

## Am I Going Home or Leaving Home?

By

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What is the toughest adjustment our missionary kids face? Leaving for the field? Leaving the field? Many times, it is the adjustment of reentering their home country that is such a thorny transition. They wonder, "Am I going home or leaving home?" Whether adjusting to the field, facing difficulties on location, or navigating re-entry, MK Ministries is there to assist in the journey. Our staff: Mark Hattabaugh (Director), Cylinda Nickel (Assistant Director/fulltime), Carla Burton (Secretary), Diane Howell (Advisor), Raymond Woodward (Board Liason), stand ready to help our missionary kids at any stage of life. They have travelled the road, know the terrain, and devotedly help others in the journey. They offer personal counseling, host events at MK Retreats, School of Missions, Thanksgiving, General Conference, and Youth Congress. They diligently send out expressions of care at Christmas, birthdays, or when an MK is sick or having a tough time. They host an excellent web site at <http://upwithmks.com> and provide bi-monthly e-magazines for different ages. The Foreign Missions Division provides a monthly allowance to missionary kids involved in post-secondary education up to their twenty-third birthday. While there, health insurance is covered.

Here are a few testimonies of triumphant missionary kids gleaned from their blogs and writings:

**Cylinda Shirley Nickel, MK to Leeward Islands:** I recall leaving the field to come back to the USA for college. My Dad told me that life would be different in the USA...but different was not bad. He gave me the "recognize the value of each place and know that I could be great in both" speech. He promised me that God had equipped me with that gift of adapting and that I would be fine. I tried to recall the fact that different was not bad as I bought a winter coat for the first time, looked like a dork in my Grandma's sweaters, and did not know how to tie a scarf in the chilly Minnesota winter. I hated the first few weeks of college. I wanted to call home, but couldn't afford to do it. I also did

not want my parents to think I was failing to fit in. By the sixth and seventh week, I had secured some friends, had learned how to walk on icy sidewalks, knew how to make a poof in my hair and earn extra money by donating plasma at the Plasma Alliance.

**Candra Poitras, MK to Ghana:** My earliest memories were of hot climates and chickens running around our backyard, the electricity being off half the week, expecting the water to go off at inconvenient times and that it was normal that several months of the year was covered by a layer of dust off the Sahara. It wasn't weird to be baptized in the ocean or help teach Sunday school instead of attending it. That was my life; all I had ever known. So, when people asked me how hard the sacrifice of spending my life in Africa was, I couldn't help but be a little humored.

December 15, 2008 was the day I really understood what sacrifice meant. It was the day I got on the plane and said goodbye to the only home I had known, all the people I loved, and moved to America. I can't really express how broken I felt or how much pain I was in, but I do remember it took months to wear off. Added to this was the gargantuan amount of culture shock that I did not anticipate....Any small pain I have gone through absolutely disappears when compared to the happiness and love I have experienced. Nothing could ever come close to replacing the thousands of people I have seen baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost. No picture could be more beautiful than the tears running down the face of someone who is so desperate for God or more precious than a people who really do live like Jesus is everything.

**Kandra Robertson, MK to Tanzania:** The time has come when I must pack my bags, and bid farewell to this beautiful place. As MKs, we've all said many goodbyes. Some were happy; some were tearful. Some were easy; some were not. Let me assure you that this particular goodbye found its home in the 'not' category. Reality has yet to sink in but the hole in my heart is already huge. How does one so casually say good-bye to a country and people who have so aptly grown to be part of who you are? I don't think that it can be done....Right now it is too painful to digest the fact that I have to leave my 'home', so that I can go 'home.' Reality comes too quick, and goodbyes take too long.