

Marked for Life Series

Survive the Distance; Inherit the Dirt

By

Bruce A. Howell,

General Director of Foreign Missions

There is at least one thing all global nomads (our fancy code name for missionary kids) have in common. All are asked to survive the distance. Most camp out in that mode continuously. Either you find yourself surviving the distance from home country or host country. I'm not talking about running a marathon but being (physically and sometimes emotionally) distant from loved ones: friends, families, and classmates. Whether at home, on deputation, or on the mission field distance and detachment prevail. It seems our MK Jukebox (that's an ancient equivalent to iPod) is always playing songs like: (1) Lately All I've Got is Leaving on My Mind; (2) On the Road Again; (3) I'll Fly Away; or (4) I'm Leaving on a Jet Plane. Some of these are before your time. Don't get me wrong. It's not that I'm getting archaic (am I?) but these songs were passed down from previous generations. Really! Possessing many lyrics they all speak one language: distance. They also stir up loneliness: a friend or foe all global nomads are acquainted with.

What can be done to shorten the distance? First of all, express it. Tell your parents or friends what you are going through. Let them know you are not asking them to solve the problem; just to listen. Express it to God. He understands. He cares! Express it to others. It is common knowledge that missionary kids understand other missionary kids best. Build a network. I imagine global nomads keep the keyboards hot: e-mails, instant messaging, blogs, and etcetera. When the going gets tough don't hesitate to write me or contact a member of the MK Ministries team. We are here for you! Hang in there. You can make it. They say, home is where your heart is. Ask the Lord to help you feel at home and adjust wherever you find yourself.

I close with a little dirt for the distance I gleaned from a MK blogger, your *CultureShock* editor. Commenting on an unusual Christmas gift, received from another missionary kid, she wrote: "I love my jar of dirt. I'll take a piece of this land with me wherever I go. And like the unexpected silver (well, silver was the color at least) locket I found in my jar - my heart will remain buried here, in this land. My life will be rooted in this soil long after me and my jar of dirt are nowhere to be found. This is my home. This is my land. This is my ... dirt." The moral of my story is to survive the distance; inherit the dirt! That should help you make it in your host country. Talking about inevitable re-entry is for another day in the life of global nomads. Until next time!