

THINK HOME

A guide for international students
preparing to return home

Adapted from THINK HOME by Lisa Espineli Chinn

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Adapted with permission from
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Introduction

Are you an international student who will soon be returning home?
If so, this book is for YOU!

When you first arrived in your host country you may have suffered some culture shock as you experienced aspects of life which are different from life at home. It is well known that entering a new culture and country can be a stressful experience!

But what about returning to your own culture (often called 're-entry') after a time away? Could that be just as stressful? Surprisingly, the answer is YES!

You may think that going home is returning to all that is familiar, but the reality is that **you have changed** during your time away. It may be the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the friends you have, your use of time, or it may be deeper changes at the level of attitudes, values and beliefs. You have changed! And life back home may have also changed while you have been away. Family, friends, and work colleagues will have certain expectations of you (and you of them). Or they may not know what to expect as you return! Successful re-entry will depend on how well-prepared you are to handle these changes and expectations.

THINK HOME is a workbook designed to help you think through:

- the realities of 'reverse culture shock'
- the process of re-entry to your home culture
- the responses you may make to the situations you face on your return

The workbook is particularly helpful for you if you are a Christian, have become a Christian during your time abroad or have shown interest in the Christian faith while abroad.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE BOOK:

THINK HOME is not designed to be read from cover to cover in one sitting. It is a workbook that asks lots of questions for you to think about and answer from your own situation. It is a book that is best worked through with others so that you can discuss some of the issues raised – in a small group or perhaps with a friend who is also about to return home or with a friend you have got to know while in your host country. Some parts you may prefer to do on your own. Not all of it will apply to you.

Try not to rush through the material. Give adequate time for discussion, personal reflection and prayer as you seek to prepare yourself for the challenges and opportunities of returning home.

If you are returning home as a Christian, you do not return home alone. Jesus Christ returns with you – you do not leave him behind! Whilst you may encounter many situations that will challenge your faith, remember Jesus' promise to his disciples –

“... surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.

(Matthew 28:20)

– a promise that is true for you if you are his disciple today. God is sending you back as his child to live for him and to serve him in your family, among your friends, in your work situation and in your nation.

May this book be helpful to you as you prepare to return home.

TOUGH QUESTIONS

Help you think through various potentially challenging situations which you may face back home. As you work through questions that apply to you, consider who could assist you (e.g. the Bible, others who have faced the situation, a friend or mentor).



SPOTLIGHT

Suggests passages in the Bible that may shed light on various situations.

I. Why are you returning home?

It may be that you are very excited to be going home or it might be that the thought of going home is frightening. This chapter will help you think through that process.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHAT IS YOUR SITUATION?

1. Why are you returning home? Tick all those that apply:

- Visa has expired
- Finished my studies
- Family needs me
- Job waiting for me
- Honour commitment to company/government/church
- Ready to go home
- Country/church needs me
- Want to go home
- Home is God's place for me
- Personal commitments to honour
- Financial reasons
- Goal(s) for coming to this country achieved
- Other: _____

2. What are your hopes and fears about returning home?

3. Would you prefer to stay in your current host country? Yes/No.
Why or why not?

4. Are you confident that returning home is the best plan for you?



SPOTLIGHT

Have a look at Psalm 23. This is a wonderful description of the Lord as our Shepherd. He cares for us, guides us, protects us, comforts us and provides for our every need.

God promises to be with us every step of our journey, guiding us by his Spirit through his Word and his people.

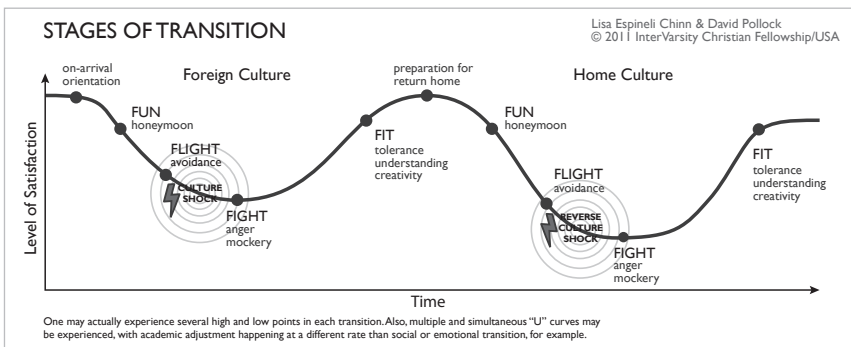


A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for writing or drawing. A small pencil icon is positioned at the top right corner of the box.

2. The reality of **עגרות תרבות** culture shock

Just as you experienced 'culture shock' when you first arrived, you will also go through some form of 'reverse culture shock' when you return home.

The re-entry transition has similar components as the entry transition into a new culture. In 1955, Lysgaard (Sociology professor from the University of Oslo, Norway) developed a tool to help describe the transition phenomenon. He called it the **"U-curve."** It describes the different feelings that one experiences when entering a new environment from a definite high point, a clear low point, and another high point signifying recovery and adjustment. Although life in another culture is not a clean series of ups and downs, the model nonetheless helps identify the feelings and when they occur. Subsequent research on the subject exposed some inadequacies. Even though it is not the definitive statement on cultural adjustment, it does help people identify with a transition stage. There are various names given to the phrases in the U-curve, but here they are named **Fun, Flight, Fight and Fit Stages** (See first half of the diagram).



In the early 1960s, Gullahorn and Gullahorn studied a similar pattern of feelings when returning home and they called the pattern "W-curve." The same up and down feelings in the "U-curve" are experienced in the "W-curve."

This simple diagram helps generate a much-needed re-entry conversation, processing, and understanding of what people may be going through. It is not to show a predictive nor a prophetic universal experience but a descriptive one with different feelings and phases. People may skip one stage altogether but will relate strongly with another. Others may have brief and short-lived phases. **But many find it freeing to name what they are experiencing.**

FUN: *When everything is working fine.*



This period is characterised by a brief or extended time of euphoria over being back home. You may be excited about certain features of the home environment. You may cherish the time spent with family and friends. The initial days and weeks may be spent visiting people, enjoying local food and sights, and sharing photos, videos, stories, and souvenirs.

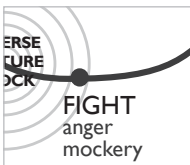
FLIGHT: *Flight is when your time as a 'celebrity' is over, and you are faced with the daily demands of work and life back home. You may begin wishing for your life back in the country that you were a guest in.*



The Flight stage may last for days and weeks, and the feelings of loneliness or "homesickness" for friends and experiences abroad may begin to dominate your world. You may be more aware of how different "home" is from the home you recall. You may feel "out of step" with the rest of your people and culture. You may have the sinking feeling of being an outsider in your own home.

You may begin to withdraw from people and be critical of how things are done. This is when you may begin to experience reverse culture shock - the emotional and social imbalance that results from a variety of changes in yourself, in others, and in your environment. It is your response to the magnitude of adjustments you have to make. At this stage you may want to "flee" abroad, or wish for your former life abroad.

FIGHT: *Fight is when there is a lot of frustration and anger towards your home situation, and you criticise and distance yourself from others.*



This is the bottom of the W-curve. You slide into this stage as your reverse culture shock intensifies. At this phase you may begin to seriously question why you even returned home. You may hear yourself say, "I hate this place!" Others may experience acute loneliness and depression.

The late David Pollock of Interaction, Inc., in his re-entry seminars for missionary kids, diplomats and business people, described anger and mockery towards home as a typical response at this stage of transition. You may be angry towards things which have changed and which now look bad to you and your new standards. Or you may mock or make fun of practices in your culture that now seem to you "old fashioned," unnecessary, foolish, and even childish.

When you look at the U and W-curve diagram, you will notice that the bottom of the curve on re-entry is lower than on the entry side. You may be surprised at how much harder it is to readjust back home. You expected to make adjustments when you entered another culture, but you did not expect or prepare to make adjustments when you were returning home. You thought you were "just" going home.

'Continuing re-entry stress' says Dr. Clyde Austin, a Christian psychologist and editor of two re-entry books, **'is normal for 6-12 months**. A significant minority may experience readjustment stress beyond that point.'

FIT: *Fit happens when you are able to resolve your inner conflicts, find your right place back home, and feel confident that you are making a positive contribution to others.*



Over a period of time, you may discover that the things that used to bother you have diminished. You may find yourself making peace with what is different and what you cannot change back home. You may find that your internal disharmony and discontent are being replaced by acceptance. At this stage you may be more open to understanding your culture again. You may be energised to re-engage and participate in life back home. However, your merging with your culture does not mean uncritically embracing everything at home. You may now have a greater confidence in the "new you" and can therefore hold your own views and values and still relate with those who are different from you.

Transitions can be messy. Remember you are readjusting on many levels simultaneously. You may be in the Fit stage in your job, but you are in the Flight stage in your home. Relationships may be great, but you are disappointed with the political situation of your country.

You will experience reverse culture shock when you first return home because:

- a) You have changed during your time away and
- b) Life at home has changed while you have been away.

The following chapters help you to think through these changes

"I was in a familiar city, among familiar people, speaking my mother tongue, picking up the dialect in the street, but feeling like a stranger!"

an international student

READ AND REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO RETURNING HOME:

HAVING TOO OPTIMISTIC A VIEW OF RETURNING HOME:

- I should be able to cope easily because it is my own culture. I will not have any adjustment problems.
- Everything is great back home.
- Everything will be the same as it was when I left.
- My relationships will be the same as when I left and I will fit right back in.
- People will be interested in hearing about my exciting experiences in a foreign country.

HAVING TOO NEGATIVE A VIEW OF RETURNING HOME:

- I will not be able to cope or adjust back to the life I had before.
- I know I am not going to like it back home.
- The change is going to be overwhelming.
- I know I will feel so alone when I return home and will miss my new friends terribly.
- No one will understand me, or my international experience. Everyone will be jealous and suspicious of me.

SOME REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

- I will go through a readjustment period, parts of which might be difficult.
- Returning home will initially feel great, but I should be prepared for a conflict of values, confusion, misunderstandings, followed by growth through all these experiences.
- I can expect some things to remain the same, but I should be prepared to face changes in myself, my family, friends, workplace, neighbours, and the country as a whole.
- I will enjoy the reunions with family and friends but will also feel sad for the people I have had to say goodbye to. I will feel alone at times, but God's promise to be with me wherever I go will help me through this transition time (Matthew 28:20b).
- People will respond to me differently and I should not be surprised if some are suspicious, jealous or threatened by me.

“God has been giving me a prayer burden for Maastricht for a year now, which has become clear as there is a company near there who wants to recruit me. My church leaders have also asked me to move from my home country to go and serve there . . . Walking with God and seeing where he takes you is indeed the most exciting thing possible.”

a German student

3. Your life in Europe

In coming to a foreign country, you will have seen and experienced so many different things. Whenever anyone has lived in another culture, they usually find that their outlook on life changes due to the experiences they have had: often they will be returning home a different person, perhaps even with a whole different worldview. As you think about going home, think back to when you first arrived and how you have changed over the past months/years.

GENERAL EXPERIENCE

I. List in the table below the factors that made your stay positive and enjoyable and the factors that made your stay unpleasant and difficult.

POSITIVE & ENJOYABLE	UNPLEASANT & DIFFICULT

2. List the things (values, lifestyles, attitudes, practices, technology, etc.) you like/do not like about living in your host country:

LIKE	DO NOT LIKE

3. From the list of things you like, which ones would you want to take home with you? Why?

From the list of things you do not like, have you learned anything through them? (Be honest with yourself!)

4. What were your goals in coming to this country? Were they fulfilled?

5. Apart from study, what experiences have most enriched you and how?

6. What friendships and/or significant people have influenced you most? Why?

CHRISTIAN/CHURCH EXPERIENCE

1. What are your observations of Christianity in your host country?
How is it different from your experience of Christianity back home?
2. Have your attitudes to the Christian faith been affected by your relationships with Christians from this, and possibly other, cultures?
3. What factors have helped or hindered your Christian growth while abroad?
4. What did you appreciate about your church life and experience here?
5. What church practices that you've observed in your host country will not work or fit back home? Why?

BIBLE & CULTURE

If you are returning home as a Christian or as a serious seeker who will be continuing your journey of faith, it is important to recognise that the way Christians express their faith differs in different cultures. While there are biblical truths and principles that are always true everywhere, there are also cultural expressions of the Christian faith which vary from one culture to another. It is important to understand the difference between the two, i.e.

- Biblical principles that are universal and apply to all Christians in all cultures (B).
- Cultural expressions of our faith that vary from one culture to another (C).

If you are a Christian returning home, you do not want to return as a 'foreign' Christian. Be aware that you may meet Christians in your home country who do things very differently from what you have experienced abroad. They may be expressing biblical truths in ways that are relevant to their/your home culture, which may not be exactly how other Christians would practise the same biblical truths or principles. Alternatively they may be practising cultural expressions of their faith which are inconsistent with biblical truth and therefore need to be challenged. This situation will need to be handled with sensitivity and love. You may want to meet with them to look at the Bible together to discover what are truly universal biblical principles and how they can be applied in your culture.

The following exercise will help you to think through this distinction. The examples are not intended to cover all the situations you may face, but to encourage you to start thinking biblically about cultural differences.

Mark 'C' if you think the statement below is a cultural expression of our faith, and 'B' if you think it is a biblical principle:

For example:

- C Being prompt at every meeting and appointment
- B Being prayerful
- Queuing when waiting for a bus or paying for something
- Making sure you phone before 'dropping in' or visiting a person's home
- Expressing your feelings openly and directly
- Being honest
- Having wine at communion
- Thinking of others before yourself
- Supporting your parents materially and in every way you can
- Having the right to speak freely in public
- Saving up money for your retirement
- Respecting the elders among you
- Greeting each other with a kiss
- Having a church building
- Being happy
- Doing things decently and in order
- Using any musical instrument for worship - drums, pianos, guitars
- Providing little children with their own church service
- Believing in democracy
- Practising hospitality
- Giving to those who are in need
- Going to church on Sunday
- Wearing smart clothes to church

TQs TOUGH QUESTIONS

You have visited several churches back at home but none **preach in the same style or sing praise songs** in the same way as the church you were accustomed to in your host country. Even though it is the same Christianity they practise, it feels totally different. What do you do?

If you wanted to **introduce change in your church** back home, what would you do and how would you do it?

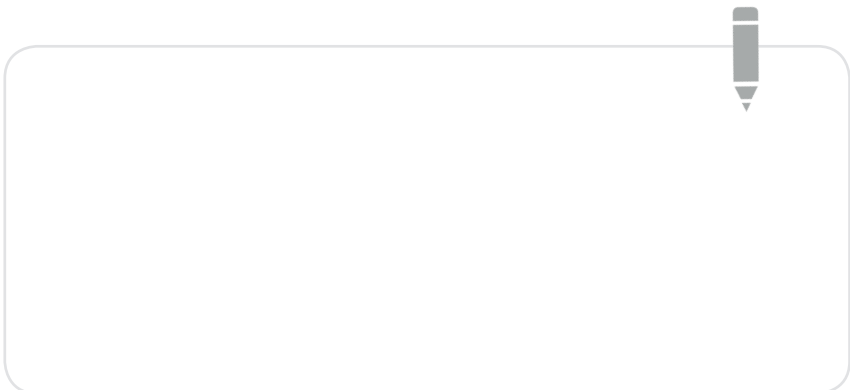
Your family is **opposed to your attending church**. Because of this, there is constant disagreement within the family. Should you stop going to church?

4. Who is going home?

Living and studying in a foreign country has exposed you to different values, practices and beliefs. Consciously or unconsciously you have learned to adapt to (and possibly adopt some of) the ways of your new 'home'. If you remain unaware of these changes, you will have greater difficulty in adapting to life back home. How much have you changed?

PHYSICAL AND IN OUTER APPEARANCE

1. What are noticeable differences about you now?
2. Are you more/less conscious of your physical appearance or image?
3. Have you developed a taste for other kinds of food? Give examples.
4. Any other changes?



SOCIALLY

1. What kinds of friendships have you developed and appreciated?
2. Have your attitudes towards people of different races / ethnicities / nationalities changed?
3. Have you come into contact with people who have opinions or values different to your own? Have your attitudes towards them changed?
4. Have you changed your manners or attitudes towards older people and people in authority over you?
5. Are you more/less class or status-conscious?
6. Have you become more or less outgoing?
7. Do you now prefer being or living by yourself or with others?
8. Any other changes?

ACADEMICALLY

1. What new intellectual habits have you developed?
2. Do you feel more or less academically prepared in your professional field?
3. Have your academic interests, goals or sources of motivation changed?
4. Any other changes?

EMOTIONALLY

1. Are you more or less comfortable expressing your feelings with others?
2. Are you handling your emotions (e.g. happiness, anger, disappointment) differently now from how you did back home?
3. How do you think the emotional changes you have identified will be viewed back home by:
 - Family?
 - Friends?
 - Society?
4. Any other changes?

POLITICALLY

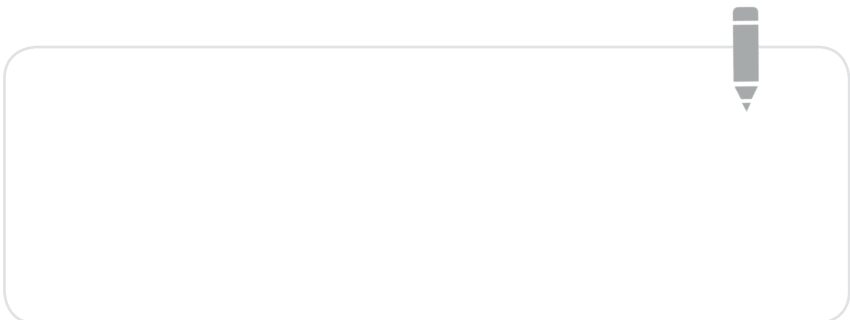
1. Have you kept up with changes and the political situation at home?
2. To what degree have your attitudes about politics been affected by your host country's media, professors, fellow students, or other people?
3. Have your views concerning the role of your government back home or concerning your host country's foreign policies changed?
4. How has your friendship with students from other parts of the world affected your engagement and interest in global issues?
5. Any other changes?

FINANCIALLY

1. In what ways have you changed your opinion and/or handling of money and material wealth? Have your buying habits or 'tastes' changed?
2. Are you more/less generous with your money and possessions?
3. How does your attitude differ from those you will be closest to on return (family, friends, colleagues)?
4. Any other changes?

SPIRITUALLY

1. How has your attitude changed regarding the religious beliefs and practices of your family/friends back home?
2. To what extent have you changed in theological or doctrinal views?
3. How has your relationship with God changed?
4. What new spiritual disciplines or habits are you practicing now?
Which do you no longer practice?
5. Any other changes?



IN YOUR PURPOSE AND AMBITION?

1. How have your purpose and goals for your life changed?
2. Would you consider your experience abroad life-changing?
Why or why not?
3. Are you more or less ambitious?
4. Any other changes?

Summarise the significant changes that have taken place in you while living and studying in your host country.

TQs

TOUGH QUESTIONS

Will you go home to **pre-arranged marriage practices**? How would you respond to a pre-arranged marriage to a non-Christian? What are your standards for a life partner? What does the Bible say about marriage and whom to marry?
See Genesis 2:23-24 and I Corinthians 7.

Are you seriously **dating someone in your host country**? How is that relationship going to affect your decision to return home? If the person is of another race, culture or religion, how will your family respond?

If you are a **woman**, will your foreign education be recognised and accepted back home? Will you experience sex/gender discrimination? How will you respond if you sense that you are not treated equally in your profession or society? How will other women relate to you?



5. Your experience with Christianity

1. Write out your story according to which of the three categories best suits you:

- a) If you are not a Christian, how has your understanding of Jesus changed during your time in your host country?

- b) If you have become a Christian since leaving home, write your story mentioning:
What you were like before turning to Jesus?
How you came to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?
What has changed in your life since you put your faith in Jesus?

- c) If you were a Christian when you arrived in your host country, summarise your experience with Jesus while living there.

2. How does your relationship with Jesus Christ affect the following areas of your life:

- a) relationships
- b) attitudes/behaviours
- c) priorities
- d) possessions

3. Where have you seen God's grace and mercy in your life?

4. In what areas is God challenging or working on you now?

5. How do you see your work or studies in relation to God?
- a) Where might there be a conflict between your faith and your work or studies?
 - b) What steps can you take to prepare yourself to be an effective disciple of Christ in the workplace?
6. What new things is God teaching you about how to love your parents and family?
7. How and where do you see the Kingdom of God expanding in your home country?
8. What have you learned and appreciated about:
- God the Father
 - The Holy Spirit
 - Prayer
 - Church
 - Sharing the Gospel
 - World Mission
 - Jesus Christ the Son of God
 - Bible/Word of God
 - Fellowship
 - Spiritual Gifts
 - Christian Service/Ministry



SPOTLIGHT

The book of Daniel in the Old Testament relates how Daniel lived in a society that didn't worship the true God. You may find it encouraging to read, especially if you are in a similar situation.

6. Developing a spiritual support group

God's family is worldwide. When you become God's child, you become part of his global family. Perhaps your first taste of that family was here in Europe, or maybe it was back home. Either way, you have, to some extent, experienced the fellowship of God's people and seen its value in your own growth as a Christian.

As you anticipate returning home:

1. How would it make you feel to have friends in your host country committed to praying for you and encouraging you after you return home?

ACTION: List the friends you think would be willing to pray for you. When should you start asking them? What are some specific things that you would like them to pray for you? Maybe they could come and visit you once you have returned home.

2. What difference would it make to have your Christian friends, Bible study group, or church pray specifically for you as you prepare to return as a servant of Christ to your own people?
3. It is important to start finding fellowship and a support group back home. Do you know other Christians who studied overseas who are returning (or who have returned) to your home country? If not, how can you locate some?

"During the first week, I cried every time I prayed and read the Bible. When I arrived I contacted my link. We have not been able to meet up, but she sent me a note of their study topic in my language. It is exciting, and even though I don't have anyone to talk to about faith and cannot go to church, I am standing firm."

student quote after returning home

ACTION: Various groups could help you find Christian contacts at home.

- IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) – www.ifesworld.org
IFES is a Christian network and fellowship of high school, university and college campus groups around the world.
- International Churches Network – www.internationalchurches.net

Ideally you should get in touch with them a few months before you return, in order to build up links with Christians at home.

In some countries there are fellowships of Christians who have studied abroad. They are an excellent source of mentors (someone who will advise, support and guide you) because they can help you adjust to life at home and can encourage and help you develop in your Christian life.

It is helpful to have mentors who can support you both spiritually and in your work. It can really help if the mentor is someone in the same or similar profession.

4. How dependent should you be on your support group in your host country?

How do you create a healthy balance between maintaining the new Christian relationships from your time abroad, and fitting into your local Christian community after returning home?

BIBLE CHARACTERS IN TRANSITION

The whole story of the Bible shows people in transition called to be faithful servants of God, for example:

- **Abraham** – called out of his home country in obedience to God to enter the Promised Land
- **Moses** – called to go back to Egypt to talk to Pharaoh and stand up for God
- **Paul** – going through so many different countries as he faithfully taught the message of God
- The Lord **Jesus** himself – as he left heaven to come down to earth that we might receive salvation

As we think through this all-important process of transition, it would be good to look at some of the examples in scripture and seek to learn from them. For this purpose four Bible studies are included in the next chapter. Set aside time to look at these studies as you work your way through this book.

7. Re-entry Bible studies

A. NAOMI – A RETURNEE SURPRISED BY GOD BOOK OF RUTH

CHAPTER 1

1. Why did Elimelech's family leave their home country (v. 1)?
2. Describe their time in a foreign country (vv. 2-5).
3. What major events caused Naomi to return home (v. 6)?
4. What choices concerning moving to Bethlehem did Naomi present to her daughters-in-law (vv. 7-14)?
5. How do you think Naomi felt as she and Ruth made the trip back to Bethlehem?
6. What kind of reception did Naomi receive? In what ways had she changed (vv. 19-21)?
7. What do we learn about Ruth's character in this story?

CHAPTER 2

1. Describe Ruth's first job in a foreign country. What made her experience pleasant?
2. In what ways was God watching over Naomi and Ruth's welfare (vv. 3, 10-12, 19-21)?

"The first communication about faith to my parents and friends was not very fruitful, as I had anticipated. I found it difficult to make them believe it's more than culture."

an Asian student

CHAPTER 3

1. What did Naomi ask Ruth to do? In what ways did Naomi understand her people's customs even after ten years of absence (vv. 1-4)?
2. What do you notice about Ruth (vv. 5, 13-14)?
3. How did Boaz respond (vv. 9-15)?

CHAPTER 4

1. What is the happy ending (vv. 9-13)? What factors played a major role in bringing this story to its good ending?
2. In what ways was Naomi an effective returnee?
3. What rewards did she have (vv. 14-16; see also Matthew 1:1, 5, 16)?

APPLICATION

1. Are you going home with any bitter experiences? How are you dealing with them?
2. How do you see God's hand in your life while you were away from home, including any difficult experiences?
3. What do you see to be your role as you return home? How can Naomi's example as a returnee be an encouragement to you?
4. Who are the foreigners in your country? How are they treated?
5. What do you think are some needs of foreigners in your community back home, and what may be ways to minister to them? How can you be of help?

"I have had a good time with my family and with some of my friends. I'm very glad that many of them are also in the faith, and have shared in the joyful experiences that I've had in England, especially my baptism."

a Chinese student

B. PAUL – LOVE IS GREATER THAN KNOWLEDGE I CORINTHIANS 8

1. What issue or problem does Paul address in this chapter (vv. 1, 4)?
2. What knowledge does Paul say is not possessed by every Corinthian believer (vv. 4-7)?
3. How does this knowledge or lack of it affect a person's behaviour (vv. 7, 10)?
4. One Christian feels free to act one way but another considers the same behaviour as sinful. What does Paul recommend when facing this kind of situation (v. 13)? Why?
5. What is more important: your freedom, or your brother or sister's spiritual welfare? Why?
6. In the end, what really matters to God?

APPLICATION

1. What practice(s) or behaviour could potentially become a source of conflict between you and other Christians when you return home?
2. Do you consider yourself as a 'person with knowledge' (v. 10)? If so, how will you handle those conflicts (vv. 8, 9, 13)?
3. What should your response be (v. 1)?

C. MOSES – THE RELUCTANT RETURNEE

EXODUS 3:1 - 4:17

1. In what setting did God choose to reveal himself to Moses (3:1-2)?
In what situations has God met you? What does this show about God?
2. What did God want to teach Moses (3:5)? Why?
3. Why did God introduce himself in the way he did (3:6)?
4. Look closely at verses 8 and 10. Are they contrary to each other? Why or why not?
What do they show of God's way of achieving his purpose?
5. What are Moses' objections and excuses (3:11, 13 & 4:1, 10, 13)?
What was his basic underlying problem? How did God answer each objection?

APPLICATION

1. Where and when has God appeared to you? How did you respond?
2. What task(s) is God asking you to do back home? How do you feel about them?
How will God's answers to Moses comfort you and give you courage?
3. When and why do you find it hard to trust in God? What things about God should
you remember when faced with the temptation of unbelief?
4. How may you be part of God's plan to liberate your people?

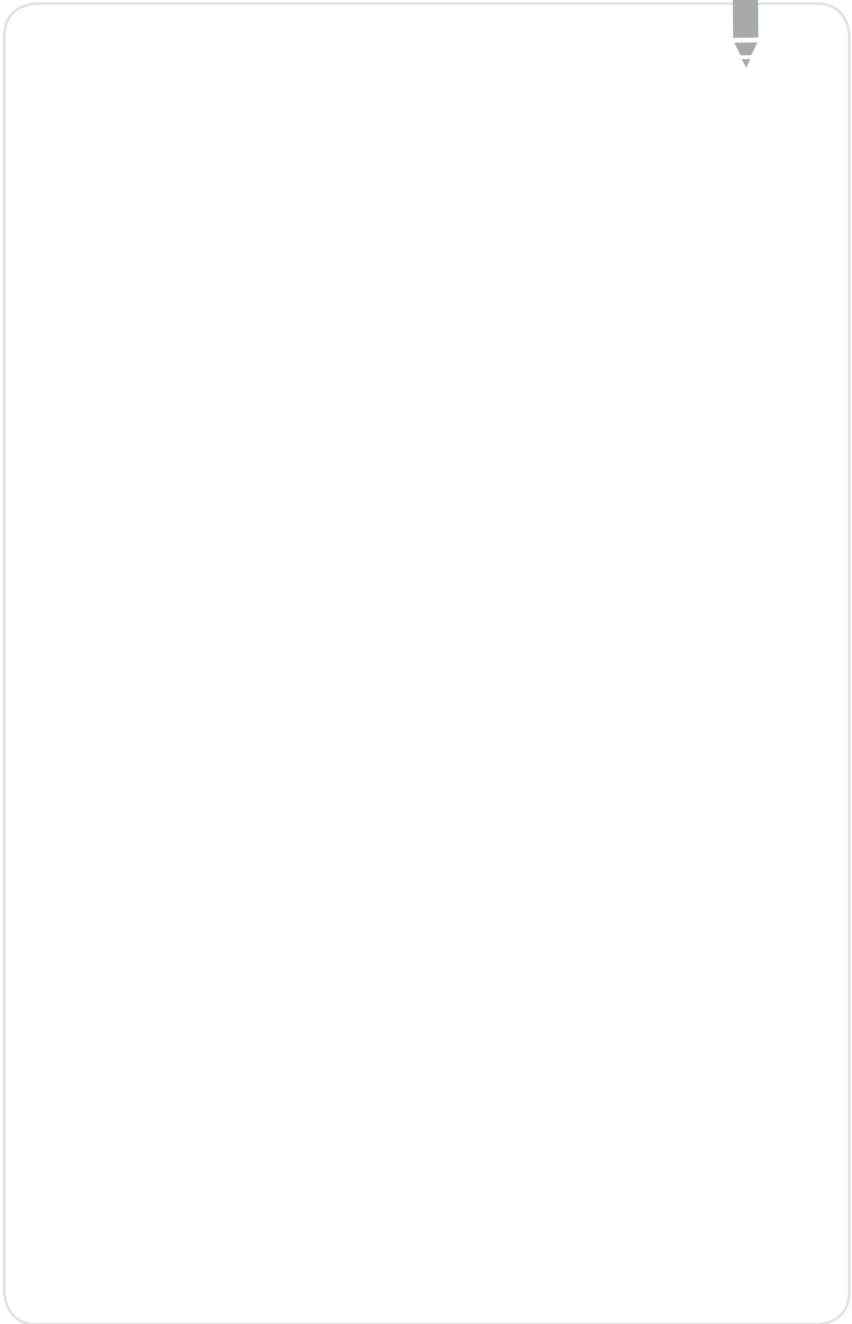
D. JESUS CHRIST – THE RETURNEES' MODEL

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

1. What would make Paul's joy complete (v. 2)?
2. What is the enemy of unity (vv. 3-4)? How can unity in the Body of Christ be maintained?
3. Who is Jesus Christ (v. 6)?
4. What did he suffer for us? In what ways did he humble himself (vv. 7-8)? Why?
5. After he humbled himself he was exalted. What honour and authority came with this (vv. 9-11)?

APPLICATION

1. In what areas of your life will you be tempted to be proud as a returnee?
2. Jesus Christ, who is God himself, was willing to be a servant. Are you? In what ways can you serve your family, community, church, and country?



8. Possible re-entry challenges

Re-entry adjustment is part of every returnee's experience. However, the degree of difficulty varies with each person's maturity, unique situation, and re-entry preparation.

Below is a list of some issues encountered by returnees. Tick those you think you may face.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

- Identity confusion – who are you now?
- Unrealistic expectations
- Changes in lifestyle
- Changes in values
- Changes in fashion
- Relatives and friends not understanding what it feels like to have lived abroad
- Different concept of time
- Different pace of life (faster or slower)
- Living with family
- Other: _____

How are you going to deal with the potential issues you have identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

- Loneliness and alienation
- Envy and distrust in relationships
- Tension between individual and family focus
- Feelings of superiority due to international experience and travel
- New and different interests from local peers
- Change in status or role
- Dissatisfaction with some rituals in society
- Indifference of friends and relatives to your foreign experience
- Lack of serious, interested, and willing listeners to your stories
- Adjustment to noise, pollution, crowds, city congestion, unhygienic conditions, etc.
- Other: _____

How are you going to deal with the potential issues you have identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

- Impatience or misunderstandings due to direct or indirect communication styles
- Absence of colleagues who speak the same 'language'
- Habits from your host country which you have adopted that may be misinterpreted by people back home
- Body language
- Speech mannerisms
- Jargon and slang words
- Other: _____

How are you going to deal with the potential issues you have identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

NATIONAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

- Changes in your country's conditions, national priorities, policies, views
- Economic uncertainties and conditions
- Changes in leadership, ruling parties
- Bureaucracy
- Reluctance to live in a setting of political uncertainty
- Dissatisfaction with political situation
- Other: _____

How are you going to deal with the potential issues you have identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

- Relevance of foreign education to home situation
- Lack of facilities and resources for research or application of skills
- Absence of professional education programmes to keep up with new developments and knowledge in the field
- Little opportunity to improve skills
- Incomplete fulfilment of educational goals abroad and its implications back home
- Lack of opportunity to apply education and expertise gained abroad
- Other: _____

How are you going to deal with the potential issues you have identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

TQs TOUGH QUESTIONS

How involved will you be **politically** when you return home? How will your commitment to Christ affect your political role and position?

What involvement will you have in your country's **social issues**? How will you relate the gospel to social issues: e.g. poverty, malnutrition, HIV/Aids, various forms of under-development or oppression?

Your friends might have reacted strangely when you told them that you had become a Christian. Some might not have contacted you since. Others might think you are going through 'a phase', while others might think that it is 'just cultural' and you need to adapt to being back home. How are you going to respond to each of these?

PROFESSIONAL/WORK ISSUES

- Long work hours
- Gender bias
- Relationship with supervisor
- Expectation to participate in questionable or unethical behavior
- Inability to work in chosen speciality
- No job openings
- Feeling of superiority due to foreign training
- Isolation from academic or scientific developments abroad
- Non-recognition or appreciation of foreign degree
- Jealousy of colleagues
- Unrealistic expectations (job position, salary, etc.)
- Concern with quick material success
- Corruption issues
- Perceived lack of enthusiasm and/or commitment among co-workers
- Other: _____

How are you going to deal with the potential issues you have identified?

SPIRITUAL ISSUES

- Absence of fellowship and support of Christians who love and care for you
- Difficulty in finding a good church, which leads to "church hopping"
- Not being welcomed in some churches
- Young people being expected to listen and accept what older people say
- Returnees may be viewed as threats to the pastor or church leadership
- Being ignored or overworked in church
- Judgmental attitudes towards the church back home
- Sharp contrast between the clergy and laity
- Difficulty in distinguishing between what is truly Christian and what was a cultural practice of Christians in your host country
- Different dynamics in small group fellowship or Bible study
- Difficulty in using or applying some ministry skills learned abroad
- Temptation to feel superior towards church leaders who have not had an experience abroad
- Other: _____

How are you going to deal with the potential issues you have identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

9. Thinking about your links back home

In earlier chapters you thought about how you have changed while away from home. There will also be changes that have happened back home whilst you have been away. Think about whom and what you are returning to and how any changes will impact the way you look at life back home.

1. Do you feel informed and close to people back home? Why or why not?
2. Have you kept informed of news and events in your own country? Why or why not?
3. What major changes have occurred in your country while you have been away?
How will they affect your return home?
4. How many times have you travelled to your country while studying abroad?
How did those visits help you connect with your own people?
5. Do you enjoy being with others from your home country while abroad?
Why or why not?
6. Are there any changes in your political thinking which could bring you into conflict with others back home?
7. How are you going to communicate with your church/church leadership about your experiences abroad? Should you start this before leaving your host country or wait until you are home?

7. Were you a Christian before you left home? How have you maintained and strengthened your relationship with your church back home (if you had one) and with other believers?

What can you do now to renew or strengthen those relationships?

8. If you became a Christian during your time in your host country, who at home knows about this? Who else should know? How and when will you tell them?

What is your family's attitude towards Christians? How are you praying for them?



SPOTLIGHT

Some verses for you to consider as you go back to your family:

Matthew 10:37-39; Exodus 20:20; Romans 8:32; John 15:16; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

“It has been difficult for me to tell my family. My father and brothers have said that I cannot continue as a Christian now that I’m home. I am not quite sure what to do.”

a Taiwanese student

“There are, indeed, a lot of reverse culture shocks, and I am experiencing a different kind of shock everyday. The first week was the most difficult. I suddenly found I had lost everything that used to belong to me when I was in my host country. Even things like talking to someone about faith or reading the Bible with somebody became luxuries, not to mention going to church.”

a Chinese student

WHO IS BACK HOME

Focussing on home and the changes that have taken place there prepares you to re-enter with more realistic expectations and with the minimum amount of stress.

1. Describe your family as you remember them (characteristics, features, personalities, etc.).
2. What have been some major changes in your family since you left? (Marriages, births, deaths, new home or location, etc.)
3. What aspects of family life do you expect to be the same?
4. What family characteristics and traditions have you come to appreciate more while away? Are there any traditions that will be difficult to participate in as a Christian?
5. Who are your friends back home? How different do you think they will be when you return home? Will your relationships with them be different now? Why or why not?
6. Describe what you remember about your neighbourhood and community. Think of the physical, social and spiritual conditions. Do you think they will have changed?
7. To what university or job situation are you returning? What major changes have happened in your work while you have been gone? How do you think these changes will affect you?
8. What kind of church did you leave behind? (size, maturity, history, pastor, theology, priorities, style of worship, openness to new ideas, etc.)



SPOTLIGHT

Finding a good church once you get home is vital for your growth as a Christian. If you want to know of contacts for good churches back at home, ask your church leader or get in touch with IFES.

9. If you were not part of a church before you left your home country, which of the following criteria will you use in choosing a church? From the ones you tick, prioritise them in order of importance for your spiritual growth.

	Criteria	Priority
Size	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distance from home / location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Style of worship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How the Bible is taught	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preaching quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Type of people / general mood of the congregation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evangelism and mission emphasis and strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involvement with social issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Theological emphasis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Structure of church leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities to use my gifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young adults programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TQs TOUGH QUESTIONS

How will you respond to **different housing conditions**, or relatives visiting and staying on indefinitely? What about relatives or others who perceive you to have a lot of money and possessions, and want to **borrow from you**?

Are you part of a **minority group** in your country? How do you view the dominant group(s)? How will you respond when you are discriminated against (professionally, racially, etc.)?

If you have studied abroad as a **parent** without your immediate family, how will you find fitting back into the family routine? Relating to your spouse? Relating to your children?

10. Welcome home!

Imagine that the final moment has come and you are about to meet your family and friends. **You are home!**

By anticipating what kind of reception you will receive, you will be better prepared to respond to people. Remember that some of the meetings could be stressful.

1. What sort of welcome do you think you will receive from the following:

WHO	KIND OF RECEPTION	WHY
Family		
Friends		
Colleagues/Work		
Neighbours		
Church		

2. What will your family and friends notice about you? How do you think they will respond? How will you respond?

ADAPTING TO LIFE BACK HOME

As you go through the processes of transition, your responses may be one or a combination of the following.

1. Imitation – You may find yourself copying what others are doing or returning to old routines and habits. Or you may quickly jump into the pace and rhythm of life back home as if you never left. You may have a strong need to meet people's expectations and at the same time discover that the things you used to do are no longer appealing.

Word of advice: Some imitation is necessary to fit back into your home culture, but it should be done without losing your values and integrity.

2. Isolation – It may seem strange to discover that you are feeling like a foreigner in your home culture. Your response may be to retreat or be in the company of expatriates or other fellow returnees. This is a normal response. Longing for your former lifestyle and friends back in the country where you experienced so much may bring pain, intense loneliness and isolation. Isolation is not all negative: in fact, you may welcome times to be alone as a 'break' from the stress and fatigue of re-entry.

Word of advice: There is a place for appropriate isolation without loss of opportunities to grow, relate, and give to your people.

3. Integration – You are beginning to merge with your home culture with ease and you like being back home. Without abandoning your newly acquired values, you feel that you are making significant progress in re-adjusting. You have a new appreciation for your home culture and increased ability to relate at different levels. Congratulations!

Word of advice: Integrate in every way possible and be true to Christ and the person he is making you into.

SUMMARY

During your life back home you will find yourself moving from one response to another, but remember that:

- To re-learn your home culture, a good amount of imitation is a must.
- To maintain some amount of cultural balance and sanity, some isolation is necessary.
- To be effective back home, integration is essential.

Like a dance, you will need to learn all three steps. Use them frequently and gracefully. **Imitate, isolate and integrate.**

11. Growing spiritually back home

Like a plant, you will be transplanted again from foreign soil to home soil. How will you grow in the midst of change and a different spiritual environment?

1. What factors have helped you grow in faith and mature spiritually?
For example: Christian friends, Bible studies, Sunday worship, etc.?
2. Will you find those things you mentioned above when you return home?
3. How can you ensure you will grow spiritually when you return home?
4. You will find that there are battles to fight. Living in a world that does not hold to Christian values will not be easy. What does it mean to be involved in a spiritual battle? Have a look at Ephesians 6:10-20.
5. What spiritual battles did you face whilst abroad and how did God help you to overcome them?
6. What spiritual battles might you face as you go back home?
7. Do you feel prepared to face spiritual battles back home? Why or why not?
If not, how can you prepare, and who can help you?
8. What are some other factors that could affect your spiritual growth after returning home?



SPOTLIGHT

Have a look at the following passages and see how they might help you in facing any spiritual battles:

Philippians 3:12-14; Jude 17-25; Hebrews 10:19-25; 1 John 5:4-5



A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for a student's response.

“I was baptised on 25th November last year, and I feel very warm in my life in Christ. I have joined a team that helps university students to reach out to young people for the Lord ... There are two small groups to read the Bible and share experiences of Christian life. Anytime I see students changing their lives for Jesus, it makes me so happy. I ask God to give me the way and knowledge so I can share with even more students.”

a Taiwanese student

“During my first week at home, I played the song ‘In Christ Alone’ quite often. My Mum was attracted by the melody and asked what it was about. It was a great opportunity! I told her the story of Jesus in my own words. She listened with interest. I now use the same method with my friends.”

a Chinese student

“People around me say that I am changed after my stay abroad. I once had the opportunity to write my testimony and experiences at university in my church magazine, and I have also been leading a Bible study group. I never expected to do such work in my life. It started with four members and now there are 9-10 coming every week.”

a South Korean student

12. Serving God back home

When we become Christians, God gives us spiritual gifts for the purpose of building up the people of God. We also have strengths or capabilities that God wants to use to advance the Gospel.

GIFTS AND SERVICES

Spiritual gifts are often identified when you feel a strong internal joy or special burden while serving at church, home or in society. Read 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:4-8 and Ephesians 4:1-16 to see examples of gifts. If you find it difficult to identify your gifts try asking a close Christian friend who should be able to help you.

1. Which of these do you consider to be your gifts?

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serving/Helping | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading | <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healing | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality | <input type="checkbox"/> Preaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prophesying | <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelising | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

2. Did you discover and use any of these gifts during your time in your host country?

3. In what area(s) of God's work at home do you see your gifts being used to his glory?
Might you need extra patience to allow your church at home to recognise your gifts?

4. What does it mean for you to serve God in your university or profession?

- Sharing the gospel
- Keeping a good, clean performance record
- Being an honest worker
- Being willing to keep biblical standards in your values, relationships, behaviour
- Doing the best in your profession/studies
- Having a Bible study in your office/dorm/residence
- Other: _____

5. What training do you need to serve God more effectively back home?

Where is the best place to get that training, and from whom?

SHARING THE GOSPEL

1. How would you summarise the essential points of the gospel message for sharing with someone from your own culture?
2. Which of your family and friends might be open to hearing the good news about Jesus?

Keep praying and sharing the gospel with them. The salvation that you received is available for them too.

3. Praying and trusting God's Spirit to lead you, which do you think would be some good approaches in sharing the gospel back home?

- Have a party and share
- Share one-to-one
- Allow your relatives and friends to observe the change in you first, and then share later
- Loan evangelistic books, CDs, videos
- Invite people to a Bible study
- Make the most of every opportunity
- Share your testimony in public
- Show the Jesus movie
- Other opportunities to share the gospel: _____

4. What are some difficulties you think you will face in sharing your faith?
5. In what other places can you serve God?
6. What dreams and visions do you have of what God may do in and through you back home?

TQs TOUGH QUESTIONS

What attractive **job offers** or opportunities do you have? What factors should affect your decision to take or turn down those offers? How will the job affect your Christian life, influence and impact here or at home?

Is **bribery** a widespread and accepted practice back home? How are you going to relate to it when you return home? Why?

What do you consider an **'honest day's work'**? Will you face pressure from your society to put in less or more time for a day's work? What are your thoughts about work on Sundays?

13. Closure and farewell

You are about to close this chapter of your life in a foreign country.
How do you do it?

BY SAYING 'THANK YOU' AND 'GOODBYE'

List those to whom you should say thank you and goodbye (e.g. teachers, housemates, host family, church and fellowship group, etc.)

Do you have contact details for them?

BY LEAVING BEHIND GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

Is there anyone whom you should forgive or from whom you should seek forgiveness?
When will you do this?

Are there bills to pay? Books or other borrowed items you need to return?

BY KEEPING SOME LINKS WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY

Through pictures, souvenirs, CDs and other items you can take home. Which ones?

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

1. How will you decide what to take home?
2. What must you take home?
3. What can you not take home?
4. What can you get more easily or cheaply at home?
5. What do you need to get here that you cannot get at home?
6. Do you need to buy anything for people at home?

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS THROUGH JOSHUA

Read Joshua 24 slowly. Read it a second time. Imagine what Joshua was feeling. Observe the action words used. Stop to meditate on a statement or a word.

This chapter can be divided into two main instructions. As Israel was about to transition to losing Joshua as their leader, God reminded them of their history and gave them a challenge.

1. **Remember** (vv. 2-13):

- a) What did God want Israel to remember? Why?
- b) List the different things God did for Israel.
- c) What does remembering God's work do to a nation? To you?
- d) List God's acts and interventions in your life while you were away from home.

2. **Recommit** (vv. 14-28):

- a) What did God, through Joshua, command Israel to do (v. 14)?
- b) What specific action did God want Israel to do to show their faithfulness to God (v. 14b)?
- c) Joshua was clear about where he stood in relation to God. What choices did he give the Israelites (v. 15)?
- d) The Israelites were quick to recommit. Why did Joshua not believe their immediate response (v. 16-20)?
- e) What idols did your ancestors worship? What could idols in your life be? What idols are you tempted to worship?
- f) If jealousy is the intolerance of any rival, what reasons may God have to be a jealous God for you?
- g) Why is it important to have a visible reminder of your commitment to God? What reminders do you have to help you in your walk with God?

Joshua used several words to indicate commitment to God: fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness (v. 14), serve the Lord (v. 15), and yield your hearts to the Lord (v. 23).

Remember and recommit: Take these words with you as you transition back home.

14. On the way back home

This page can be completed while you are travelling home.

Leave with a

GRATEFUL HEART

As you reflect on your time abroad, what are you thankful for (Psalm 57:9-10)?

Leave with an

EXPECTANT HEART

What are you trusting God to do in, for, and through you back home (Psalm 37:3-5)?

Leave with a

CONFIDENT HEART

What promises can you claim from God (Psalm 11)?

Leave with a

SURRENDERED HEART

Write out Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 1:20-21 and Luke 9:23.

Meditate on and apply these verses.

You are grateful because God has done great things for you; expectant because God promises to do great things through you; confident because he goes before you; surrendered because he is worthy of your complete and undivided worship.

RE-ENTRY RESOURCES

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- Preparing Yourself Back to Japan with Jesus**. Long Beach, CA: Japanese Christian Fellowship. www.jcfn.org
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- Returning Home to China: An Equipping Guide for Chinese Christians Returning Home**. Mechanicsburg, Pa: China Outreach Ministries. Email: ChinaOut@aol.com; www.chinaoutreach.org
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APPENDIX

Life lived in response to God

Returning home can be a huge change from what you are used to in the country you visited. Your walk with God is very important because the one constantly reliable, supportive relationship you have at all times is your relationship with the Lord.

Being part of a small group where you study the Bible, pray and support each other can be one of the most helpful forms of fellowship a believer can have. In this time of transition make it your aim to preserve your walk with God and to find the support of a small group.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

The Christian's relationship to God as a child to his father is not only intimate but SURE. The way to be sure is not just to feel sure; one day you could feel close to God and the next day feel far from him. This can lead into uncertainty.

We can have complete assurance as a Christian of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Here are three ways.

1. God promises to give eternal life to those who receive Christ (1 John 5:10-12, John 6:37, John 10:28, Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5-6, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 John 1:9, James 1:5, Romans 8:37-39).
2. God speaks to our hearts when we speak to him in prayer. This is not to place any confidence in shallow and changeable feelings; it is rather to expect a deepening conviction in our hearts as the Holy Spirit assures us of God's love for us and prompts us to cry "Father" as we come to him in prayer (Romans 8:15-16).
3. If we have received Christ as our Lord and Saviour, then the Spirit lives within us. Further evidence of him being there is the changing of our character to become more like Christ (Romans 8:9-17, Galatians 5:22-26).

HOW DO WE GROW AS CHRISTIANS?

We grow by communicating with God every day through **prayer** and **Bible reading** and by meeting with other Christians regularly for **fellowship**. Although your days may get busier when you return home, if you want to grow as a Christian, then you will need to be disciplined and keep this a priority.

PRAYER – ‘the active exercise of a personal relationship’

1. Quiet time diary – it may encourage you to write down your thoughts and prayer requests for the day ahead. Set a time aside daily to pray.
2. After reading your Bible, speak to God, maybe about the subject you have read on. In your prayers worship him for his goodness revealed to you, confess your sins before him, thank him for any blessings, pray for the lessons to be learned and for friends, family and the world. God is your father, so be natural, confiding and bold. He is interested in all the details of your life.
3. Pray in your own language so that when you get home it will feel natural to pray with others.

READING THE BIBLE

The Bible is made up of 66 books with many different authors. The Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is God's word and is living and active today. The Bible is intended to be, and can be, understood by all. It is a book from God whose thoughts are far above our thoughts (Romans 11:33-36). Therefore, understanding the Bible can be hard work. Here are some tools to help you!

As you read a book of the Bible, start by praying that God would be at work in you whilst reading his word. These questions/techniques may help you understand and apply the passage.

OBSERVATION: Who wrote the book, to whom was it written, what is the historical and geographical setting of the book? What sort of literature is used? See if there is a structure to the book or any themes or patterns, look at word meanings. How does this book fit into the context of the rest of the Bible?

Then ask yourself, ‘What did this passage tell us about God/Jesus Christ, the world, ourselves and other people, and the situations we face?’

INTERPRETATION: What is the main point of the passage? What words or phrases are repeated? What is the context? Why was this passage written?

APPLICATION: What does the passage mean for us? A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers. Are there areas of my life that I need to change as a result of what I've learned?

FELLOWSHIP

The Christian life is not just a private relationship. As you are a part of God's family, not only has he become your father, but every other believer in the world, from whatever nation or denomination, has become your brother or sister in Christ.

We were never intended to live our Christian life alone. Fellowship is really important, whether that is in a small group, church, or meeting individual Christians. Your life may be so busy when you return home that it is impossible to go to a church or Bible study at first. However, it is really important in the first few weeks home to establish friendships with Christians in your home town, even if you can't go to their meetings straight away.

Mentors – people who have been through the process before and can offer help, advice and encouragement. A mentor would support you spiritually and help you to readjust to your life at home. You may be able to find a graduate who has returned home a few years before who could help you.

Some positive action you could take

- Find out about other returnees in your home town, university, church, etc.
- Join a church with a small group ministry
- Pray and initiate a small group amongst Christians at your university, work, etc.

IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) is a movement of students living out the good news of Jesus. The IFES community unites evangelical student movements in over 160 countries: more than half a million students on campuses worldwide are being transformed by the redemptive power of the gospel and are sharing their faith with their friends. In the daily realities of student life, they are engaging with God's word together, developing a Christian mind in their sphere of study, and learning to integrate faith with their whole life.



On graduation, as these believers enter the workplace, they bring Kingdom values into the public arenas, and help strengthen the witness of their local church. They are the fruit of our student ministry. In God's grace, they will influence their societies, families and communities for his glory.

To find out more about the IFES student ministry in your country, and how God is at work among students around the world, visit ifesworld.org

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