

Resonate

ISSUE 26

The **TRANSITION** ISSUE



GLOBAL
INTERACTION

CHANGE AHEAD!

Six steps for surviving, and thriving, during transitions

Sharing your faith

PART III
Crunch Time



15 MINUTES WITH JACINTA



Jacinta, aged 16, is a proud red-head who loves design, movie watching and surfing. She also has a passion for working with younger kids and making people laugh. And, she loves reading Resonate magazine and was stoked to contribute to this edition.

What inspires you about mission among your friends?

The main thing that encourages me to be an example of Jesus with my friends is the thought that we might get to spend eternity together with Him! I love my friends and want the best for them, but, I admit I have trouble speaking up about Jesus. It sometimes scares me. I'm so grateful that it's a team effort with the Holy Spirit.

What are some of your passions?

I love art, graphic design and basically anything that involves making things look pretty! I believe that God has given me this passion and gift of creativity. I am so excited to think about the opportunities He has in store for using my gifts for His glory.

We are focusing on transitions and change in this edition – how do you respond to change?

I can't say I'm a real pro in dealing with change. It can downright stress me out, especially when it takes me by surprise. I find researching helps. For example, when I moved schools I found out all I could about the new school so on my first day I held onto the things I knew, which helped me deal with the differences.

How has your relationship with God changed over the years?

When I was younger, I viewed God as a hero figure that could do amazing miracles and used incredible people to do His work. More recently I've asked myself 'If God can use all these people in the Bible, what's stopping Him from using me?' I want to move out of my comfort zone because when deciding to change things up and do things differently, I become uncomfortable, and that discomfort pushes me to draw closer to God.

And your understanding of mission?

Going overseas to a country you I couldn't pronounce, living in grass huts and sitting cross-legged teaching people about Jesus was what popped into mind when I heard the word 'mission' as a kid. However my understanding has changed since I was six! I believe we are all called to mission, even if it doesn't involve travelling overseas. Mission is something that comes naturally with loving God. It involves loving others and being prepared to share the hope we have.

3 TIPS for dealing with change

1 TALK

Tell family and friends about the change you're experiencing so you're not dealing with it alone.

2 BE POSITIVE

Reflect on all the positive outcomes that have occurred and helped you through the change. Being thankful enables us to see God in all situations.

3 RELY ON GOD

Know that even though we experience change, God doesn't change and he is a firm foundation.

MEET THE

Neighbours

As a child growing up in a large town, Rima lived with her mother and grandmother, while her father lived with his second wife in another town. She was expected to accompany her grandmother to the Wat (temple) every week. They sat quietly on the floor with their hands in a prayer position for an hour listening to a monk chanting in a different dialect to the common Khmer language. She watched her grandmother

Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Janelle Windus gives us a glimpse into the life of Rima*, one of her neighbours in Cambodia.

and others give money to the monk with the hope of receiving merit and having a better next life. They could not afford to give much, but they believed the more money they gave, the more merit they would receive. Rima often wondered how Khmer people would know this merit would help make their next life better, since they don't know what their situation was in their past life. But she was expected to believe this, and respectfully do the same.

Over time Rima questioned the Buddhist teachings which allowed her mind to be open to other teachings. So when Global Interaction cross-cultural workers began to share about the God who created the universe and offers love and grace, it made sense to her, and she chose to trust in Jesus with her heart and follow His teachings. She continues to go the Wat with her grandmother, however she chooses to pray to God the Father there rather than to Buddha or ancestral spirits.

*pseudonym

Episode N°2

ADVENTURES WITH THE HARLANDS

Luke, Belle and baby Salem are the Global Interaction Ethnic Thai team's newest recruits.² They've unpacked their suitcases, worked out where to buy nappies and navigated their way around town. Here they reflect on what the transition has been like so far.

When we first decided that we wanted to work cross-culturally one of our pastors and close friends jokingly said he would try to scare us out of it. He'd previously worked in Lesotho and had seen the rougher side of what a cross-cultural worker's life could be like, whereas we had very rose coloured lenses about it all. He wanted to test our commitment to this new dream. You'll be glad to know that he didn't manage to divert our path but did start the process of preparation. He and his wife were the first people to be totally honest with us about the struggles of serving cross-culturally.

Right throughout our partnership development in Queensland we were intentional about keeping our expectations realistic. We tried not to assume too much about the way things would go and have entered the country with few preconceptions of how we can serve. The idea is that we enter as learners and not as people with all the answers. This attitude has led to a surprisingly smooth transition (so far). We've been welcomed into a team that already feels more like a family and our one year old has taken to Thai life like a duck to water.

The few expectations we did have was that we'd arrive to a dodgy, little, unfurnished rental apartment, have to walk or catch a tuk-tuk to

get anywhere and be left to find our own way around. **Well, God is good and He's already blown those expectations out of the water.** Our house is comfortable and functional, we've been given a team car to get around Chiang Mai and a few of our team mates have taken the time to help us find furniture and show us the way to our local supermarkets.

So with the practical details of transition chugging along nicely we have space to grapple with the internal transition. It hasn't fully sunken in yet that we've just uprooted our entire lives and moved halfway across the globe to serve God in a culture that we know very little about. Coming to terms with navigating a new world can be a big deal! At the moment we're mostly just relieved to finally be here and excited to get into language learning. We've been too busy to grieve or feel stressed although Belle did shed a tear when the high chair we brought over broke. It still seems to be the little things that get under our skin. Despite this we haven't yet hit the end of the honeymoon period here but as Belle put it recently,

when it does come, that's the time we really need to fight the urge to stay within our comfort zone and keep pushing ourselves to become more a part in the local culture.

Thailand is a beautiful country full of amazing things and some of the friendliest people on the planet but we still find ourselves pining for contact with our family and friends. We've only just had internet connected at home so until now staying in touch has been a bit difficult. Another challenge to add to the list will be to balance contact with home with engaging in life here. **Overall it's the little things that we miss. I miss things like driving without having to dodge chickens, dogs, pedestrians and oncoming traffic.** I miss being able to understand how much the 'checkout chick' wants for my groceries. I miss Vita-Brits (seriously the best cereal ever)!

Our Pastor would be happy to know that we still haven't been deterred from serving here and we know that all things will come together for the good of those who love Him.

2. Read the start of their journey in past Resonate edition 25

Maggie Jade is a policy writer and communications student from Queensland who enjoys giving impromptu tours of her new hometown to obliging friends and relatives. She shares a little of what she's learnt about transitions.

You learn a lot about yourself at your 21st birthday party. Just when all the baby pictures have been put away, the music fades and you nervously wait for your friends take centre stage ... ready to reveal a little-known fact or two about the real you. Fortunately, I got off pretty easy that night ... not too many skeletons in my ultra-organised closet. Along with jests about my supernatural spring-cleaning abilities came a welcome reminder about my fascination with places I'd never been and experiences I'd never had.

My interest in the unknown could be explained by the fact that my life up until that point had been lived in the same house, on the same pocket of farmland. As grateful as I was for the safe haven that my childhood home (literally among the gum trees) offered, I was keen to discover what was waiting for me beyond its familiar borders.

The moment I'd been waiting for came soon enough. After graduating from uni I was all packed and on my way to a city I'd never seen. What amazed me most was how smoothly the wheels were set in motion. There were no lightning bolt signs or restless nights of indecision – it was simply an open door, with no reason for me to ignore it or try to pull it shut. Invitation accepted!

When we treat every opportunity as an invitation to stretch ourselves, we create space in our hearts for change and give ourselves room to grow into the great plans God has for us.

Something remarkable happens when we take that first step on an unfamiliar path, something delightfully childlike and exciting – we reignite our sense of wonder at the world, and everything in it that is greater than ourselves.



Six steps for surviving, and thriving, during transitions.

But this doesn't mean that we should overlook the finer details along the way, or expect life to go on as normal when we arrive at the next stop on our map. Whatever the shift may be – leaving home, changing careers, starting uni – there are plenty of things we can do to engage with the process, to reorient ourselves to God and make the most of what He has placed within our reach. Here are my six steps for surviving, and thriving, in a transition:

1 CREATE ROOM

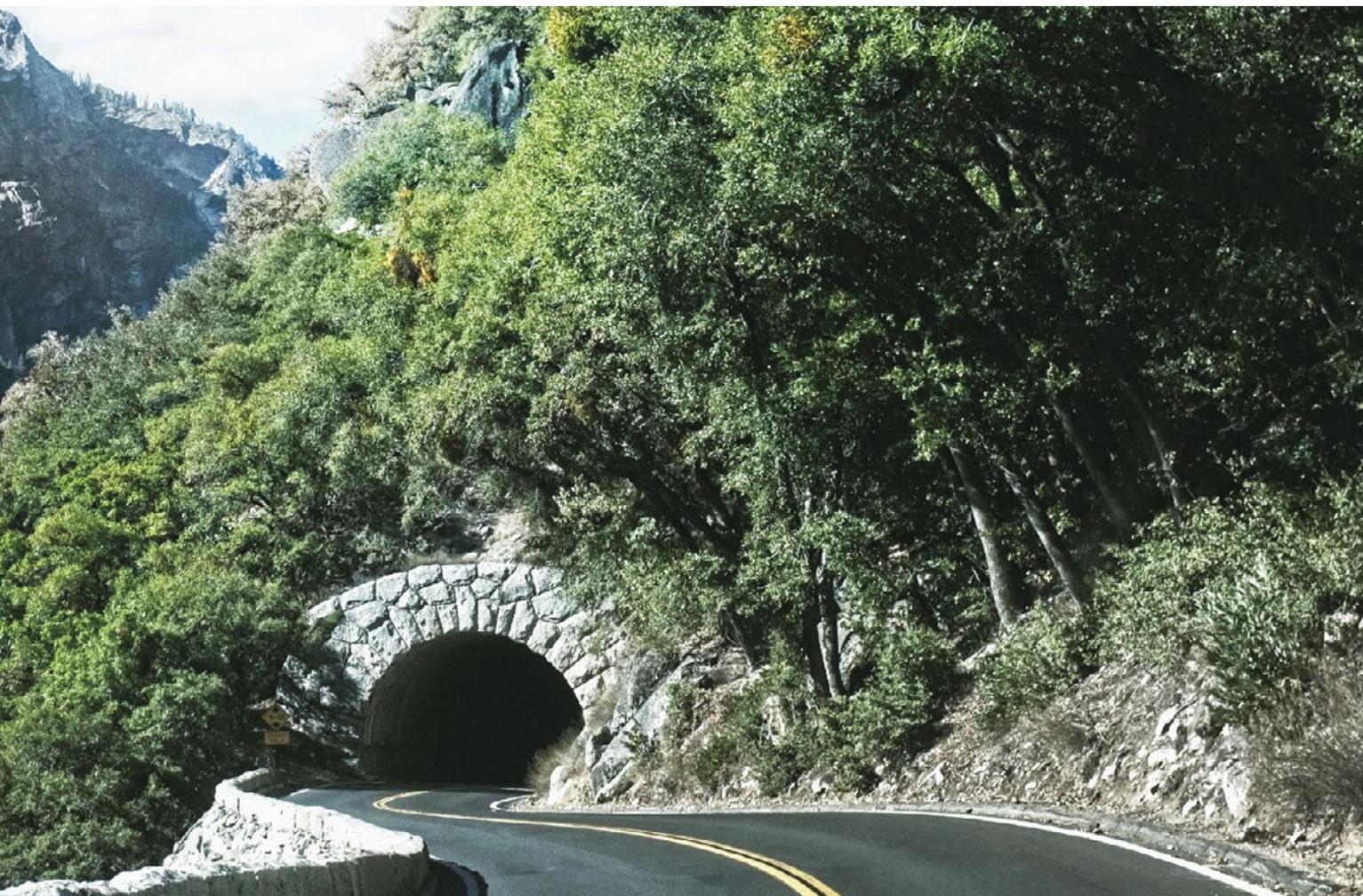
To really immerse yourself in a new environment or lifestyle, you need to live lightly and freely. If your calendar is brimming with social obligations – give yourself permission to be selective about what networks you want to invest in. If your rock-climbing gear will just end up in storage for the next few years – sell it or give it away. The cost of keeping the excess may far outweigh the loss of letting it go. Think of it as an investment in your present – a commitment to create room for another adventure. You won't look back.

2 INVEST IN THE MOMENT

To truly thrive in a new season and settle in quickly, you need to be freed up financially to enjoy the journey. Avoid being so budget-conscious that you can't treat yourself to the priceless experiences that will make you cherish the change (like a trip to the theatre or an art class). Factor in some quality time to recharge and get a fresh perspective, too. You'll be richer for it.

3 DO YOUR RESEARCH

Navigating a major life transition is the perfect opportunity to situate yourself in a community that will inspire you to live excellently – so make the most of it and do your homework. If you are contemplating a new place to live, work or study, ask yourself: is the area in a public transport hotspot or cultural hub? Will it connect me with people of character and vision? Can I picture myself serving in a church nearby? Skip the research and the road to success can be an uphill battle.



SOMETHING REMARKABLE HAPPENS WHEN WE TAKE THAT FIRST STEP ON AN UNFAMILIAR PATH, SOMETHING DELIGHTFULLY CHILDLIKE AND EXCITING...

4 CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

If your next season involves a new location, checking out all the local attractions around town may be high on your to-do list. But they won't endear you to a new place as much as the hidden gems you find on the road less travelled. Set aside the maps and create some history of your own. When you happen upon that quirky coffee shop no one else knows about, it's yours – it will be far more special to you than the well-visited landmarks. Trying new things is the best way to celebrate a new chapter in your story. They may become much-loved traditions.

5 LEARN FROM THE LOCALS

When I left home, I was conditioned to driving everywhere because nothing (not even the bus stop) was in walking distance. You can imagine my supreme elation when I realised that the locals in my new town had more active modes of transport! I'll never forget the day I stepped off my front porch to make my maiden voyage on foot – I was so happy I may have broken out into song. And then the day came when I locked eyes with a lovely vintage cruiser and found myself pedaling past little laneways like a cast member from The Sound of Music. (Again, there may have been some singing involved.) Trust me, the quickest way to feel like a local in a new place is to act like one. Following in their footsteps will save you a lot of legwork!

6 GET INVOLVED

There is no better way to manage a transition than to remind yourself that it's not about you! When our world is turned upside down, we have a tendency to forget about the needs of others. That's the perfect time to find a cause you're passionate about supporting and commit to it – because if you're not making a positive difference right where you are, you might as well click your heels three times and go home, Dorothy! You'll learn new skills, meet people with similar interests and above all, it will have you feeling right at home, wherever the road leads you.



DID YOU KNOW, Global Interaction team members participate in a 10 day live-in course before they leave called Transition Training? It's designed specifically for people preparing for cross-cultural mission. It gives them the heads up, arms them with skills and encourages a learning posture. How good is that?!

DOING LIFE *together*



Sally

Hannah

Sally, age 26, visited the team in Mozambique on a Global Xposure visit nearly four years ago and hit it off Hannah, age 16, the daughter of the team leader and his wife. While Sally returned to Mozambique for nine months to help look after the younger children of other team members who were doing language study, hanging out with Hannah in her down time was a highlight. Sally's most recent trip to Mozambique earlier this year saw the two pick up where they left off. Sally is preparing to return, this time as a long-term team member.³

3. Learn more about Sally and join her partnership team here: www.globalinteraction.org.au/who-we-are/people-groups/yawo/mozambique/sally

Hannah and I definitely clicked straight away. When I wasn't looking after the kids, visiting friends in their villages or spending time with people at the hospital I loved spending time with Hannah. We'd go on weekend walking adventures, bake and explore the local markets.

One time Hannah and I joined her younger brothers in a photo scavenger hunt and tried to capture objects that started with every letter of the alphabet. We had to be very creative, thinking of different names for dirt, sticks and mud! It took a long time but we persevered and have lots of funny photos from that day.

There is so much I admire about Hannah. She is brave, always keen for an adventure, generous and filled with grace and love! Hannah's love for her family inspires me. She will often make meals to help her mum out, or bake some treats to share with her brothers. I also admire how Hannah makes time for her friends, even though some of us are so far away. She is always willing for a Skype chat and often sends encouraging emails and is always interested in how I am.

Hannah loves Jesus and that is written across her life, especially in the way she interacts with people and generously gives of her time to help others.

I'm looking forward to more exploring with Hannah when I get back to Africa. There are many hills still to be climbed! Most of all though, I'm looking forward to sitting with Hannah at her dining room table sharing life together and more than likely, eating one of her famous brownies.

I remember first meeting Sally on her Global Xposure trip. She jumped out of the car, introduced herself and showed genuine interest in my experiences, the culture here and the work we're doing. On her next trip to Mozambique we quickly adopted her into our family.

Even though I was busy with my schooling, I loved helping Sally look after the kids and spending time with her. Some of my best memories are exploring the bush, rivers and mountains and sliding down our special mud pit during rainy season!

One time Sally and I moved our electric piano to the middle of the room and set it up as if it were in front of an audience. We even draped a cloth over the front and play the Pachelbel's Canon duet for in front of our "audience" - anyone who happened to pass the room and stop in for a quick listen (and laugh)!

Sally is an inspiration and a role model to me. She's so full of love, kindness and generosity. She was always there to help out with the youth group that we run, she'd host our whole team for meals and could sit for hours listening to me talk about anything and everything. Sally challenges me in my walk with God and encourages me through my struggles.

It's clear that God's got Sally's heart and He's preparing her for amazing things here in Mozambique!

There are some new rivers Sally and I are yet to visit and freak each other out while looking for the rumoured crocs and she still needs to teach me how to sing! It'll be great having her at the family table, contributing to the daily experiences, jokes and stories we've all told a million times.





Global Interaction's VIC/TAS Young Adult Consultant, Jon Coombs, puts his feet in the sandals of Jesus' disciples and imagines what it's like to be grateful to God during uncomfortable times of transition.

Change and transition are inevitable in life. But that doesn't mean it is comfortable.

When I left school and then uni I knew things are about to change but didn't know what my career path would look like a few years down the track. When I became engaged I knew I wanted to get married but wasn't entirely sure what it would be like a month after the ceremony. When my wife became pregnant for the first time, I knew that in nine months there would be a baby but the full extent of that impact was also not quite clear.

I am comfortable with the now because I know it, but the not yet, well, that can be fairly scary. At each transition stage I was filled with joy, excitement, fear, and anxiety - sometimes all at once!

Whenever I'm going through a period of change I'm reminded of the beginning of Acts; I find it puts things into perspective. For the disciples and followers of Jesus I imagine this would have been a frightening time. Jesus had been resurrected and then he tells them he will be leaving them, again. I can't imagine the disciples would have been too thrilled by the news.

IF YOU'RE ON THIS PATH RIGHT NOW MAY YOU SHAKE OFF THE DISCOMFORT AND EMBRACE THE TIME NOW, KNOWING IT IS WHERE GOD WANTS YOU TO BE.

But as Jesus left, he promised the disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit and be His witnesses in the places where they live, the wider community, and to the ends of the known world (Acts 1:8). A huge, exciting, daunting, humbling call on their lives! Jesus left and the disciples waited. And waited. For about ten days they were living in the uncomfortable 'now' not knowing what was to come.

Those sensing a strong inclination to be personally involved in cross-cultural mission spend oodles of time in transit, and not all in comfortable airport lounges. Waiting to hit the ground and begin building relationships with people who don't know Jesus can be years away from the initial sense of call. Sometimes decades. Even when people have made the step of contacting me or our Global Interaction team, it's still often 18-24 months til I'm waving them off at the airport.

But this waiting and preparing period is so vital, and something to be recognised as part of the journey.

Trusting God in this uncomfortable transitional time enables us to have greater trust in Him over the long haul. It can be a gift of time to grow deeper in our knowledge of God and of the people we are passionate about sharing our faith with. It also helps build our own capacities and understanding about the complex issues of mission life.

If you're on this path right now may you shake off the discomfort and embrace the time now, knowing it is where God wants you to be. But at the same time look forward with anticipation for what God is preparing for you and the least-reached.

The disciples received the Holy Spirit and fulfilled that promise of being witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. That promise is still active for us today. In whatever our circumstances we can continue to be a witness for Jesus. I'm more than comfortable with that!

SHARING *Your Faith*

Part III

Crunch Time

CREATING CONNECTIONS *that Lead to Christ*

If you're a *Resonate* regular, you've been waiting with bated breath for Part 3 of the series. Wait no longer! Take the two dog-eared, coffee-stained past editions from your bookshelf or click your Bookmarks tab and recap. First, initiate and create connections with people. Next, make those connections meaningful, moving beyond chitchat to deep sharing. Finally (unless you tell us you want more⁴ and the mini-series may become a whole season!), Susan Campbell looks at what happens when your friends are open to knowing Jesus.

You've been doing the relationship gig for a while. You have a few buddies who trust you, know how you like your coffee, arrive wearing trackies to watch 'The Voice' and see themselves out as the credits roll. They know you're a follower of Jesus and they're cool with that. You'd love to see them come to faith and have been praying for God to draw them closer to Himself.

So, what next?... Stealthily slide some Bible verses into their back pocket when they reach for the Tim-Tams? Casually ask if they want to give their life to Jesus in an ad break? Ask them to critique your testimony?

Ah, hmm, perhaps we should get some tips from the Global Interaction cross-cultural workers, seeing that sharing faith is one of their favourite things to do.

Dema and his teammates in Thailand had been building relationships with people for a while. They were at a point where a good level trust was established and friendship was formed with a few people. They decided it would be appropriate to invite their friends to join together to discuss the Bible. They prayed a lot, chose a date and plucked up the courage. They believed their relationships were robust enough for the Ethnic Thai people to say 'no' yet the friendships to still continue. But they said yes!

The first discussion group in Dema's village was on in April 2013 and it's been going ever since. Every Friday, in someone's home, a group of people are sitting on the floor with their thongs at the door, eating stir fry and rice, drinking tea and Coke, discussing Bible stories and sharing experiences of Jesus.

4. Go on, you know you want to! Text 'more Resonate!' 0402 464 154 or email resonate@globalinteraction.org.au

Tobias, a team member in Mozambique says,

“For the Yao people, the stories of Jesus are strong concepts that they can grasp. Hearing how Jesus calmed the storm or healed a man from blindness is mind blowing. So, I incorporate stories into conversation. A lot of people are hungry for more and will ask questions. Some people show more than a cursory interest in Jesus.

So, back to your buddies. Do you dare consider what getting to know Jesus might look like for them? Ready? First, consider one of your friends. Name them. Think about what you know of their lives, personality, communication style, struggles and hopes.

Next, consider what it is about Jesus that may resonate with them. What might they love about Him? What might inspire them? Which Bible stories, Psalms or passages might be encouraging to them? Where might there be a point of connection?

Are you still with me?

Now, imagine which situations might be best for them to explore this stuff, remembering that the most effective evangelism strategies will involve you, their friend, communicating in genuine ways. (Your friends won't feel particularly valued if you outsource when it comes to the crunch.)

Can stories be easily woven into conversation, like Tobias' in Mozambique?

Could you invite them to your home with a couple of friends to explore the Bible together, like Dema's community in Thailand?

If they communicate more openly through social media, perhaps initiate deeper conversations through Facebook Messenger?

Google 'Alpha' or 'Intro to Christianity' courses in your area or ask your church to host one and go along with them.

If they are avid readers, buy them a great book, perhaps with your thoughts and ideas on sticky notes throughout?

Or invite them to read some of your writing, poems, drawings or songs that express your faith...

... the opportunities are endless!

YOU'RE BUZZING WITH EXCITEMENT ABOUT HOW GOD IS MOVING AND YOU ARE JUMPING OUT OF YOUR SKIN TO TELL THEM EVERYTHING ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN.

Choose one. Go on...

Now, imagine that in a few months' time, they are beginning to know Jesus. You're buzzing with excitement about how God is moving and you are jumping out of your skin to tell them everything about being a Christian. You pull out a box of your dusty prayer journals for them to scour through. Send them Facebook invites to every Christian event you can find (don't forget the camps). Bombard them with text messages of Bible verses, every day. Sign them up for a Koorong membership, subscribe them to Christian podcasts. And lend them your treasured (slightly stinky) T-shirt you won at church youth camp 10 years ago for reciting the memory verse backwards with a mouth full of Weetbix!

Whoa there, hold on. There's a slight (or gigantic) difference between orienting them to Jesus and swallowing them up with the stuff that surrounds Him.

Let's go back to our cross-cultural workers - what do they do when people come to faith?

Dema in Thailand explains,

“Some people in our Friday group have come to faith, others have been baptised in the local river, new people have joined and others have left. We worship together in a natural, culturally relevant Thai way, complete with chanting, lots of conversation and Thai stories. We don't push people to implement certain ways of life but rather help them along the way to understand Jesus better and follow Him in their daily lives, allowing the Holy Spirit to prompt and transform. Once people feel a sense of belonging, they share their suggestions of how to worship God. They come up with ideas that help them to develop their own culturally distinctive ways of following Jesus.

Over in Mozambique, Tobias says,

“A Yao friend looks to me a lot for help when it comes to life issues. The reality is that I can't make decisions for him, even if I wanted to so I engage him in what the Bible says and encourage him to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to work it out. I might have an opinion on what he should do but often I don't need to say it before he figures it out for himself. I want to focus on what the Bible says about a situation, not on sprouting propositions or instructions on how they should behave or what they should think. I would almost always miss something in the cultural nuance and end up giving bad advice. Better to encourage prayer and let God speak.

Ah, now there's some wise advice. These guys admit they are still learning but they seem to be on the right track. Beats the verse-in-the-pocket stealth operation.

What would it take for us to adopt the same posture as these cross-cultural workers?

First, it takes trust that the Holy Spirit will always be working in people's lives (with or without us).

Second, it takes humility to sit back, shut up and let go of our preconceived ideas of what someone should and shouldn't do.

Third, it takes discernment to help them navigate the Scriptures, answer their questions and consider what resources from Koorong's bulging shelves and the internet's heavy cloud are actually helpful, and what can be left aside, for now (or forever!).

And finally, it takes a heart that is grateful and humble, giving glory to God for his continuing work of bringing people to Himself.

From Single to... um, Single.

An (honest) perspective on going solo in mission

While we're talking about transitions, let's address one of the most significant changes people expect to face in their lives - from singleness to marriage. Global Interaction Queensland's Young Adults Consultant Karen Haynes looks at what it's like for some people not to go through that transition, while simultaneously exploring a future in cross-cultural mission.

"I'm really interested in cross-cultural mission but I want to find a partner first." I've heard this statement during many conversations over the years. Conversations with remarkable, passionate, capable, Jesus-following people who genuinely want to serve in cross-cultural mission.

Wait or go? It's a dilemma.

It is a dilemma I understand well. Most of my Christian friends are not only married but have children. If it was slightly difficult going to so many happy weddings in my 20s, it is now more so, not going to many weddings in my 30s.

As a young person in church I grew up hearing testimonies. We loved them. Many testimonies from older women can be summarised like this:

- I was lost
- I met Jesus
- Jesus found me my husband
- Now I am happy

A happy marriage appeared to be part of the salvation package (tied up with a wedding present sized bow!). Many of my friends anticipated the same would happen for them. They would quickly find a fellow Christian traveller and face life's joys and challenges together.

I can even now remember the moment it hit me. This picture was all wrong. God did not promise me a husband. Salvation to all who believe? Yes. Marriage? No. Good things certainly come from God but He is not bound by any list, mine or yours.



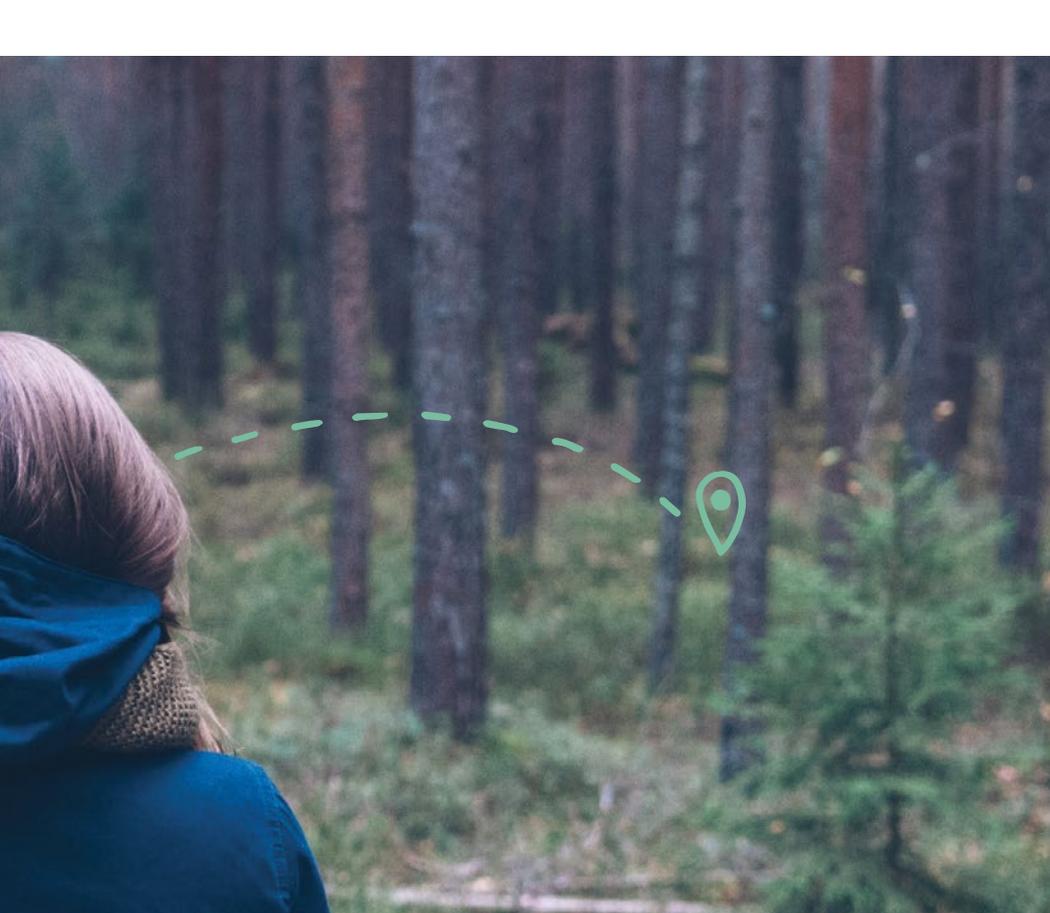
That was a tough moment. What was I to do with all the positive affirmations that praying Christians had made to me? Promises about 'grand plans', the 'heart's desire' and 'good things' for my future. It is true

we follow a God of generosity and abundance. Yet God made flesh, Jesus, modelled a life that didn't prioritise comforts, settling or many fulfilled desires. Jesus lived a full life but it wasn't a rosy picture of all that young men of his day and throughout history might want - a home, stability, wife and kids, growing old in comfort, dying peacefully surrounded by grandchildren. Taking Jesus' example seriously, we can be joyous in our salvation but not confuse what that promise actually includes.

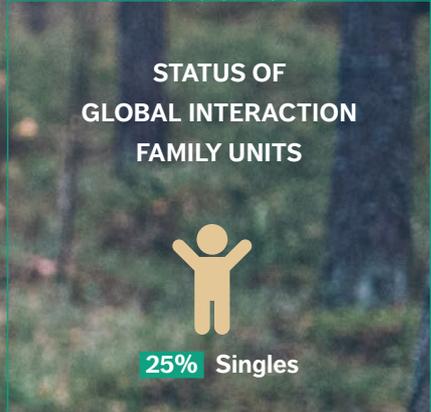
So, while I held on to my faith in Jesus and my promise of *new life* in Him, I let go of my expectation of being a *new wife* because of Him! I shed the anticipation that God would meet all my earthly desires.

Back to the wait or go dilemma.

For followers of Jesus, the first family we are called to is not one of vows and children but of eternal membership.



Global Interaction's first five cross-cultural workers, commissioned way back in 1885 were all single young women. Ellen, Martha, Marion, Ruth and Alice were nicknamed the Five Barley Loaves - what are so few among so many? I doubt they would ever have conceived the impact that their ministry had!



(I will never forget when young children at church started calling me 'Aunty Karen'. Their innocent inclusion of me in their church family melted my heart.) One element of our family life together, indeed a crucial element, is our collective call to mission.

As Aussie Baptists, we've particularly committed ourselves to sharing with those who've least had the opportunity to hear it, beginning with nine people groups in Asia and Africa. We either go ourselves or support those who go.

Many of the go-ers are singles. And being single provides some wonderful opportunities, for example they:

- > Find it easy to devote time to culture and language learning
- > Can easily connect with a local group or family and receive and give hospitality
- > Have plenty of time to make friends
- > Can make and change plans quickly, without having to negotiate needs and priorities of others
- > Have low financial support needs.

However, while many singles recognise the opportunities and benefits to their ministry, the longing for marriage does not end. They may feel peace and contentment for a while, then... crash.

Another wave hits. Regret. Sadness. Loneliness. A married pastor once told me that marriage was God's plan for character development. I'm sure singleness does this too, just in a different way. I believe it can develop compassion and empathy as we share God's love to people, perhaps those in more trying circumstances than our own.

For those seeking to be a part of God's mission cross-culturally, I urge you to go. However, you do not have to, nor should you, go alone. You need to be part of an organisation that takes the needs and opportunities of all people, singles and marrieds, seriously. Here are a few pointers:

- > Look for a track record of singles not just as helpers but as fully-fledged team members and leaders
- > Connect with other singles in the organisation, even if they are in other locations
- > Be part of a team of people who support each other well
- > Find a mentor who is also single, they may understand the challenges
- > Practice God's presence. He's right there. Talk, listen, read, worship
- > Invest in a circle of friends you can call upon, just to talk.

SO, SHOULD YOU WAIT FOR MR OR MRS RIGHT?

Probably not. Just get on with it. You don't want to spend your life missing out on what God may have in store, waiting for what may or may not come to pass. If you are blessed by meeting a partner in the departure lounge or in a village fruit market, be thankful. If not, still continue in the adventure God has for you.



COOKING CULTURALLY



Curried Sweet Potato Soup

SOUTH ASIA

Serves 4

BUY or GROW IT

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ½ -1 teaspoon curry powder
- 500 grams sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 cup water
- 3 teaspoons vegetable or chicken stock powder
- 3 cups milk
- ¼ cup cream (optional)

DO IT

1. sauté onion, garlic and curry powder in melted butter in a large saucepan
2. sauté sweet potato in pan for 1-2 minutes without browning
3. combine water and stock powder, then add to the pan. Bring to the boil and cook for 30 minutes or until soft
4. puree cooked mixture until mushy. Stir, adding splashes of milk, to preferred consistency
5. heat through, without boiling
6. stir in cream

VARIATION

Add 1-2 teaspoons crushed ginger when sautéing and 1 cup coconut milk when adding milk



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