

# Longing for Home

In East Africa, when people want to know where you live, they always ask, “Where do you stay?” But if they desire to know where you belong, they ask, “Where’s home?” This contrast is a subtle but essential difference among people who consider their tribal homelands “home,” and think of the houses they inhabit as merely temporary perching places. Roots, they believe, lay deeper than bricks and mortar, fixed into areas where their tribes and families have generations of life, where the bodies of those who pass away are carried back for burial.

As a child living in Central America, I perched lightly in my homes. From the time I was born, my missionary family moved to a new house and city every two years, sometimes more frequently. By the time I went to college at the age of eighteen, I had lived in thirteen different houses. Maybe that’s the reason why I connect my pursuit of God with my desire to “dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23:6).

## WHERE THE LORD GOES

When the disciples left their homes to follow Jesus, they began a three-year trek with a man who said of Himself, “Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’” (Luke 9:58). Willingly they left behind their houses and jobs to learn from the Messiah and stay with Him. They had times when Christ gave them instructions and sent them on missionary trips, two by two. On some journeys, they took nothing with them. Wherever lodging became available, they stayed there. On this trip, they took extra clothes and money. Little by little, Jesus weaned their trust and sense of security away from their houses, from their lands, from their people, from their own families, and bound them to Himself.

The disciples felt most at home when they gathered together with Him. On the evening of His betrayal, their distress grew with every thought of Jesus leaving them. Jesus spoke some of His most comforting words in that hour of anxiety.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:1–3).

Jesus connected their desire to stay with Him and their longing to be home. In their pursuit of Christ, they instinctively felt that He had become their fortress, and they wanted to live with Him forever.

**Surely your goodness and love  
will follow me all the days of  
my life, and I will dwell in the  
house of the LORD forever.**

**(Psalm 23:6)**

Fundamental to our relationship with God, our pursuit of Him can be expressed as a deep desire to be with Him in His place—a longing that where He is, we may also be. David said that his soul longed for the courts of the Lord. Paul considered that his mortal body was no better than a tent. Still, one day he would receive an imperishable body with which to live with Jesus eternally in the heavens (2 Corinthians 5). We don’t want to have a heavenly fellowship with Him as disembodied spirits floating in space, but we long to be physically together with Him, forever in His house.



STRANGERS AND EXILES ON EARTH

It’s a great thing to pursue Jesus by learning to be at home in Him and thinking of Him as my home in preparation for the time when I will physically be with Him forever. Pursuing God means growing in my readiness to live forever with Him in His heaven. It keeps the lightweight nature of all this world’s stuff in a proper perspective.

If the Spirit of Jesus is my daily honored guest, welcomed into all the corners of my soul and dining with me, then I am happy whether eating off plastic or china (Revelation 3:20). Whether I’m living in the same house as last year, whether its walls are mud or brick, whether I have running water or electricity, my essence—the heart of myself and soul that is burrowed and grafted deeply into Him—is well. My windows are clear; my rooms are all full of light, and the wallpaper I trace is the Word of God.

Another great thing about pursuing Jesus as my home is that God is not ashamed to be my God, for He has prepared a city for me and for all the others who diligently seek Him by faith

(Hebrews 11:15). Since now I’m a citizen of heaven, I no longer need to bow to the god of my appetite, glorify my shame, nor set my mind on earthly things.

Instead, I can eagerly wait for my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come bodily to receive me to Himself and transform my body to be like His—ready to live in God’s holy city forever (Philippians 3). I don’t need to get discouraged or frustrated when no place on Earth fully satisfies me, nor when the citizens of this earth don’t speak my language or appreciate the customs that are part of my spiritual heritage. I don’t have to feel “left out” of some inner circle, nor “cheated” if I don’t have the kind of house the world admires.

FABULOUS FAMILY

I love the honor Jesus bestows on us who belong to Him, making us into a house for His Spirit. He is making a home for us in the heavens; meantime, He is building a house for Himself with living stones (1 Peter 2:5). As we are built into a dwelling of God by the Spirit, we grow more and more into Him (Ephesians 2:20-22). The prayer Jesus prayed on the night He was betrayed, that just as He and His Father are One so His people would be One, is being answered brick by brick as He builds.

Whether sitting on the sand under a tree or on wooden benches under a corrugated steel roof or in a soaring cathedral, when I am with my brothers and sisters in Christ, I give thanks for this spiritual family into which I have been born again. We get to feast at the Lord’s Table, remembering His promise that one day we will feast in His house; my pursuit of Jesus and my desire for a home is being answered most deeply during this life within this spiritual family and temple.

Recently I hosted a group of fourteen ladies for lunch. The group included women from the US, Kenya, Ethiopia, Laos, Cambodia, Brazil, Morocco, and India. Five of us were believers in Christ; the rest are not yet in Him. I hoped that in my home—eating, laughing, and meeting my other sisters in Christ—those who did not yet know Jesus would sense His presence and love. The warmth would awaken in them a desire to pursue Him.

As we finished dessert, my Muslim friend, with whom I always read Scripture, said, “Before we go, aren’t we going to read the Bible?” I opened the Bible to Psalm 16 and read verse 11, “You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” The prophet David, I explained, had a longing that is universal in human hearts. He had the desire to find happiness. And in this psalm, he wrote about where a person can find the fullness of joy. “My prayer for you,” I said, “is that you would come to know Him and the fullness of joy in His presence.”

PARTICIPATING IN HIS PURSUIT

Even though I lived in many different houses as a child in Central America, I do not remember feeling like a person who didn’t have a home. Instead, I felt like a person who had hundreds. I felt this way because, within my loving family, we had the Lord. He, our warm Comforter, brought peace, joy, and blessing into our home.

I’m so grateful the Lord opened my eyes to the terrible plight of people who desperately needed to find their home and life in Christ. So often, I feel like a child feasting at a beautiful table while poor beggars looking in the window from the dark outside. How I want to open the door, draw them in, give them clean clothes, and share with them the living Bread.

Eventually, I grew up. I got married, and we came to East Africa, where we have lived in some homes that appear far more rustic than any of my childhood. The one we live in now seems almost palatial. At every turn, however, I still meet people who need Jesus.

Like Christ, I feel that yearning desire to draw people to Himself so that one day we can all be home with Him in heaven. I’ve learned that part of my relationship with God throughout my life involves sharing His pursuit of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. I have a deep desire for them to be at home with Him forever. When His house is full, then my joy will be complete, too.

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’... And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’” (Revelation 7:9-10; 21:2-3, esv).

My pursuit of Jesus and my desire for a home is being answered most deeply during this life within this spiritual family and temple.



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