

Marked for Life

Pierced Hearts

By

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Ever wondered why I call this series “Marked for Life”? Global Nomads bear the marks of their cross-cultural experiences—mostly positive and occasionally negative—throughout life. The marks are seldom visible, but they are there just the same. Anyone involved in the sights and sounds of another culture and reaching the lost is never quite the same again. It is as if an arrow has pierced our hearts. We’ve been marked—heart, mind, and soul. As you can probably tell, I’ve been thinking about pierced hearts today. I’m writing this close to Valentine’s Day. At this time of year, I often picture an arrow shooting a gigantic heart. I also think of my list of loved ones which include my precious wife, Diane; my kids; grandkids (Did I tell you I have another grandbaby on the way?); and my Global Nomad friends. Hi, ya’ll! Oh yeah, there is one more group on my list—our lost world.

Remember it was Love (1 John 4:7-8) that brought salvation to us (John 3:16; 15:13); and love that took us to the mission field to start with. It is only through love (and God’s grace) that we manage to cope and remain on the field.

Jesus said the first commandment was to love the Lord. The second, to love others (Mark 12:29-31). It is by this mark that all know that we are true disciples (John 13:34-35). Love is not merely a word; it is action (1 John 3:16-19). The world doesn't fully understand true love, only lust which is self-seeking, self-centered, and self-satisfying. Lust asks, "What can I get?" Love asks, "What can I give?"

Oops! Sounds like I'm preachin' so I better get back on track here.

Steve Green sings, "To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission. The spring from which our service overflows; across the street or around the world the mission's still the same. Proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' name."

Interestingly, Steve not only captivates our mission, but reflects someone that has been marked for life. He is a Global Nomad, raised by missionary parents in South America until he was eighteen. He recently commented, "I have spent my life trying to safeguard myself, building walls of security, independence and provision, but God has spent my life undoing me. The reason He dismantles these walls is because I'm prone to trust what I know, and God is committed to keeping me weak, looking to Him." Marks in life keep us fragile and our eyes fixed on Jesus. One of Green's newer songs says, "When I reach the end, you are just beginning. In you alone I soar on borrowed wings."

What marks did Steve Green's missionary encounters leave on his heart? Years ago he sang and made popular, "People Need the Lord." His words still move me as I type, "Everyday they pass me by. I can see it in their eye. Empty people filled with care. Headed who knows where? People need the Lord... At the end of broken dreams, He's the open door. People need the Lord. When will we realize—people need the Lord?" Yes, I recognize I may be dating myself; that the song may be before your time, but it still has a powerful message. It puts it all into perspective, from a pierced heart to pierced hearts. The song continues, "Through His love our hearts can feel all the grief they bear!"

Another group of Christian artists you may be familiar with is "Selah" — three gifted musicians that include a brother and sister brought up in the heartland of Africa. They can't get away from their roots, and do an African song or two on each project. A recent article released by Curb Records explained that Jim Smith, following in his own father's footsteps, took his family to a life of missionary work in the Congo. Todd, Nicol, and two other children grew "to see the world as a place of trees—mango, palm, and coconut—many planted by their grandmother...They came to know the Congolese people, to speak their Kituba language and love their music." Nicol expresses her heart, "When you need to be comforted, there is nothing like these hymns, because so many of them were written from a place of suffering." Perhaps, you can relate to this experience:

“Our dad drove a seven-ton army truck, the only kind that would make it on those muddy roads in the rainy season. We’d have to cross these bridges made of six planks, forty feet above the river, and we’d always pray that the planks wouldn’t break under the truck. That’s what life was like there. You had to pray—just to survive.”

I may not agree with their doctrinal slant—or even be aware of it—and I’m not promoting their music, or starting the Howell Record Company. I’m not even sure I always like their style. What attracts me to them is they are missionary kids; Global Nomads. They are marked for life and it shows through in their lyrics, musical expression; in their interviews and articles. They have found a way to express their pierced hearts and to bless others. I pray that each of our Global Nomads, throughout the United Pentecostal Church International, will do the same. Many of you are equally talented and can, and will, impact our church and our world.

Here’s my advice:

Love the Lord your God.

Love others. It’s the heartbeat of our mission.

You are marked for life. Thank God for it!

Your heart has been pierced. It is for a purpose.

You cannot lead others, where you have never been.

Your pain is the seed of healing for the hurting.

Find outlets for your experiences and bless your world. People need the

Lord!