

# RESONATE

ISSUE 08 // AUTUMN 09



## God's Call or Not God's Call

Is there a question?

When God calls – how do we pick up and what do we answer?

**Caryn Rogers**

**++Plus**

Dummies' Guide to Buddhism  
Planning Life Together

# FIFTEEN minutes

Jen, 27, is a Melbourne girl who was so inspired by a five month Global Discipleship Training course<sup>1</sup> and a one year Gi6pro<sup>2</sup> placement in Thailand she decided to – quite literally – put her head (well, hair) on the line. In under an hour, Jen went from Rapunzel to shiny cue ball – all to raise awareness and financial support for Global Interaction.

**Q People might say, 'it's just hair', but what did your hair mean to you?**

**A** It was a special part of me and a sign of my femininity. I've had very long hair for most of my life. It was down to my lower back, 65cm long before the shave. I was a bit scared about shaving it off.

**Q What was going through your head when you first felt the razor on your head?**

**A** I hope it doesn't cut me! It wasn't until I was able to look in the mirror once it was all gone, that I realised how harsh it looked. My first thought as soon as I had a minute alone was "what have I done?!"

**Q Where are your beautiful blonde locks now?**

**A** They'll be made into a wig for a girl with Alopecia, a medical condition that means she can't grow her own hair. I'm happy that she doesn't live in Melbourne so I don't keep looking to see my own hair travelling around on someone else's head!

**Q How much money did you raise and how will it be used?**

**A** More than \$4,700 will be donated to Global Interaction. It will go to support home-based staff so they can continue supporting the cross-cultural workers with crucial administration support.

**Q Tell us about one of the people who sponsored your headshave...**

**A** One large family promised to give a considerable donation – they just needed to wait for their government benefit to arrive before they could give the money. I felt so touched by their sacrifice when they faithfully provided the money a month later on Christmas day!

**Q Do you feel like a new woman?**

**A** Not really! I feel like the same person. Each time I put a top on I still reach behind to pull my long hair out. In a way, it's others that have to get used to the new look – they're the ones that have to look at me! And working in childcare, I frequently get children curiously ask me, 'are you a boy?'

**Q Any regrets?**

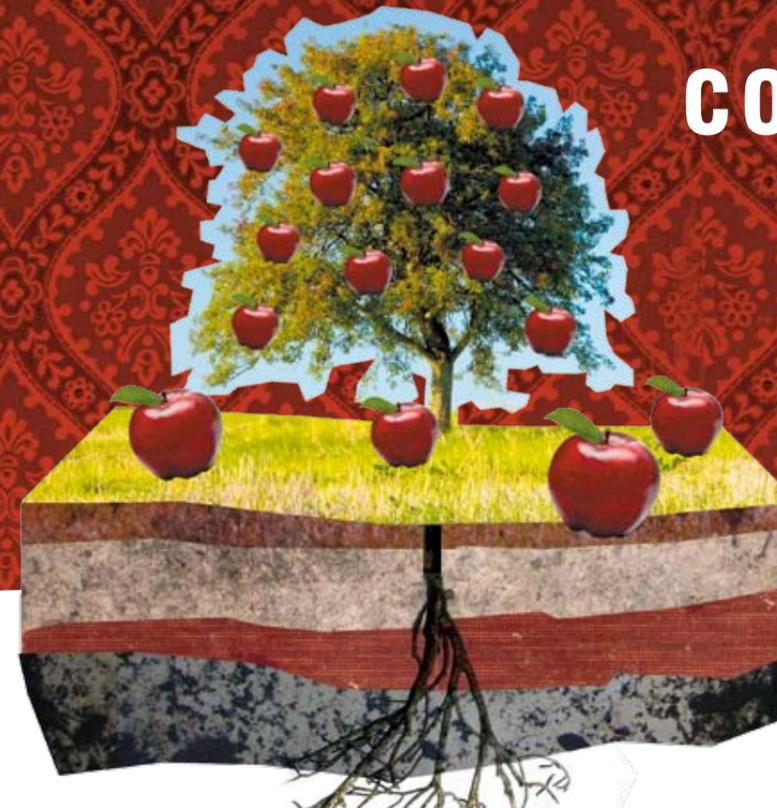
**A** Sometimes I miss my hair. I'm not looking forward to the months it will take to grow it back to a decent length, but I don't regret doing it. It's worth it even for one person in Asia or Africa who comes to know Jesus through the support of the Global Interaction team.

To see a short clip of the shave (mind the pun), search Jen's Global Interaction Head Shave on YouTube.

1. www.gdt.net.au
2. Generation Isaiah 6 Professional. www.gi6pro.net.au



# craig's COLUMN



It seems like only yesterday that we started travelling vicariously with Craig, 32, and Talitha, 27. We were there filling in application forms and going to training with them and now here we all are, two years on in Mozambique working with the Yao people as part of the Global Interaction team. But how did this journey begin? Craig takes us pre-Resonate to where it all began, in a place far, far away...

I like to think that I was a pretty normal kid growing up. We lived in a wooden house (that I tried to light fires under), dug out loads of muddy racetracks for my Tonka trucks in the backyard and played with a kid from next door called Titus. I guess maybe I wasn't really your average neighbourhood kid in that scenario, though - given that us Willis-Jones' were far from home, far from normal, living in Papua New Guinea.

**That's right, my parents were cross-cultural workers and I am the apple that didn't fall very far from their cross-cultural tree.**

I spent the majority of my childhood in PNG, and while I'm sure I could have spent all of my schoolboy years there, I am really thankful to Mum and Dad for taking me back to Australia, particularly for high school. There's very little potential for a raging social life – and interaction with the opposite sex – for us expat kids overseas unless we're shipped off to boarding school. And while sisters are technically the opposite sex, they are really more like aliens than the girls you'd actually like to spend time with. Outside of the family, we had maybe one or two friends to hang out with.

**I've seen peers and other kids really struggle to fit back into Australian life, sometimes regretting for the rest of their lives the decisions their parents made as cross-cultural workers.** (Just in case parents needed a little *more* pressure in tough decision making!)

But of course as a kid, you just don't realise what goes on behind the scenes with cross-cultural work. You don't hear too many stories as a kid about the interpersonal relationship strains, sickness and distance from adequate help, the frustration of language learning and day-to-day challenges. We're on the other side of the coin now, and things look very different.

Thankfully, Talitha and I have parents who can say 'we understand' - and we know they actually do! With their years of experience - many *many* more than us and some of our team members - they happily lend a wise ear and a sympathetic voice whenever we need it. They've been there, and they've done that!

The super exciting news is that we'll soon gain even more insight into what our parents went through being cross-cultural workers with kids... we're expecting our first baby in July this year!

**This is one apple that appreciates how close it fell from the tree...**



## POP QUIZ

- 1 What is the name of the Facebook game that helps you to know your world?
- 2 Which South East Asian country has never been ruled by a European power?
- 3 Who is the world's largest commercial employer?
- 4 Which country is the only one in the world to have a gun on its flag?
- 5 In which year did Kazakhstan declare independence from the USSR (now Russia)?
- 6 Which country has the largest population in Africa?
- 7 Which is the biggest ethnic group in China?
- 8 A Muslim woman's head covering is commonly known as what?
- 9 What is the name of the SBS documentary that features Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman riding through Kazakhstan?
- 10 What is the Aboriginal word for The Olgas, the rock formation near Uluru?

- 1 Traveller IQ 2 Thailand 3 Indian Railways (1.6 million staff)
- 4 Mozambique 5 1991 6 Nigeria, 11.1 million 7 The Han
- 8 Hijab or burkha 9 Long Way Round 10 Kala Tieta

## marinate your MIND

### Heart, Life, VOICE



### The Album

*Heart, Life, VOICE*, Micah Challenge Australia

### Snapshot Summary

There are very few contemporary worship songs that speak of our God being passionately concerned for the poor, yet there are more than 2000 verses in the Bible that address issues of poverty and justice.

Heart, Life, VOICE is an album of worship about God's compassion for the hungry, poor and marginalised; a prophetic call for justice. The songs are written and performed by 13 of Australia's best singers and songwriters, challenging Christians to live out a radical faith through speaking, giving, praying and doing. The songs are designed for worship and personal listening. Includes Biblical tools and background material.

### Recommended For

Contemporary worship leaders and anyone who enjoys listening to worship music. [www.heartlifevoice.org](http://www.heartlifevoice.org)



# GOD'S CALL OR NOT GOD'S CALL IS THERE A QUESTION?

BY CARYN ROGERS

HELLO GOD? IT'S ME,  
CALLING JUST TO CHAT  
ABOUT MY CALL BECAUSE  
I'VE HAD SOME THOUGHTS  
ON THIS ONE AND I'VE BEEN  
THINKING THAT I SHOULD...

WHAT'S THAT?... SHOULD  
I CALL BACK? ...

OH... RIGHT. YOU'LL CALL ME.  
HOW?... WHEN?... WHERE?...

GOD?...

...HELLO?!

As someone who's recently re-entered the growing pack of job-hunters, I've had to think pretty seriously about God's call on my life. It's a tough climate in which to lose your job; it's an even tougher time to sit on your hands waiting.

And I've started wondering, is the call of God a luxury I can't afford to consider?

Harsh, I know, and yes, His eye is on the sparrow, I know calling isn't just about your job etc etc – you're preaching to the converted. But when there's bills to pay, limited job opportunities and potential to sink under a weight of tertiary-educated-debt, working out God's call for my life seems like time that could be better spent sending out resumes and making calls to woo potential employers.

Have I missed the point? Or, more importantly, have I missed the call of God? Is my redundancy a just retribution?

**The panic sets in.** (see also: spiritual hyperventilation)

Am I spiritual enough? Do I have the skills in God's job description? Should I pop out to the local Christian bookshop and get some more books to get more smarter-er?

Is the series of coincidental encounters, scriptural surmisements and relational inputs a call? Have I heard God at all or have I just interpreted the dial tone?!

What if I think I followed God's will... but I didn't... and then I'm stuck here for-e-v-e-r?!?!?

**CAN I PASS OR FAIL THE CALL OF GOD?**

For most of us, the jury is still out deciding what it means to hear the call of God, what the call of God actually is and who should respond to it.

It seems these spiritual choices have mature, grown-up Christians anxious, if not clutching our Bibles to our chests and rocking back and forth, sobbing and muttering, "I thought I heard him, I thought I heard him."

You might think I'm exaggerating, but if you want to see someone panic, ask your average Aussie young adult Christian whether they have heard the call of God and if they have, how they're living it out. Go on. I dare you.

The issue is confusing so let's not pretend otherwise.

In a recent nationwide survey<sup>1</sup> 83% of Christian young adults stated their number one motivator for being involved in cross-cultural mission was a clear call from God, predominantly through a sense of conviction by the Holy Spirit. So it's simple then isn't it, just a little of conviction from the Holy Spirit and we're done here?

**My suspicion is that the call of God is not limited to a certain style or format. Different people hear in different ways.** It's a suspicion confirmed by some cross-cultural team members who've loaned me their thoughts. I've also employed some fine (and some not-so-fine) lyricists to help unpack the issue, to highlight the many and varied views we take of it. **I like to think of the call of God like a soundtrack for my life – always there throughout the story yet I don't often appreciate the entire setlist.**

## 1 THE LIGHTENING BOLT

Some people think a call of God needs to be audible or visual, using a voice, a more-than-coincidental street sign, lightning bolts or other exceptional (and often extreme) turns of events. Without one or all of these facets – they think God has not spoken.

Like the guy who expects to see his future wife's name in the sky, or the girl who won't give up compulsively shopping until God personally shows up at the checkout to stop her.

Generally, this thinking means getting a very clear, sometimes conventional, sometimes kooky, sign. Take it away Ryan Adams,

*"You could give me anything tonight  
Just a wink or even just a sigh  
Be ok... cos I been waiting for a sign to come...are you the one?"<sup>2</sup>*

For Robyn Hughes, a community health worker with the Global Interaction team in Malawi, she wouldn't define the call of God as lightning-bolt-only but it certainly is how she has experienced it. Twice.

"The second time [God called] it took a number of steps; a growing heart for Africa and gentle directions of preparation," Robyn notes. "I then had two visions as I was driving down the Cumberland Highway in West Sydney."

**"The first vision was literally of a sign that said, 'Why not?' and the second, some minutes later was of a decorated gasket (yes, the car engine part) that was tipped upside down, just as my life and plans would be."**

## 2 THE ALGEBRAIC EQUATION

Some view call as a semi-algebraic equation based on a combination of common sense, intuition and gut reactions. For example, we feel the call of God through our passion for certain work, a sequence of Bible passages and/or an assessment of choices in light of our gifting. 'If Circumstance A merges with Bible Verses B and I have Feeling C then it must be a call...'

The outcome of the equation is an answer to the sum of its parts. The Lemonheads sang about a guy who added up all sorts of functions to discover what he really *wasn't* called to.

**"Couldn't build a fire to save my life... Never learned to swim, can't grow a beard or even fight. I lied about being the Outdoor Type."<sup>3</sup>**

Pip Miner, another Global Interaction team member, wanted to live in an armpit. More accurately, she felt called to live and work in Poipet, the place known as the 'armpit of Cambodia' because it is sweaty-hot and far away from places you'd prefer to be.

**"I decided if I wanted to be involved in new faith communities anywhere in the world, I'd like to do it in Poipet."**

Over several months while she was living in Phnom Penh she researched, visited the area, conducted interviews and was soon convinced that there was a need for more people to get involved in development and church work in Poipet.

She then heard voices, well, a voice, quite literally calling her out.

"One evening I bumped into one of the directors of the Youth Commission at the gym," Pip remembers. "Between repetitions he asked, 'Pip, would you be willing to move out of Phnom Penh to work?'"

"I said I would.

**"He asked specifically, 'Would you consider moving to Poipet?'"**

Pip considered her research, her passion and the director's question – the end result being a call to Poipet.

### 3 'TODAY WE GO THROUGH THE ROUND WINDOW...'

Remember back to the days of Playschool when you would journey through the square, arch or round windows into a magical new place? Well, some believe that 'when God shuts a door, he opens a window'.

Andrew and Wendy are no strangers to doors slamming in their face. They discovered that it wasn't enough to *feel* called – the calling needed to take shape and have direction. **Several years ago they discerned a call to cross-cultural work, then Andrew was offered a dream job in Australia. He took the job.**

The immediate reaction is to tut-tut Andrew and Wendy for hearing the call to cross-cultural work and ignoring it. "While this might have seemed like a selfish alternative, I think in hindsight taking the job was part of God's plan for us," Andrew notes.

Ben Folds can't help but agree. "Who will make the first last mistake. Good things come to those who wait. **Well, I can't wait.**"<sup>4</sup>

**"After some time I remember telling my church pastor that I felt like Jonah, like I was in the belly of a whale. I wasn't happy in my job, I knew something had to change,"** Andrew recalls.

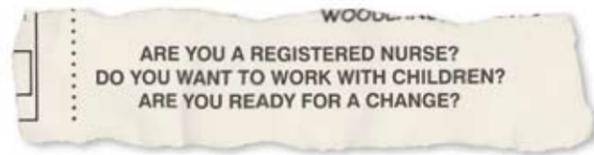
They tested the waters several times, but the doors still didn't seem to open. This year, however, they're heading out through the round window, preparing to join a Global Interaction team in South East Asia. At last, it feels right.

### 4 HEARING VOICES

Sometimes people 'hear voices' (not creepy, think other people's) to discern the call. Surely given the nature of God and His heart for community (think church in its proper context), Oasis might actually have it right.

**"Because we need each other  
We believe in one another  
And I know we're going to uncover  
What's sleepin' in our soul."**<sup>5</sup>

For nurse Elise Rolfs, the call to cross-cultural work was a long-term process, but part of it was as simple as opening up the newspaper. Spotting an advertisement that ticked all the boxes of her personal sense of mission amongst the poor, Elise immediately sprang into action; well, sort of. She cut out the ad and, without telling anyone, hid it under her pillow.



The following Saturday she saw the ad again. This time it wasn't just her that spotted it. "Two of my closest friends rang to say there was a job in the paper that was perfect for me," Elise remembers.

**"I knew that God had spoken; a voice confirmed by my two good friends!**

"Since that time, it's taken me a lot of day-to-day listening and obedience to God to get to this point – it wasn't as easy as, 'there's a job I'll take it.' But I am very excited to be moving to a remote Aboriginal community to get involved in a community based program that's already contributing greatly to the people and families in the local area."

### 5 NAVIGATING THE CALL

Many people talk about the call of God as a single path with various challenges to negotiate – kind of like a map, but a whole lot weirder. Think Neverending Story meets Bourne Identity crossed with Lord of the Rings.

After comparing speed versus tollways on whereis.com it's pretty easy to find our way. But when we view the map of call – it's not so easy.

What if we choose Path A, but take a wrong turn? What if we choose Path C, only to discover it's a dead end? What if all of the paths close, until you find yourself at Path Z and very unhappy with life? Is God only tracking on Path A, and if we miss it are we doomed?

Or (oh please, oh please) am I 'safe' from the path of call because I don't 'feel' called to be a pastor, missionary, Sunday School teacher or martyr?

A little bit of Eminem's logic slips into our thinking.

**"You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow  
This opportunity comes once in a lifetime yo..."**<sup>6</sup>

For mother of five, Heather Crane, call looked a lot different from how she thought it would, and it's meant a lot of mindset-adjusting along the way.

**"When I was growing up I felt I had to be 'somebody'; whatever I dreamed, making my mark on the world or making lots of money, or reaching for the stars (whatever that is!),"** Heather laughs. "All the things I was encouraged to be when I was growing up were about ME.

"For quite some time I felt like I could (and should) do lots of things outside the home and still be the main carer for my family. But that has changed now and it doesn't mean I've settled for Path B. I do feel 'called' to my role of wife and mother, even though some people may view my role as 'removed from the action' - the action being village work in Mozambique.

**"I may not be the one directly doing that job, but I am part of the team which is going for that goal."**

### NOWWHAT?

Often when we call out to God for direction, for guidance, for clarity, it feels like He is so far away. Death Cab for Cutie understands what I mean,

**"The distance is quite simply much too far for me to row  
it seems farther than ever before, oh no.  
I need you so much closer."**<sup>7</sup>

How do we go about following God's call for us when His silence is sometimes deafening?

Sadly, our questioning leads us to a dead end or a plateau - because we didn't hear Him when we called Him, we assume He doesn't exist, or if He does exist He doesn't care.

If all you're hearing is the dial tone, don't hang up the line just yet. Over to you Coldplay, **"so you lost your trust and you never should have, no you never should have."**<sup>8</sup>

There's a great deal of difference between us being called *by* God, and us calling *on* God. We expect God to hear us anytime we open our mouths, but when he speaks – whenever that might be and whatever that might look like – are we ready and willing to listen – wherever that might take us?

**Let's not get too hung up on the specifics – otherwise we'll soon be comatose with the fear of missing God's 'best' plans. His best plan is Jesus, so for you, your best plan is to understand His call to relationship with Jesus.**

**What if God's call for you is not about your job, your partner or where you will live, what if you're called simply to relationship with Jesus? What if, "this calling is to someone not to something or somewhere?"**<sup>9</sup>

Global Interaction's Victorian State Director, Mark Holt, notes that, "acknowledging that there is a caller and a called, we can say that call is first and finally about relationship. Vocation is a call to relationship with God. This call is at the centre of who we are."

**Clue: If you're acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with your God<sup>10</sup> – whatever that looks like – consider yourself to have the found the magical, the mythical, the frightening, but oh - so - delighting call of God.**

So before you start singing out the Blondie hit from the 80s: **"call me on the line. Call me, call me, any anytime,"**<sup>11</sup> remember that the call of God can, and most likely will, turn things on their heads, and it's not always a grand gesture or heroic pursuit. The experience of call to cross-cultural work for many people is a simple, not-so-dazzling obedience to God's command to share His love with the world. You don't need to wait for the bells and whistles. It's often easier to feel called if we're playing the hero, but the call to everyday faithfulness is just as much the call of God – be it here or overseas.

And here I wait, safe in the call of a relationship with Jesus. While I wait for the great opportunity or the 'God-moment' of clarity, I'll keep pushing on doors and flogging my resume out to everybody under the sun. (Say, if you're looking for a copywriter ... call me.)

<sup>1</sup> Global Interaction Survey, 2007 with 250 participants

<sup>2</sup> Gimme A Sign, Demolition, Ryan Adams

<sup>3</sup> The Outdoor Type, Car Button Cloth, The Lemonheads

<sup>4</sup> Bruised, Supersunny Speed Graphic, Ben Folds

<sup>5</sup> Acquiesce, The Masterplan, Oasis

<sup>6</sup> Lose Yourself, 8 Mile Soundtrack, Eminem

<sup>7</sup> Transatlanticism, Transatlanticism, Death Cab for Cutie

<sup>8</sup> See You Soon, Parachutes [UK Edition Bonus Disc], Coldplay

<sup>9</sup> Banks, R and Stevens, R (1997) The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity, IVP: Illinois, p.97

<sup>10</sup> Micah 6:8

<sup>11</sup> Call Me, American Gigolo Soundtrack, Blondie

...HELLO?!

GOD?...

### WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Head to [www.globalinteraction.org.au](http://www.globalinteraction.org.au) for:

- Details of people in your state who would love to shout you a coffee and chat with you about your call
- Discussion questions about this article
- Full stories of the cross-cultural workers in this article (and then some...)
- Details about the new Global Interaction DVD that's coming soon to help unpack this issue further

# TOOLS of the TRADE



**Name:** Fiona Gunn **Age:** 25 **Hometown:** Canberra  
**Current Location:** Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
**Education:** Bachelor of Health Science (Speech Pathology)  
**Profession:** 'Speechie' (Speech Pathologist)  
**Previous Experience:** Two years at an Acute and Rehabilitation Hospital, one year in Early Intervention  
**Time on the field:** 12-month placement with Gi6pro<sup>1</sup>

## SKILLS IN ACTION

I spent my first two years as a speechie coaxing minced meat and blended carrots into elderly people followed by a year of tea parties and toy car races with two-year-olds, using chocolate to motivate children with autism to use picture-cards.

This year has shaped up to be very different! The needs in Cambodia are huge. **It is a country with a high percentage of people with disabilities, but there is currently only one other practicing speechie!** Speech pathology is a new concept, and general disability work is very new here.

One of my roles is to train Cambodian staff to help people with disabilities in various regions of the country. They have been trained by an occupational therapist to encourage physical development, such as sitting and walking.

However, they have had no training in encouraging communication or safe eating. Some of the children I met in one village were five or six years old, with no means to communicate apart from perhaps pointing and grunting.

The challenges of my job in Australia included translating for unintelligible three year olds and remembering the names of the Wiggles. The challenges of my new job will include working through interpreters to translate the information I provide, and working out what are the Cambodian versions of cars, dolls' houses, and fashion magazines.

My hope is to demonstrate Jesus' love to these vulnerable children and their families.

<sup>1</sup> Generation Isaiah 6 Professional - [www.gi6pro.net.au](http://www.gi6pro.net.au)

# Planning DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Bek, 27, had a fascination for mission since childhood and fell in love with Africa on a short-term mission trip during uni days. One cross-cultural worker friend gave her a list of '20 Things You Should Do Before Moving Overseas', which posed the big question: do you need a man?<sup>1</sup> Bek joined the Global Interaction team working with the Yao people in Malawi and Mozambique for a two year Gi6pro<sup>2</sup> placement, leaving Scott, 31, her close friend behind in Perth. Now, the newly engaged couple (after four proposals!) are working out God's calling as they go - together.

## BEK



With a lengthy to-do list in action before I left for Mozambique in 2007, the last thing I expected to add to the bottom of it was Spend Time With Future Husband. But somehow that became my reality only days before leaving Perth.

Scott had been a close friend of mine for a number of years. He was the kind of friend who helped change a tyre in the pouring rain. A mate who could make me laugh no matter how frustrated I was. A friend who knew my 'come and rescue me from this awkward conversation' look. A mate who was a joy to serve God beside and was passionate about being all he could be through Christ and loved seeing others become that too.

As for the change from friend to fiancé? It just kind of happened really, I'm still not completely sure about that conversation! We did think and pray about the future, all the while realising that God would have to work out some pretty big things for a future to happen. We had the same missional values, just differing geographical directions. God worked them out quicker than we even hoped or thought possible.

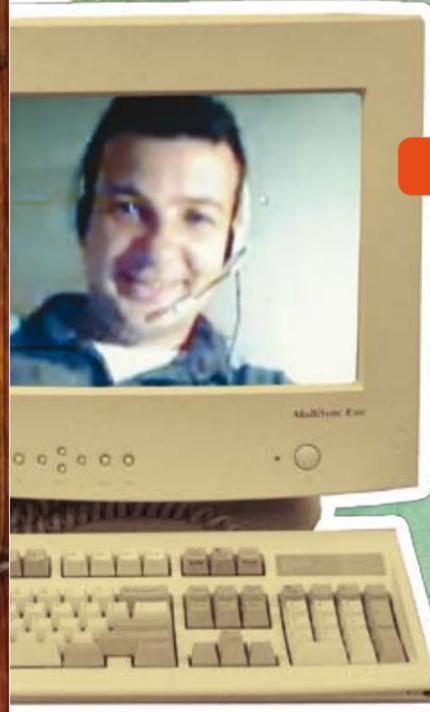
It's been hard for both of us doing the long distance thing and certainly not something we would have chosen.

We deal with different time zones, delayed and broken Skype connections, phone lines being down, fickle power connections and emails not getting through the cyberspace above the Indian Ocean. I've made do with virtual hugs (and kisses!) and Scott's been to a whole stack of weddings and celebrations by himself. He even met my brothers and extended family alone last Christmas, brave man! But it's not all bad, how many girls can say they've had four marriage proposals using four different mediums?

Having him visit here recently was fantastic. I didn't have to endure cooking in the kitchen following his copious (and unnecessary, I think) instructions over Skype video. I could relax and watch him cook for me instead! Having time to talk and dream together and watch him experience all the things in Mozambique I've been describing for years was totally priceless! Scott is a huge encouragement to me. He's helped me get perspective on things I deal with over here and to think more creatively about what I do.

As for the future, who knows what tomorrow holds, let alone beyond that. I'll return to Perth, Scott will continue his theological study, we'll get married and look forward to serving God together somewhere, somehow. But that still seems distant, so for now we are content doing life - together but apart!

## SCOTT



They often say 'you should marry your best friend', but neither Bek nor I had that on the agenda when she left for Mozambique. We both knew that God was calling her to cross-cultural work and I didn't want to interfere.

Bek and I served in our church youth ministry together and we learnt a lot from each other. She taught me the fine art of Looking Organised and I taught her how to be an even bigger kid than she was! We shared many laughs and many great 'God moments' with the kids and together. I was always so encouraged by her awesome heart for God.

When she moved to Mozambique we had discussed the future but were both unaware of exactly what it would look like. We occasionally talked on Skype video, but more often than not the connection wasn't good enough. One day when we had the video working Bek let out a huge scream and ran out of view. Just as I called out, 'what's wrong?!' I saw a monkey run past her camera. The neighbour's pets had gotten out again and running riot in her house - only in Africa!

We believed Bek would stay in cross-cultural work and I would continue working in the small business I had been building for the past five years. However, within a year my business partner said, "I've been praying and thinking about this for a while, how would you feel if I bought you out?"

I knew then that God had a plan.

Before long my planned two-week holiday was extended to a month, I was jabbed with vaccinations and plane tickets were booked. I was going to visit my fiancé and finally present the ring! One month turned into three and we had an awesome time together. We are convinced that we will spend many more years in God's service together!

<sup>1</sup> Interested in this issue of relationships in mission? Check out the discussion in Issue No. 6 of Resonate

<sup>2</sup> Generation Isaiah 6 Professional. [www.gi6pro.net.au](http://www.gi6pro.net.au)

# FAMILY on the FRIDGE

After growing up in Melbourne, Ad, 26, returned to the shores of her country of origin in South East Asia to join Global Interaction's team for a two-year placement. It's been six months since she began her adventure and she's already enjoying some surrogate family love.

I remembered thinking how effortless it would be living back in South East Asia, but after my first week, I realised that it wasn't as easy as I expected! Thankfully, on my second day I was introduced to players in the local women's basketball team, and we became instant friends. One special friend has welcomed me into her family home; her sisters have become like my sisters and her dad treats me like his own daughter (sadly, her mother has passed away). They are very open with me and always fill me in on family news, both the good and the bad. I feel very comfortable in their home. It's not the flashiest house by Australian standards but it's warm and friendly.

Not long ago we celebrated Idul Adha, a Muslim festival of sacrifice where people go around to different houses to greet each other. I was asked to spend the day at my friend's house and I helped with the food preparations.

On that day I met a lot of people and was introduced as one of the daughters. It made me feel very special - I was really part of their family. It amazes me how united these people are, how they value every member of the family and have real respect for their elders. They also respect young people because they believe if you want to be respected you have to show respect to others first. Here, I've realised that when it comes to the crunch, family comes first.

When I get sick, my friend is always the first one to care for me. She knows things that I need before I even say anything. She really is just like a sister to me. Having a long distance relationship with my boyfriend in Melbourne is another thing that isn't easy, and I really miss my mum and family at home. Sometimes it gets very lonely here but I'm so thankful to God for my surrogate sister and my other girlfriends - they keep me happy, look after me and have helped give me another kind of 'home' here!



# DUMMIES' guide to BUDDHISM



## Buddhism in a nutshell

- Fourth largest religion in the world; second largest religion in Australia
- Founded in Northern India
- Two main forms:
  - Theravada* – the dominant, traditional school of Buddhism, found in South East Asia (Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos). Follow only the recorded words of the Buddha.
  - Mahayana* – largely found in China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia. Accept many additional 'inspired' books and words of wisdom.

## Life of Buddha

**Early life:** Siddhartha Gautama was born a prince in India about AD 563 and raised as a Hindu. He lived an extravagant life. In early adulthood, after an encounter that opened his eyes to a world filled with suffering, he renounced the extravagant life and wandered off into the world in search of truth.

**Ah-Ha moment:** After much meditation and fasting (often only eating a few grains of rice each day!) he discovered that both the life of luxury and the life of extreme self-denial weren't going to get him anywhere. He determined that a better path to achieve Nirvana – a state of freedom from suffering – was to pursue a 'Middle Way'. One night, while sitting under a tree, he attained Nirvana, and was henceforth known as a Buddha (Enlightened One).

**Legacy:** He spent the remainder of his life travelling throughout India teaching others about how to achieve enlightenment.

## Karma and Reincarnation

A key idea of Buddhism is that of Karma - the law of consequences. This is the theory that good and bad deeds will return to a person. Karma plays out in an endless cycle of rebirth, in the cycle of reincarnation, meaning that the actions of this life will determine how you'll be reborn – as a rat or a god. It's best to be reborn as a human as it presents the opportunity to escape from the endless rotation of rebirth and suffering.

## Fat or Thin?

There are two typical types of Buddha statues. The 'thin' one is typical in Thailand and other South East Asian countries. This is said to be a representation of the first Buddha, who was thin due to extreme fasting. The 'fat' laughing Buddha is more popular in China. It is regarded as lucky to rub the fat Buddha's tummy or drop a coin in his belly button.

## Beliefs shared with Christianity

- Life after death. In Buddhism, though, humans are trying to escape being trapped in the continuous cycle.
- Themes of morality, justice and love e.g. do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- The understanding that we live in a broken world filled with suffering, much of which is caused by selfish desire.
- Practice of meditation.

## Beliefs not shared

- The origin and end of the world are left unexplained by Buddha.
- In Buddhism, ignorance, not sin, is considered the roadblock to salvation (or Nirvana), and therefore there is no need for a saviour.
- In its original form, Buddhism did not teach the existence of a god, and in fact demonstrates the futility of searching for one.

## Monks

Buddhist monks are easily identified by their shaved heads and striking orange or maroon coloured robes. In the early days, this was the most readily available dye, ground from the forest roots. This simple clothing symbolises the vow they have taken to live a simple life.

## Buddhist Wisdom

"When you realise how perfect everything is you will tilt your head back and laugh at the sky."

"However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what good will they do you if you do not act upon them?"

"Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful."

## Famous Buddhists

Orlando Bloom, Richard Gere, Jennifer Lopez, Uma Thurman.

## COOKING CULTURALLY

# 3 WAYS WITH WATER

## 1 IN AUSTRALIA LEMON AND LIME GINGER ALE

### Buy it:

- 1 green apple, cored and sliced
- ½ inch fresh ginger, grated
- A handful of green grapes, removed from stem
- ¼ lemon
- ½ lime
- 1 bottle of chilled sparkling mineral water

### Do it:

Juice the fruit and ginger together in a juicer or food processor, pour into a tall glass, top with mineral water and serve with ice.

### Drink it:

From tall, chilled and crystal clear glasses with friends at a garden party on a warm, sunny day.



## 2 IN MALAWI JUST WATER

### Buy it:

Large red, green and blue plastic cups from a door-to-door salesman who travels through the village on his bicycle.

### Do it:

Take a large plastic container and walk half a kilometre to the village water supply - a shallow hole in the ground that white, cloudy water seeps into. Climb down into the hole, lower your container into the water, climb out, balance it on your head and carry to your home.

### Drink it:

From your plastic mug. Enjoy sharing a drink with family or friends while sitting on a split bamboo mat in the shade of a mango tree.

## 3 IN CAMBODIA JUST WATER

### Buy it:

Water is plentiful in the rainy season, however in the dry months it must be purchased from roaming water trucks. As diarrhoea is still the major killer of children under five, a mother may need to try to get filtered water for her young ones when they are sick.

### Do it:

Bargain at the local market (even though the price never changes - \$1 for a six-pack), check the seals and lug the pack home on the back of the family pushbike. Place the clean water away from the sight of others who may be tempted to help themselves. Refill the empty bottles and place them in the sun which at least kills the live bugs.

### Drink it:

Sparingly... while praying for the child to recover and the rains to come quickly.



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