More Screams, Different Deserts

Joy and Perseverance for Women in Cross-Cultural Ministry

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Sue Eenigenburg

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1.
Persevering to Raise TCKs with TLC

Raising children in any culture is difficult. One thing I've learned is that we don't often know the full picture of all that God has done for our children until they are grown and they tell us stories that make our hearts beat faster, even though it is thirty years after the fact! While we were ignorant of some of the circumstances, God was saving our children's lives!

Now that the kids are adults, when we are together I love sitting around the table remembering things that happened when they were children. I thought I knew all the stories. However, now that I've heard "the rest of the story" for several that I thought I knew, I am more thankful than ever that God is omnipresent and omnipotent, because I certainly was not and am not.

We've often told the story of Michael and Kristi being lost on the streets of Cairo when they were eight and five years old. Michael flagged down a taxi, got a ride to the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant near our house, and paid an abominably small amount of change for the distance driven. As I shared this account with others, I would say, "God bless that taxi driver. Michael gave him all the money he had, and the taxi driver was so kind not to give him a hard time." We found out a few years ago that Michael had more money; he just didn't want to spend it!

There was the time our girls were out on our fifth-floor balcony with their friend Jennifer. They had tied their two plastic jump ropes together to climb down to the ground. As I stepped onto the balcony,

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Jennifer was already over the edge, starting to try to shimmy down the flimsy rope. I got to them just in time to pull her back to safety. Once, as we were talking about that, our oldest son let us know that he used to play on that balcony. He would climb over to the other side and play hold on, let go, grab hold, let go. As he told us, I sat there dumbfounded. Where was I? How did I not know? And even more importantly, why in the world would he do that? He said he thought it had seemed like fun at the time.

We have forgotten our children when I thought Don had them and he thought I had them. When we left our youngest at a restaurant, I called as soon as we got home to ask if she was there. She was. I remember saying, "Tell her we love her and are on our way to pick her up!" It turned out that she was quite pleased because the restaurant manager felt so bad for her that he gave her a free stuffed animal.

Today my children know Jesus and love him. It hasn't been an easy journey for any of us; however, God has been at work. They have each chosen wonderful Christian spouses. They seek to serve him in their jobs and in their homes. They produce the cutest grandchildren I've ever seen.

I, more than anyone in the world, know that this is due to God's grace and mercy. I praise the Lord for his untold mercies and for his watchful care over our children when we weren't there or even aware of what their needs were. Though I am a flawed mother, I am a flawed mother who has an all-knowing, amazingly perfect, totally capable heavenly Father.

Let me tell you a few of our stories . . . or at least the parts I know!

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We Should Do That

Ministering in a creative-access country has its challenges. During our first term our children weren't quite sure what their parents did. Because they were so young (all four were under six years old), we weren't sure how to explain to them that we were missionaries but going overseas with a different job. (We didn't use the word "missionary," as the countries where we were going to work didn't allow missionary visas. There was a cultural misunderstanding of the word. Many people often thought of a missionary as not just a religious person, but a political figure with imperialistic goals.) We also didn't do a very good job of helping the children understand so they could explain what we did to people who asked. They knew we moved.

We had been in language study for about one year. Our oldest son, Stephen, was in first grade, where the teacher asked him what his father's job was. He said he didn't know. She tried to help and asked him, "Does your dad read a lot of books?"

"Yes," Stephen replied since he saw him studying almost every evening.

"Does he like old things?"

"Yes," he said as he remembered the different historical places we'd gone to do some sightseeing.

"Is he an archaeologist?" she asked.

"Yes!" our son answered. When we went in for the first parent-teacher conference, we had a hard time understanding why she asked Don about his job in archaeology! She then told us the story of her conversation with our son.

Several years later, after we had finished language school and were in our host country, Dick and Doreen, leaders from our U.S. Sending Center visited us. By then our older kids had a better

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understanding of Don's role in representing a business while seeking to plant churches. Our younger daughters still weren't sure what we did. We asked Aunt Doreen to share her testimony and pray with our daughters before their bedtime.

Aunt Doreen shared how she came to know the Lord and how she and her husband had traveled around the world telling people about Jesus. Kristi was quite impressed and asked me the next day, "Mom, are Uncle Dick and Aunt Doreen missionaries?" I didn't even know she knew that word, as we rarely used it. We used other terms like "workers" or "macaronis" instead.

"Yes," I replied, "Why do you ask?"

"She told us how she went around the world telling people about Jesus. Hey, we should do that!" She thought we lived at home (in the Middle East) and didn't travel much. We just had lots of friends over and visited them as well.

"Well, honey, we do tell our friends about Jesus." I told her. "That's why we left our home country, invite people to our house, why we are a part of a team, why I go visiting friends when you are at school, why we live here and not where we were born."

"Oh," she said, beginning to understand a little more fully what her parents did.

Questions:

How have you helped your children understand your calling and what you do?

What can churches do to educate the congregation on how to communicate with cross-cultural workers in creative-access countries?

Resource:

A communication guide can be found at http://cma-cmd.nextmeta.com/files/global_ministries/CACCommunicationGuidelinesBrochure2011_785.pdf.

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What Happens When Husbands Are Gone

My husband wasn't home. I know it isn't true, but it really does seem as if more unforeseen (and therefore unprepared for) surprises happen when spouses are gone than when they are home!

My two young boys had just arrived home from school. Though they were only in elementary school, they rode a bus with kids their age up through high school-age teens. Sometimes they heard things on that bus that they shouldn't have heard. This was one of those times.

My sons had heard some bad words regarding sex and wanted to find out more about what they had heard. Since I was home, I got the questions. I wasn't really thinking of having this talk until they were older and, well, I just kind of assumed that my husband would talk with them and I would talk with the girls about sex.

I listened as they repeated the words they had heard (oh my!). Their faces showed their disbelief as they said they didn't believe that what the older kids had said about sex could be true. I was thinking, "I'm not ready for this. They aren't ready for this. Where is my husband and how I am going to handle this?" My body, however, was calmly sitting down with them, and my voice said serenely, "Let's talk about what you heard."

Well, we went over the new additions to their vocabulary and we talked about the appropriate words for body parts. I also explained why we don't use crude terms to describe sex when God intended it to be a wonderful demonstration of love that should only happen between a wife and her husband.

We got through the details using correct terminology and a solid theological background, but I think my face turned slightly redder

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