

What You May Have in Common With Mary, Joseph and Other Bible Heroes

As I sit down to write, my faithful little laptop computer is one of the few things I own that is not in a box, a bag or the give-away pile. It's moving time, that unsettling transition when every closet must be emptied, every cabinet scoured, when there is no chair left to rest on, and we bump over trunks and suitcases and dismantled furniture. I'm paralyzed by a cracked glass: usable, so keep or damaged, so toss? My son's yearbooks made the cut; the shoes the dog chewed did not.

As I suppose most humans do, I resist transition and hope to make the chaos as short-lived as possible. And yet there is an uncomfortable awareness that most of the best stories of God's mercy and grace happen to people off-balance, people in-motion, people who are shaken out of one place and way of life and set in process to another. Since Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden, we have been a race of wanderers longing for stability. Noah and family, Sarah and Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Zipporah, Joshua, Jonah, Rahab, Ruth and Naomi, Daniel and his friends, Mary and Joseph. Even Jesus had less lair than a fox; and his followers scattered to the winds as storms of persecution struck. Though the prophets and poets sing of the vine and fig tree, very few get to both live a life both rooted in earthly place and time, and central to the coming of the kingdom. Maybe Solomon, but the exception may prove the rule.

Twenty-five years ago, my husband and I packed up a rented house in Baltimore, snapped an 8-month-old into a cotton onesie and boarded a plane for Uganda. We've been living the paradox of creating home and embracing journey ever since.

I say paradox, because I have found most of the things worth believing require the faith to hold onto two truths that appear contradictory on the surface. Creating home is deeply embedded in our DNA. As soon as we had a cement floor, a mud-brick wall and a tin roof, I was pulling out fabric for curtains and modifying traditions from our childhoods to our new normal on the equator. From rigging car speakers to a battery for music to killing cockroaches, we were intentionally and grittily laboring to create a space where our family would feel they belonged. Sure, we had to hide under beds during rebel raids a few times, but mostly we just lived. The more normal days of laundry and visitors and work and laughter one passes in a place, the more at home one feels. God surely smiles upon those labors.

And yet—all that effort to make a new home cannot preclude the embrace of journey. After 17 years in Uganda, we were asked to move to Kenya, and then a new place in Kenya, and now, ironically, we find ourselves packing up and heading back to where we started. But only temporarily because the horizon beyond six months is completely obscure. Even in the most settled spans, we have always been aliens and strangers, ever stumbling with language and insight. And even if we had somehow figured all that out, the settled arrival remains elusive as kids grow, families change, jobs evolve and friends come and go. The truth is this life is a reflection, and a dim one at that, of our final true home and we are continuously in motion towards a new heavens and new earth.

Home and journey are both worthy goals. We seem to need a measure of both for spiritual health. We come from home and head to it, and we reluctantly admit that most of what we learn about God's faithfulness and power occurs in between. Comfort and routine might rob us of knowing God deeply. Periodically by mercy, we are wrenched away from order and set out in the desert.

So, deep breath, here we go again, off-kilter and unsure of

most things, except this: the God who called Abraham, Moses, Rahab and Mary out of their homes and onto the journey goes with us. So ultimately, the paradox resolves into this tabernacle-in-the-wilderness-party: home cannot be taken away by journey. Praying you sense the reality of God with you, the paradox of home on the road.

J.A. Myhre *is the author of **Rwendigo Tales**, a doctor and mom who loves to put down home roots and just set back out on the open road.*