time at orientation we are available to talk privately with any cross-cultural worker candidates who want to see us. Currently we help in three orientations per year.

Seminars. We present information on various topics to a variety of cross-cultural worker groups. We have done seminars on third culture kids, leadership, generational differences, conflict, anger, adolescence, maintaining mental and physical health, and psychology from a Christian perspective. We have made these presentations to groups as varied as the entire cross-cultural worker force of one organization, cross-cultural workers on a field, seminary students, university students, field directors, national pastors, retirees, and appointees.

Cross-Cultural Workers in Our Home. Cross-cultural workers have stopped by our home to discuss issues that concern them. We have talked with individuals and couples about a variety of topics ranging from grief to interpersonal relationships to debriefing when they return to the states. These are people who have met us in larger group settings such as conferences, retreats, orientations, seminars, or even discovered us on our web page.

Cross-Cultural Workers on the Field (from Our Home). Cross-cultural workers serving on their fields are unable to stop by our home, so we have communicated with them in a variety of ways. Of course, telephone conversations are always helpful but may be quite expensive between some countries. E-mail is free, but the time between sending a message and receiving a reply may be rather long. Instant messaging by typing messages from computer to computer as well as via voice communication from computer to phone is free, and we do that on a regular basis.

On-Site Visits. At the invitation of cross-cultural workers, we visit them on the field to help them cope with various issues. We do this only if everyone involved wants us to come, and we have the blessing of the organization. At these times we have talked with individuals, couples, and groups of cross-cultural workers. We are not sent by the organization, but go only when invited by the cross-cultural workers themselves.

Care of Cross-Cultural Workers in a Geographical Area. We are just beginning to see the realization of a dream we have had for several years, a dream of providing care for cross-cultural workers from many different agencies in a given place. We want to go on a regular basis to the same cross-cultural workers so that they will get to know us and feel free to talk with us, rather than just going to help in a crisis situation. We have begun by spending a couple weeks in Bolivia talking

with about 30 cross-cultural workers from five different agencies in the spring of 2003 and again in the spring of 2004. We also presented seminars on various topics to different groups of cross-cultural workers, and we plan to return to Bolivia on a regular basis as further opportunities arise.

Reentry. We facilitate reentry retreats for cross-cultural workers in transition as they return to the USA. This includes a group debriefing as we talk for two or two and a half days about where they have been, where they are now and where they are going. As a part of this we have written a 50-page booklet, *Coming “Home”: The Reentry Transition*, which is available on our website for anyone to download and use even if they are unable to come to a retreat. Currently we do four reentry retreats (50-60 cross-cultural workers total) each year.

Organization Conferences. We have participated in organization conferences when invited to give churches suggestions on how to care for the cross-cultural workers they support financially. In these seminars we give suggestions above and beyond prayer support and financial support.