

North American Division Office of Volunteer Ministries

# **Student Missions Re-entry Retreat** FACILITATORS' MANUAL





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## INTRODUCTION

From *Re-Entry Retreat/Debriefing Seminars, General Guidelines*  
by Pat Gustin

### *History*

Missionaries have been “going out” to the mission field and “coming home” for centuries. During those years they inevitably faced the challenges of adjusting to life both on the outgoing and return journeys, but without the benefit of any concerted effort to explain or in any other way ease the pain. The term “culture shock” only began to be used in the 1950s and “reverse culture shock” twenty years later, in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

Recognition of the need to prepare people for either of these phenomena only came gradually. Special seminars or workshops to help people cope with the effects of both culture shock and reverse culture shock are therefore of recent origin. Today, the military and many multinational corporations, government agencies, and mission organizations are providing seminars and workshops for their people to help prepare them to deal with both of these experiences.

Recognizing this need, the Seventh-day Adventist church conducted its first re-entry seminar in January 1999 in the South Pacific Division. Missionary families and teens returning

<sup>1</sup>Austin, *Cross-cultural Re-entry*, p. xix.

to Australia from mission assignments in the Pacific Islands and other parts of the world attended the five-day program. Later in the year, three similar programs were held in the United States. The first, for returning teens, followed by one for families, was held on the campus of La Sierra University the summer of 1999. Another one for families was conducted in the fall of the same year at Andrews University. At the same time, many Adventist colleges began offering a weekend re-entry retreat for their returning student missionaries. Today, re-entry programs for families, teens, and student missionaries are held yearly in Australia and the United States.

### **Purpose**

Missionaries and others who live and work cross-culturally, live in a world of change—change on every level and aspect of their lives. Faith, location, relationships, culture, and values are only a few of the areas of life in which there is constant change for those who live cross-culturally. Keeping one’s bearings with all these transitions is a major challenge. Time is needed to reflect on the different experiences and their impact on our lives. This process of reflection is called “debriefing.”

Some think debriefing is only for victims of serious trauma. Such persons obviously do need special help processing their traumatic experiences. However, the need for this opportunity to evaluate non-traumatic cross-cultural experiences is equally important. On our own, it is unlikely that we can adequately examine and evaluate our experiences in helpful, healthful ways.<sup>2</sup>

### **Goals**

The goals of a re-entry or debriefing seminar are simple:

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from material published by Missionary Training International (MTI) “Debriefing and Renewal (DAR).”

1. Provide the opportunity for people to share/describe their experiences—positive and negative—in a safe, non-critical, supportive environment. Opportunities to share with people who can truly understand are limited, so this experience is very important.
2. Enable participants to identify memories, thoughts, and feelings related to their experience.
3. Begin analyzing, processing, and/or reframing the experiences and the underlying assumptions that may accompany them.
4. Apply/project how these past experiences can be beneficial in helping them as they move into the future. This helps bring closure to the past in a positive way.

### **Objectives**

#### **Spiritual Objectives**

1. Reflect on your present relationship with the Lord.
2. Renew your relationship with the Lord.
3. Enjoy spiritual fellowship with fellow travelers on this pilgrimage.

#### **Personal/Interpersonal Objectives**

1. Spend time in rest and reflection.
2. Look toward the future with renewed vision, hope, and direction.
3. Begin to heal some of the emotional wounds sustained through life.

#### **Cultural Objectives**

1. Reflect on the extent of your acculturation to your host country.
2. Recognize and appreciate the skills you have acquired.

3. Understand the cross-cultural mission field in your home country.

### **Organization**

Since the first purpose of a re-entry/debriefing seminar is to provide opportunities for people to share, identify, and analyze their experiences, the most important thing is to arrange plenty of opportunities for talking. Though it is helpful to provide some guidance, it is not necessary to rigidly control the process. People's experiences and emotional responses to those experiences are so different that it is impossible to create a one-size-fits-all format. However, the ability to share freely with people who are probably strangers will be influenced and thus enhanced by several things.

1. Sharing is best done in small groups—three being the ideal number.
2. Most people share more freely in same-gender groups.  
[Note: If possible, but not mandatory.]
3. To make the sharing process “real,” it is best if each group is composed of people who did not serve in the same place or know each other well.
4. Good listening is essential to the success of the sharing process. A few pointers may need to be offered on how to be good listeners:
  - a. Share the time equally—no one is to run away with the conversation.
  - b. Encourage the person speaking with eye contact and attentive body language.
  - c. Offer appropriate comments, such as: “Then what happened?” “Amazing!” or “Oh, no! What did you DO?”

- d. Avoid such comments as, “Oh, that reminds me of the time I . . .”, etc.
  - e. Never criticize or judge.
  - f. Strive to understand the other person by entering into their experience with them. Listen with your heart, not just your ears.
  - g. Confidentiality is essential as others open their hearts—the pain, the joy and the sorrow.
5. Provide adequate time (usually 10-20 minutes/person) for each session, followed by some whole-group time and a break. Sharing can sometimes be emotionally draining, so some breaks are needed.

### **Student Missions (SM) Re-Entry Retreat Planning Guide**

This is not an exhaustive list, but can give a general idea of what needs to be done in planning a retreat.

#### **3-6 Months**

- Determine your budget: how much you can spend on facilitator, location, food, etc.
- Decide on retreat length—one day or one weekend.
- Pick a date. It’s best if it’s early in the school year.
- Find and reserve a location. The earlier the better, especially for off-campus locations.
- Choose a facilitator and find out if they are available for the dates you have chosen.

#### **1-2 Months**

- Announce/email Re-Entry Retreat dates and basic info to return student missionaries (SMs).
- Plan the retreat program.

- If you are inviting a few previous return SMs to help out with song service or anything else, ask now.
- Plan logistical details (e.g. meals, housing arrangements, RSVPs from SMs, transportation, delegate jobs, etc.).
- Communicate with the facilitator about the program. If coming from off site, confirm travel arrangements, etc. Plan for honorarium if appropriate.

### 1-2 Weeks

- If applicable, re-confirm with the facilitator about when they are arriving. Arrange for someone to pick them up if necessary.
- If you are facilitating, prepare and practice.
- Send final details and program to return student missionaries.
- Send final details to participants involved in helping with the program.
- Reconfirm with location.
- Make copies of handouts.

### 0-2 Days

- Last-minute logistics (food shopping, final list of who is coming, finalizing transportation, etc.).
- If applicable, arrange for picking up and care of facilitator.
- Gather and load up handouts, materials, and other items needed for retreat.

## **Student Missions (SM) Re-Entry Retreat**

### **Sample Schedule—WEEKEND**

This is meant to be a starting point for you to come up with ideas that will best fit your SM program's abilities and needs. Notice this is more about facilitating than teaching, and especially, helping the SMs connect with each other. You may also want to include some previously returned SMs who are still around so they can help.

## OFFICE OF VOLUNTEER MINISTRIES

### Friday

TBD	Depart for retreat location
5:00 p.m.	Arrival/Settling in
5:30 p.m.	Supper
6:30 p.m.	Vespers Welcome, Prayer, Song service, Ice breaker
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 1: SHARING OUR STORIES (Facilitator)*</b>
7:15 p.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
<b>7:45 p.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 2: SHARING THE PAIN (Facilitator)</b>
8:00 p.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
8:30 p.m.	Conclusion: Giving pain to God (Facilitator)
8:45 p.m.	Afterglow/Fellowship time
11:00 p.m.	Bedtime

### Sabbath

8:00 a.m.	Private devotional/Prayer time (optional)
9:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:45 a.m.	Song service/Opening prayer
<b>10:00 a.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 3: ROLLER COASTER OF TRANSITION (Facilitator)</b>
10:30 a.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
11:00 a.m.	Break/Song service
<b>11:15 a.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 4: SHARING THE JOY (Facilitator)</b>
11:45 a.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
12:15 p.m.	Memory lists (Facilitator)
12:30 p.m.	LUNCH/Free time
2:15 p.m.	Song service
<b>2:30 p.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 5: HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY (Facilitator)</b>
2:45 p.m.	Worksheets: How to tell your story
<b>3:00 p.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 6: WHERE TO FROM HERE? (Facilitator)</b>
3:15 p.m.	Brainstorming in triads
3:45 p.m.	Closing remarks and Prayer (Facilitator and/or coordinator)
4:00 p.m.	Clean-up/Leave

\*The SM Coordinator or Chaplain may take this role or find someone suitable. Pat Gustin is often invited to speak for Re-Entry retreats, but your program will be responsible for her expenses/honorarium. You may contact her at: [gustinpjg@gmail.com](mailto:gustinpjg@gmail.com)

## Student Missions Re-Entry Retreat Schedule Overview—Weekend

Time	Supplies	Topic	Activity	Time
Friday Evening 1 hr. 45 min.		<b>SESSION 1: Sharing Our Stories</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> Power of and need for telling our stories. (Mt. 13:34; Lk. 9:10) <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What I did, where I lived, what I learned.	15 min. 30 min.
	*Handout *Fire	<b>SESSION 2: Sharing the Pain</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> Everyone experiences pain: good experience (pain of loss), bad experience (pain of failure). (Lk. 24:19) <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What I miss, regret, etc. <b>Giving pain to God:</b> Write lists and burn to signify commitment to continue surrendering and forgiving.	15 min. 30 min. 15 min.
Sabbath Morning 1 hr.	*Plant *Pot *Soil *Handouts	<b>SESSION 3: Roller Coaster of Transition</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> Re-pot plant, transition bridge, RAFT. <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What transition experience has been like.	30 min. 30 min.
<b>BREAK</b>				15 min.
Sabbath Morning 1 hr.	*Handouts	<b>SESSION 4: Sharing the Joy</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> The joy of service (Ps. 66), Demoniacs, “Go and tell.” (Mk. 5:19). <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What I feel best about, what I laugh about, how God has led. <b>Memory lists:</b> Good memories I want to remember.	15 min. 30 min. 15 min.
<b>LUNCH</b>				2 hrs.
Sabbath Afternoon 1 hr. 15 min.	*Handout	<b>SESSION 5: How to Tell Your Story</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> How and what we tell is important—Paul’s pointers. (2 Cor.) <b>Worksheet:</b> <i>How to Tell Your Story</i> (can extend or finish later).	15 min. 15 min.
	*Handout	<b>SESSION 6: Where to From Here?</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> The Elijah Story. (1 Ki. 17-19) <b>Brainstorming in triads:</b> What is our mission now, how can we influence our campus for mission, how can God use me where I am?	15 min. 30 min.

## Student Missions Re-Entry Retreat

### Sample Schedule—ONE DAY

If your school's mission program is not able to do an entire weekend, this is an idea of what a retreat might look like if you can plan at least one day. This is just meant to be a starting point for you to come up with ideas that will best fit your SM program's abilities and needs.

8:45 a.m.	Arriving/Snacks
9:00 a.m.	Welcome/Prayer/Song service
<b>9:15 a.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 1: SHARING OUR STORIES (Facilitator)*</b>
9:30 a.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
10:00 a.m.	Break/Snacks/Song service
<b>10:15 a.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 2: SHARING THE PAIN (Facilitator)</b>
10:30 a.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
11:00 a.m.	Conclusion: Giving pain to God (Facilitator)
11:15 a.m.	Break/Snacks
<b>11:30 a.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 3: ROLLER COASTER OF TRANSITION (Facilitator)</b>
12:00 p.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
12:30 p.m.	LUNCH
<b>1:30 p.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 4: SHARING THE JOY (Facilitator)</b>
1:45 p.m.	Sharing in triads (10 min. each)
2:15 p.m.	Memory lists
<b>2:30 p.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 5: HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY (Facilitator)</b>
2:45 p.m.	Break and hand out story worksheets (to do later)
<b>3:00 p.m.</b>	<b>SESSION 6: WHERE TO FROM HERE? (Facilitator)</b>
3:15 p.m.	Brainstorming in triads
3:45 p.m.	Closing remarks and prayer (Facilitator and/or coordinator)
4:00 p.m.	Clean up/Leave

\*The SM Coordinator or Chaplain may take this role or find someone suitable. Pat Gustin is often invited to speak for Re-Entry retreats, but your program will be responsible for her expenses/honorarium. You may contact her at: [gustinpjg@gmail.com](mailto:gustinpjg@gmail.com)

STUDENT MISSIONS RE-ENTRY RETREAT

Student Missions Re-Entry Retreat Schedule Overview—One Day

Time	Supplies	Topic	Activity	Time
Morning 45 min.		<b>SESSION 1: Sharing Our Stories</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> Power of and need for telling our stories. (Mt. 13:34; Lk. 9:10) <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What I did, where I lived, what I learned.	15 min. 30 min.
<b>BREAK</b>				
Morning 1 hr.	*Handout *Fire	<b>SESSION 2: Sharing the Pain</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> Everyone experiences pain: good experience (pain of loss), bad experience (pain of failure). (Lk. 24:19) <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What I miss, regret, etc. <b>Giving pain to God:</b> Write lists and burn to signify commitment to continue surrendering and forgiving.	15 min. 30 min. 15 min.
<b>BREAK</b>				
Morning 1 hr.	*Plant *Pot *Soil *Handouts	<b>SESSION 3: Roller Coaster of Transition</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> Re-pot plant, transition bridge, RAFT. <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What transition experience has been like.	30 min. 30 min.
<b>LUNCH</b>				
Afternoon 1 hr. 15 min.	*Handouts	<b>SESSION 4: Sharing the Joy</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> The joy of service (Ps. 66), Demoniacs, “Go and tell.” (Mk. 5:19) <b>Sharing in triads:</b> What I feel best about, what I laugh about, how God has led. <b>Memory lists:</b> Good memories I want to remember.	15 min. 30 min. 15 min.
	*Handout	<b>SESSION 5: How to Tell Your Story</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> How and what we tell is important—Paul’s pointers. (2 Cor.) Hand out worksheets at break to fill out later.	15 min.
<b>BREAK</b>				
Afternoon 45 min.	*Handout	<b>SESSION 6: Where to From Here?</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> The Elijah Story. (1 Ki. 17-19) <b>Brainstorming in Triads:</b> What is our mission now, how can we influence our campus for mission, how can God use me where I am?	15 min. 30 min.

## CURRICULUM OUTLINE

### SESSION 1: SHARING OUR STORIES

15 min.—Introduction

30 min.—Small Group Sharing Time

- I. Give a brief introduction  
Self (facilitator) and experience with missions/  
student mission.
- II. Acknowledge SMs and their experiences.
  - How many had the best year? Worst year?
  - How many got lost? Ate strange food?
  - How many fell in love?
  - How many had some big adventures? Funny stories?
- III. Jesus knew the value of stories.
  - A. Spoke in parables – Mt. 13:34, *“He did not say anything to them without using a parable.”*
  - B. Importance of debriefing – Lk. 9:10 *“When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done.”*
- IV. The Re-Entry Retreat is an opportunity to share stories with others who understand.
  - A. Since you’ve come back, people might often ask, “How was your SM year?”
  - B. But when you tell them, you find their eyes glazing over. They don’t really understand.
  - C. You start shortening your answers.
  - D. This is a chance to talk and listen to others who know what it’s like.

V. Divide into groups of three.

- A. Each person will get 10 minutes to share stories from their year (30 min. total).
- B. Two listeners demonstrate good listening skills.
  - 1. Do not interrupt with your own story.
  - 2. Can ask questions.

**SESSION 2: SHARING THE PAIN**

15 min.— Introduction

30 min.—Small Group Sharing Time

I. Mission life is full of extremes.

- A. Best/worst
- B. Fun/scary
- C. Lonely/fulfilling

II. Missionaries experience loss from moving away.

- A. Examples of losses:
  - 1. Fruits, snorkeling, hiking, traveling, independence, friendships.

III. Missionaries experience feelings of guilt.

- A. There is no one to take your place at your mission site.
- B. Re-entering a culture of materialism after being in a third-world country.

IV. Missionaries experience feelings of failure.

- A. Unresolved conflicts—administration or other missionaries.
- B. Broken relationships—friends in the mission field or from home while separated.

V. Missionaries come back to problems at home.

- A. Financial—facing school bills or other issues.

- B. Family—maybe changed for the worse, or don't understand.
- C. Self—different, often frustrated with everything and everyone.

VI. What do you miss? What do you regret?

VII. You have a heavy, full backpack not yet unpacked.

VIII. Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-19)

- A. Two disciples walking back from Jerusalem, talking about what happened to Jesus.
- B. Jesus shows up and asks, in Luke 24:19, "What things?"
  - 1. Jesus knew the disciples had to unpack before they could learn.

IX. Break into the same groups of three to share the painful parts of your experience.

- A. Ten minutes for each person—30 minutes total.
- B. Good listening skills.

**HANDOUT:** *Sharing the Pain*

**MATERIALS:** Fire

**SESSION 3: ROLLER COASTER OF TRANSITION**

30 min.—Introduction

30 min.—Small Group Sharing Time

**\*Optional Pre-Introduction: Repotting Plant Illustration**

- *Take a look at “The Transition Experience” hand-out. This is an overview of crossing the transition bridge from being involved in your mission location to being involved back in your “home” environment.*
- *Have two pots ready—one with a plant, and one with only dirt. Take the potted plant and separate part of it to re-pot it in the other pot with the dirt.*
- *As you are doing this, point out the transition stages that SMs must go through as they re-enter their home culture: **Involvement** (while the plant is still in one pot); **Leaving** (pulling part of the plant out—notice what’s happening to the roots); **Transition** (right after the plant is potted . . . needs a lot of care); **Entering** (growing new roots); **Involvement** (growing and thriving in its new environment).*

**I. Introduction**

- A. We’re going to look at the predictable (and, unfortunately, normal) stages of transition—stages that take us to emotional heights and depths.
1. The Bad News:
    - a. It is inevitable.
    - b. It seems to last forever.
    - c. It isn’t necessarily related to where you served—undeveloped vs. developed.
  2. The Good News:
    - a. It really doesn’t last forever.
    - b. For most people, about a year.

B. Hopefully by being forewarned, we can be forearmed (prepared) and be better able to cope.

II. You're already here, but you can build a RAFT—by email or letter if needed (see handout).

**A. R—Reconciliation:** Make things right—do as soon as possible.

**B. A—Affirmation:** Say proper thanks—do as soon as possible.

**C. F—Farewells:** Say goodbyes—especially important for those who had to leave unexpectedly.

**D. T—Think realistically:** About the present and the future— changes ahead and all around you.

III. Arriving (Brainstorm)

A. What things did you notice when you first got back—the good and fun stuff?

B. What did you notice had changed?

C. Have YOU changed at all? How?

1. Physical appearance

2. Socially

3. Spiritually

4. Ethnocentrically

5. Theologically

6. You know yourself as you didn't before

7. Ultimate question: Who am I now?

a. Do I know myself?

b. Does my family know me?

D. How has your extended family changed?

E. How has your home country (America/Canada) changed?

F. Other changes you may notice:

1. You will be moving from being primarily concerned with spiritual matters (your work for the Lord) to preoccupation with practical matters (school).
2. You will be moving from having a fixed and measurable goal to perhaps having none at all.
3. You may be moving from seeing real poverty firsthand to experiencing seemingly overwhelming wealth (MATERIALISM, WASTE, GREED).
4. You will be moving from a high degree of self-motivation (survival as a teacher?) to searching for a new motivation.
5. You will be moving from being somebody special (IDENTITY CRISIS, NO STATUS).
6. You will be moving from serving with people who have a world perspective to being with people who, in many cases, do not care much for those outside their circle.

#### IV. Entering: The CHAOS stage of transition

##### A. Introduction:

1. Home:
  - a. What is it? (Familiar—places, people, routine, safe, comfortable, belonging)
  - b. Where is it? (Here? Overseas?)
  - c. Why does it change?
2. What kinds of things have you noticed since you got “home” that you never noticed before? (Brainstorm)
3. Have things really changed that much or are you seeing them through new cultural lenses?
  - a. Everything changes when your perspective changes.

- b. Do you feel “richer” now than you used to, as you compare yourself with the poor places you were?
- 4. The BIG questions are: *Am I really home? Do I still belong here?*
- 5. And the scary question is: *If this isn't home, where is?* And it is complicated by the fact that:
  - a. . . . we may not even want to become just like these people again.
  - b. . . . nobody seems to understand—*Aren't you glad to be home? What do you mean you'd like to go back to India?*
  - c. . . . nobody wants to hear about your experience—not even at church! So you aren't really allowed to share a major part of who you are . . .
    - i. We talk for 5 minutes and get senseless comments.
  - d. . . . you miss things from your “other home.”
    - i. Brainstorm: What do you miss?
- B. As a result of all this, we may develop many different symptoms:
  - 1. Critical and judgmental—of family, country, church.
  - 2. Problems are exaggerated and we overreact to things.
    - a. Cry easily, overwhelmed by decisions.
  - 3. Irritability
  - 4. You feel “out of sync”
    - a. You've lost continuity with the past and have no present.
    - b. You have only a vague hope for the future.

5. You have to monitor your behavior because you tend to respond inappropriately.
    - a. Raising your eyebrows, bargaining, driving on the wrong side of the road.
  6. You second-guess your decision to return “home.”
  7. You may feel lonely, depressed, discouraged, even left-out.
  8. You’re pretty self-centered.
  9. You may feel disillusioned (with . . .)
  10. You have a loss of self-esteem.
  11. You’re not much fun to be around.
- C. So what can we do?
1. Be patient with yourself. Remember, “This, too, shall pass.”
    - a. It will probably take 6-12 months.
  2. Learn all you can about the subject of re-entry.
  3. Learn to derive your identity from who you are (a child of God) rather than what you do/did.
    - a. Remember Jesus’ words to His disciples (Luke 10:17-20).
  4. Continue to trust in God’s overall plan for your life.
    - a. Remember Joseph, Esther, Daniel—bigger picture.
    - b. God led you to the mission field and He’s leading you now.
  5. Face this “new culture” in the same way you did the mission field culture.
    - a. Be a “foreigner.”
      - i. Study about this culture.
      - ii. Accept things tentatively that you don’t understand and/or don’t like.

- iii. Choose to be tolerant.
  - iv. Remember, American/Western culture isn't wrong—just different!
6. If you need to, find a mentor who will help you “catch up.”
    - a. New vocabulary, fads, current events, “in” things.
  7. Don't expect special treatment.
  8. Don't be critical—of family or church—or yourself.
  9. Don't judge those who don't seem to have any interest in mission.
  10. Resist the urge to impose the way you did things in the mission field on others.
    - a. Try to adjust to their ways instead.
  11. Try to give people the “benefit of the doubt” and understand where they are coming from and why they don't want to hear your stories in detail.

BRAINSTORM: Reasons they may not be able to listen well:

    - a. Too much “catching up” to do—overwhelming.
    - b. Their life is just as important as yours . . .
    - c. They may feel threatened or jealous.
    - d. They may feel resentful.
    - e. They may feel inadequate or inferior.
    - f. They may feel rejected or unappreciated (especially family—when all we can talk about it how wonderful it was “there”).
    - g. They may not have the background to appreciate it—it really can only be experienced!
  12. Be humble...and patient when people say stupid things.
  13. Reach out to people. Don't wait for them to reach out to you.

**HANDOUTS:**

*The Transition Experience*

*RAFT*

*You Made it Home. But*

*it's Not the Same!*

**MATERIALS (optional):**

Potted plant

Empty pot with dirt

- a. Be interested in other people's lives—remember: their lives are just as exciting (to them) as your wild jungle stories are to you. Show interest.
  - b. Make an appointment with the pastor and find out how you can help in the church and offer your services. Let them know what you can/would like to do.
  - c. Get involved in the community—service clubs, volunteer work, women's shelters, community activities.
14. Think positively back on your mission experience, but don't put an unrealistic "halo" around it.
  15. Find other people with a similar background—people with international experience who may be experiencing the challenges of transition.
    - a. Keep in touch with them and support each other.
    - b. Make the effort to fit back in, but at the same time look for ways to use the special talents/skills that you developed—teaching out to internationals, immigrants, other missionaries, exchange students, being a translator, etc.
    - c. Ex. 23:9: *You must not oppress foreigners. You know what it's like to be a foreigner, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.* (NLT)
  16. Take care of yourself—let go of your "missionary" look, even if you don't feel like it!
  17. Find a new mission—and be open for surprises!
    - a. God has a thousand ways to use you that you may never have thought about.
  18. Keep remembering: *this too shall pass*. Time helps!

**SESSION 4: SHARING THE JOY**

15 min.—Introduction

30 min.—Small Group Sharing Time

- I. Read Psalm 66 together (use hand-out or Bible).
- II. Mark 5:19 – Story of demoniac, when Jesus told him, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you . . .”
  - A. Now that we’re home, that is what He is asking us to do.
  - B. Psalm 66 is about the joy that comes in telling what God has done for us, and it definitely can apply to what God has done for us through our recent mission experience.

Verse 1: *Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Why?*  
Here are a few reasons:

    - Verse 9: *He has preserved our lives . . .*  
—**Physical care**
    - Verse 9: . . . *and kept our feet from slipping.*  
—**Emotional care**
    - Verse 10: *For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.* —**Spiritual care**
    - Verse 16: *Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*
- III. Break into same groups of three to share the joy in your experience, and how God led you.
  - A. Ten minutes for each person—30 minutes total.
  - B. Good listening skills.

**HANDOUTS:** *Psalm 66, Sharing the Joy*

**SESSION 5: HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY**

15 min.—Introduction

15 min.—Worksheet time (optional)

- I. Telling your story is good for you—but it can also be good for others.
- II. How can you tell your story in a way that meets the needs of others, and not just yourself?
  - A. If you share too much, you start to see eyes glaze over.
  - B. If you share too little, your story might be harder to understand.
- III. Optional—*share personal experience of sharing a story that missed its audience. (boring, too long, confusing, etc.)*
- IV. You will miss opportunities if you are not prepared. Take time to prepare.
- V. In 2 Corinthians, Paul gives some great pointers about telling your personal story.
  - A. There are four that I would like to tell you about, that spell the acronym “STOP”:
    1. **S = Situation**
      - a. 2 Cor. 1:23 – . . . *in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth...*
      - b. 2 Cor. 2:1 – . . . *I would not make another painful visit to you.*
      - c. Paul showed that he clearly recognized the situation or context in which he would share his story. He was writing this letter to a church that doubted his ministry calling; trying to prepare the way for his next visit.

2. **T = Themes**

- a. 2 Cor. 1:13 – *For we do not write anything you cannot read or understand.*
- b. Because Paul understood the situation, he chose certain themes. Rather than tell his entire story, he focused on certain themes of his story that would fit the situation.

3. **O = Openness**

- a. 2 Cor. 4:8, 9 – *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.*
- b. 2 Cor. 6:11 – *We have spoken freely to you . . . and opened wide our hearts to you.*
- c. Paul shared openly the good and the bad; joy and pain; weakness and Christ’s strength. Audience can understand Paul’s personal experience, but also see clearly how Christ worked in His life.

4. **P = Plan**

- a. Paul obviously took the time to plan—that is why we have 2 Corinthians.

5. Questions to ask as you put together your story:

- a. What are some situations in which you might share your story?
- b. What are some themes that you would like to communicate?
- c. What does this “openness” look like in your story?

- 6. Use worksheet to help you write your story and share with someone (now or later).

**HANDOUT:** *How to Tell Your Story*

**SESSION 6: WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

15 min.—Introduction

30 min.—Small Group Sharing Time

- I. Story of Elijah (1 Kings 18:16 – 19:1-18)
  - A. Summarize the story of Elijah on Mt. Carmel, fleeing Jezebel, hearing God’s whisper, and returning to ministry.
    1. Faced some extreme highs and lows: Mt. Carmel—high; Jezebel’s message—low.
    2. God understood Elijah’s emotions—fear, despair, exhaustion. He sent an angel.
    3. Elijah ran away to the wilderness, and encountered God on the mountain.
    4. God’s message to Elijah after all of this was that Elijah wasn’t finished—there was still work for him to do. He was to anoint kings and his successor.
  - B. After an adventurous year as an SM, it’s easy to feel useless.
    1. Not sure how to fit back into the pot (re-potting analogy from Session 3: Roller Coaster of Transition)
    2. No recognition
  - C. But God still has a mission for you here and now.
  - D. Divide into groups of three (or larger groups) to discuss and share:
    1. What is our mission now?
    2. How can we influence our campus/community for mission?
    3. How can God use me where I am?

**HANDOUTS:** *Where to From Here?*

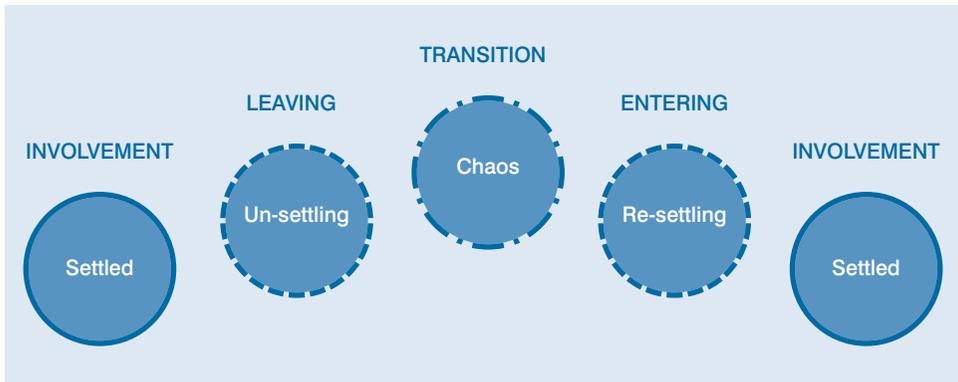
HANDOUTS AND MATERIALS LIST

SESSION	HANDOUTS	MATERIALS
<b>Session 1:</b> Sharing our Stories		
<b>Session 2:</b> Sharing the Pain	<i>Sharing the Pain</i>	Fire (to burn paper)
<b>Session 3:</b> Roller Coaster of Transition	<i>The Transition Experience</i> <i>RAFT</i> <i>You Made it Home</i> (Article)	<i>Optional:</i> Potted plant Empty pot with dirt
<b>Session 4:</b> Sharing the Joy	<i>Sharing the Joy</i>	
<b>Session 5:</b> How to Tell Your Story	<i>How to Tell Your Story</i>	
<b>Session 6:</b> Where to From Here?	<i>Where to From Here?</i>	



# The Transition Experience

## A Normal Process



## The Transition Experience

	INVOLVEMENT	LEAVING	TRANSITION	ENTERING	INVOLVEMENT
SOCIAL STATUS	BELONGING Part of "in" group Reputation Position Knowing	CELEBRATION Attention Recognition Farewells Closures	WITHOUT STATUS Unknown Lack of structure Special knowledge without use	INTRODUCING Marginality Mentor searching Uncertain of position/response	BELONGING Known Knowing Position
SOCIAL POSTURE	COMMITTED Responsive Responsible	DISTANCING Loosen ties Relinquish roles Disengage	CHAOS Must initiate relationships Isolation Self-centered Exaggerated problems Ambiguity/ Misunderstandings	SUPERFICIAL Observer Uncertain of trust Exaggerate behavior Risk taking Search for mentor Errors in response	COMMITTED Belonging Involved Conforming behavior Concern for others
PSYCHOLOGICAL	INTIMACY Confirmed Secure	DENIAL Rejection Resentment Sadness Guilt Anticipation	ANXIETY Loss of self-esteem Loss of continuity Loss of sacred objects Grief from loss Emotional instability Dreams Disappointment Panic	VULNERABILITY Fearful Ambivalent Easily offended Depression	INTIMACY Secure Affirmed

# Building a RAFT

By Matthew Neigh

*Proper farewells are a vital part of keeping bitterness from occurring. David Pollock, in his article “Exit Right—Enter Right,” lists the following pre-departure elements as critical to good adjustment.*

## 1. RECONCILIATION

One of the big causes of bitterness is “unfinished business.” It’s so easy to get on a plane and leave without ever asking for forgiveness or giving forgiveness. We need to make sure that we’ve straightened out any broken relationships that may exist, before leaving.

## 2. AFFIRMATION

It’s so important to thank, encourage, affirm, and commend those who have had a significant part of our lives. It not only is affirming to the one who receives the note or word of thanks, but it helps to cement some of the good memories that we experienced overseas.

These first two elements are ones that I encourage you to deal with as soon as possible, before it’s too late. It’s tempting to put those elements off until later. Unfortunately, later often never comes.

## 3. FAREWELLS

As obvious as it may seem, we, including our parents, often neglect the importance and health of saying goodbye. We need to make sure that we say our proper goodbyes, not just to people, but to places, pets, and possessions.

Unfortunately those who face evacuation, or an emergency medical or family leave, often find this step impossible to do. When this step is short-circuited, an extra amount of attention needs to be given, to make sure that we’re dealing with the issues and grieving the losses that have taken place.

## 4. THINK AHEAD

So often we go into new situations, like returning to the States, either for furlough or permanently, and never once stop to think through what we expect life, school, friends, etc. to be like. Those of you who have been in the host country for a short period of time in particular, often falsely assume everything is going to be the same when you return.

We need to talk about what kind of expectations we have. So often the first response is, “I don’t have any,” but if we’re willing to think and continue discussing, eventually things will come to mind. At that point we need process to our expectations, if possible with the help of others. Questions to ask: Are they realistic? Are they too high? Are they too low?

*Adapted from “Exit Right—Enter Right,” David Pollock, ACSI World Report (April 1991), pp. 1-3.*



RECONCILIATION



AFFIRMATION



FAREWELLS



THINK AHEAD

# You Made it Home. But It's Not the Same!

By Patricia Gustin,  
Director, Institute of World Mission,  
Andrews University

You made it! Congratulations!

My guess is that there were moments (days, weeks) during the last year or so, while you served in the “mission field,” when you wondered if you would make it, right? Undoubtedly, you sometimes wondered if the day when you’d be going home would ever come! But here you are.

Returning home was something you looked

**Returning home was something you looked forward to with great anticipation while serving overseas.**

forward to with great anticipation while serving overseas. On those dismal days when you felt like a failure, on those days when you felt totally misunderstood, on those days when you wanted to scream because the surrounding culture was so strange, on those days when you were so homesick you could die, on those days when . . . well, I think you get the point. On those days, the thought of going home kept you going. I know a number of volunteers who began a calendar countdown during one of those times—“just 127 days ‘til I can go home!”

Now you are home, but I can almost guarantee that whether your time overseas was mostly good or mostly bad, or somewhere in between, when it comes right down to it, returning home hasn’t been as easy as you thought it would be. Returning home is a major transition, and no one enjoys transitions. Things at home are somewhat different, and that worries you a bit. You intuitively know that you are somewhat

different, and that likely worries you a lot. You intuitively know that no matter how much you’ve loved or hated the place you’ve been, there are things you’ll miss—things no one “back home” seems to understand. The whole situation is a bit bizarre and inexplicable, even to yourself.

So here you are, at your re-entry, not sure just how to cope.

Interestingly, most organizations which send large numbers of people into cross-cultural situations have learned that for the majority of their people, returning home (“repatriation culture shock” it’s called) is usually more challenging than the initial “culture shock” people experience when they go out.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is not limited to any one country or ethnic group. The following percentages indicate the number of people returning to their home countries who experienced major cultural adaptation upon their return: Japan—80%, Finland—71%, Netherlands—64%, and U.S.A.—60%. The length of time this process takes and the intensity with which you experience it will probably be directly proportional to how deeply involved you were with the local culture. The more involved, the harder the transition,<sup>2</sup> but the adaptation process is inevitable.

For whatever it’s worth, the good news is that if you experience some bumps in the road as you return home, you’re in good company.

**Why would I have culture shock when I’m going home?** The big question that puzzles us, usually, is why? Why, when you’ve returned home after being absent only a year or two,

<sup>1</sup>Black, *So You’re Coming Home*, 1999. San Diego, CA. p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Storti, *The Art of Coming Home*, 1996. Yarmouth, Maine. p. 152.

should you have any adjustment at all? After all, you're home!

Let's start by looking at some of the reasons this happens.

1. Probably the major single factor is that reverse culture shock is so unexpected. Virtually everyone anticipates some adjustment problems when they leave their home and go to a new culture. But no one really expects any major adjustments on their return. So what they don't anticipate, they don't recognize and prepare for. The obvious starting point for you then, in dealing with reverse culture shock, is simply to expect it.

2. The second major factor arises from our concept of home. What is home? Dumb question? Not really.

Most of us have never analyzed home. It just is. But if you analyzed it, you'd probably realize that home is where people and things are familiar, comfortable, predictable, and safe. It's where you belong. But when you go home after an extended absence, you discover several things:

- Some parts of the once-familiar may now actually feel a bit strange.
- Elements that previously comforted you may now seem somewhat uncomfortable.
- Neither the environment of home, nor even you yourself, feel quite so predictable . . . or safe.
- You may even discover that while you still belong, at the same time a part of you belongs somewhere else, too.

Life has moved on. People and places change, even in a short time, and if your stay overseas was even partially positive, you found new people and things that were familiar, comfortable, predictable, and safe. You even found a certain sense of belonging in a new place. And so when you returned home, you found that home feels a little less like home now. You may even find yourself getting "homesick" for that faraway place where you lived for only a

year or two. It's all quite confusing!

The result is that in a very real way, home may feel a bit like a "foreign country" at times, and you may feel a bit "homeless" upon your return, and that's not a very nice feeling! It's no wonder that many, many returning volunteers

## Home may feel a bit like a "foreign country" at times, and you may feel a bit "homeless" upon your return.

very quickly begin making plans to go back as soon as possible ... back to that new "home."

3. Another factor contributing to reverse culture shock is that returning home is so sudden, so complete, and feels so permanent. You got on that plane and instantly you left behind everything of the new life you were living. There is no gradual adjustment. You recognize that the chances of you returning half-way around the world are pretty unlikely.

4. One additional factor in the adaptation process is that you often experience this alone. No one seems to understand you and if they try, they have a hard time understanding why you're having a hard time. After all, this is home! And we all know "there's no place like home!" You should be ecstatic! So what's wrong with you?

### What are the stages and symptoms of the transition process?

The stages of transition back home are almost identical to those of out-going culture shock, with a few different twists. Let's look at them and some of the symptoms of each:

#### Stage 1: The honeymoon stage—It's great to be home!

- Everybody wants to see you; you have a certain "celebrity status."
- You get to eat the foods you've missed while you've been gone.
- You revel in the things you missed—taking

hot showers, drinking water out of the tap, going to Taco Bell, driving on good roads where the traffic is orderly and pretty predictable.

- Everybody speaks your language and looks more or less like you. You can blend into a crowd without being noticeably different.

**Stage 2: Reverse culture shock stage—It's terrible to be home!** (I have divided this stage into three sections, although the symptoms do not happen in any predictable order.)

You notice some negative things you never noticed before. You may even begin to feel somewhat critical of “home.”

- Everyone seems to be in too much of a hurry. There's no time just to “be.”
- You seem surrounded by excessive materialism, abundance, and waste. This is painful if you've lived where there is real need and people live with few “frills” in their lives.
- People seem very direct, almost rude.
- People seem very individualistic with little sense of community or family.
- Everyone seems competitive, loud, and self-absorbed.
- People seem ignorant of other places, peoples, and cultures.

You seriously miss things from your place of service, such as:

- People—your students, friends, and fellow workers.
- Foods—good mangoes and bananas, soba, kimchee, and other foods you thought you'd never adjust to.
- Places—the beach, the markets, exotic places you got to visit.
- Your status as a teacher, pastor, ADRA worker, etc.
- Your independence.
- The climate (especially when really cold weather hits back home!).
- Amusements, sports.

- The closeness of the community you were a part of.
- The challenges that caused you to grow stronger.

You feel “out of it,” a bit depressed, and wonder if you'll ever readjust.

- Many of your friends have moved on and you may wonder if you'll ever really belong again.
- You are now interested in things others do not seem interested in at all.
- You may feel “homesick” for your field of service.
- Nobody seems even remotely interested in your experiences. In fact, their eyes kind of glaze over when you begin to share with them and you realize they're not really listening.
- You wonder if you'll ever get to go back, and you may even begin to make plans to return as soon as possible.
- You have newly-acquired skills (language, teaching, leading, preaching, etc.) that no one seems to recognize, want, or need.
- You now have a cultural sensitivity that makes you very aware of the narrowness and provincial attitudes of many people at home.
- You may experience all kinds of negative emotions. You may feel depressed, irritable, sad, and/or critical. The reality of this stage is that you may actually be pretty self-centered. Chances are, you probably aren't too much fun to be around!

**Stage 3: Entering—On some days it's okay to be home.**

- You still feel somewhat marginal at times, but you're beginning to see more light at the end of the tunnel—it feels like you will fit back in again.
- You've found a few people who more or less understand the new you and can appreciate who you are now.

- You're learning to integrate the past and the present.

#### Stage 4: Re-adjustment stage—Home once again feels like home.

- You actually enjoy life again and on a regular basis you're really glad to be home.
- You realize that you have some new attitudes and a somewhat altered focus for your life, but you begin to see ways to integrate that with parts of your "old life" and let it guide your future.

The reality, of course, is that things at home probably didn't change all that much while you were away. The big difference is that you are now looking at them through different lenses. Your experience of the last year or two has changed your field of comparison and you therefore see things differently.

Some of the differences you may now find challenging. You may even catch yourself determining that you certainly don't want to be like "these people." The problem, though, is that "these people" are your people—this is your home. And a critical spirit really won't fly, so you may feel trapped. In the end, some of the differences may turn out to be neutral, and you

### Your experience of the last year or two has changed your field of comparison and you therefore see things differently.

can adjust back to some of your former ways of doing things, thinking, reacting, etc., without too much difficulty. But some of the changes in you—how you see, think, and feel—may be significant and a permanent part of the new you.

Ultimately, the challenge is how to channel your new insights, new "lenses," new focus, and new attitudes into something positive rather than simply feeling critical and frustrated.

**Help! What can I do?** How can you facilitate your return so it will be as painless as possible? Let's consider several things that will help.

A good transition to a new place or position is dependant upon a good closure of your previous experiences. Bringing good closure to your overseas experience should begin before returning home. See the suggestions that follow. (But if you are already home, you can still seek closure by phone, letters, emails, etc.)

- Make any needed reconciliations with people who, for whatever reason, you've had difficulty with so these issues won't haunt you after you return.
- Express appreciation. Thank the people who made your experience a positive one. They may have helped you out in big or small ways, but don't leave without saying thanks.
- Say proper farewells—to people, places, and even things. Saying good-bye is especially important when you are moving half-way around the world. Bringing closure to these relationships is important. Some of us do not like farewells. They make us feel uncomfortable. We'd rather just "slip away in the dark." However, a farewell is for the other people as well as for us. We need to face the sad parts of leaving and that helps bring closure—for us as well as others. But in addition to the people you'll be leaving, remember to "say good-bye" to special places you've come to appreciate (or even dislike!) You may want to make one last visit to these places and take pictures to put away in a memory album. Say proper good-byes.
- Begin to make realistic plans for the future as you return home—to a job or to school. This will include re-examining your expectations, assumptions, and anticipations, knowing that changes have occurred and that a certain amount of "pain" is a normal part of the transition process.

When you get home:

- Remember that the symptoms you are experiencing are normal. It's "the nature of the beast." Be patient with yourself!
- Be patient with your compatriots and don't jump to conclusions about them even though they may seem superficial, provincial, and materialistic. They haven't experienced what you have so they can't be expected to see things or respond to them as you do.
- Begin evaluating your time of service realistically. In some ways it probably did not meet your expectations. In other ways it may have exceeded them. Certainly it's a mixture of positive and not-so-positive experiences—"the best of times, the worst of times." You may need someone to help you look at it realistically, but you need to look at it and accept it as it was.
- Analyze what you learned through this experience, how you grew, and how you changed (The people back home aren't the only ones who've changed!). Some honest journaling may be very helpful as you review your time away from home.
- Find someone to "debrief" you—to listen as you sort out your experiences.

One good way to do this is at a re-entry seminar which some colleges and universities hold each year for returning missionaries.

- Expect some ambivalence—one day you're glad to be home, the next day you may hate it!
- Reach out to others, remembering that the things they've done while you've been gone are as important to them as your adventures are to you. Affirm them and be a good listener.
- Above all, remember to derive your primary identity from the fact that you are and always will be a child of God (Luke 10:17-20) rather than basing most of your identity on the "fabulous experiences" you had as a missionary.

- Give yourself time to adjust. Be slow to jump to conclusions about life, people, the future, etc. It takes time for your body, mind, and emotions to adjust. For some people the adjustment time may be brief—a few weeks or months. But for many people the process may take a year or more. However, just as initial culture shock passes, so does reverse culture shock. You survived culture shock before and you will survive this too!
- Remember that not only has "home" changed, you've changed, too. Probably a lot. You've had experiences that others probably cannot identify with. You are no longer mono-cultural. You will forever see the world through different eyes. You have a broader view of the world. You've changed

**Give yourself time to adjust.  
Be slow to jump to conclusions  
about life, people, the future,  
etc.**

in ways your friends and even your family probably cannot fully understand. Deal with it and don't put undue pressure on them (and yourself) to be what they (and you) can't be and to do what they (and you) can't do.

- If you experienced serious trauma during your time of service (major political upheaval, evacuation, or a life-threatening situation of any kind), seek help from a qualified professional who understands trauma management and counseling. The pain and grief from such incidents can haunt us for years if we don't take care of them properly. As Shakespeare said, "The grief that does not speak knots up the overwrought heart, and bids it break." Being the strong, stoic sufferer is neither wise nor Christian.

## Some special questions

1. How can I keep in touch with the mission field?
  - Obviously, it's important to keep in touch via letters, e-mails, etc., with the people in your field of service that you came to know and love.
  - Get to know people from "your" country who live at your college or home town. This will help you feel connected.
  - Connect your church, Sabbath School class or youth group with a project in your field.

## Because of your newly-acquired cross-cultural skills, you will be able to reach out to other volunteers who are returning home.

- Find a "new mission field" close to home (inner city, migrant workers, immigrant populations, youth, etc.). This will help you channel your newly developed interests and talents.
2. How can I utilize the new skills I've acquired overseas?
    - If you learned a language, find people with whom you can use it (i.e. immigrants, international students, etc.).
    - Without being pushy, volunteer to do things that utilize your new skills (i.e. teach in children's Sabbath school, speak in weeks of prayer or evangelistic series, accept offices that require your type of leadership skills).
    - Because of your newly-acquired cross-cultural skills, you will be able to reach out to other volunteers who are returning home, or to international students, missionary kids, immigrants, exchange students, etc.
    - Look for receptive venues to share your story. Some churches are eager for "real mission stories." Seek them out, but don't stop there. If you're comfortable talking to kids, let local schools know you'd be glad to

share with their students (of special interest to elementary schools are first-hand cultural experiences). Many service clubs (i.e. Kiwanis, Rotary) have international service projects and are happy for first-hand reports. Some churches and other organizations have projects to help immigrant populations (i.e. ESL programs, "Welcome to X City" programs, etc.). There are many ways to get involved and combine your new focus with your life back home. Go for it!

## Epilogue

The following thoughts are borrowed from a wonderful book on the re-entry process called *The Art of Coming Home* by Craig Storti.

### Symptoms that you're well on the way to adjustment<sup>3</sup>

1. You've stopped carrying toilet paper with you wherever you go!
2. Some of your clothes are not out of date.
3. You have a few friends who have never had any kind of international experience.
4. You don't have to think twice about drinking the water out of a faucet.
5. You can approach a stranger to ask directions without first thinking you need to ask, "Do you speak English?"
6. You don't cry (or feel too sad) whenever someone mentions your country.
7. You're not tempted as often to say, "But in Country Q we did it this way . . ."

<sup>3</sup>Storti, *The Art of Coming Home*, Yarmouth, Maine. p.159-160

## Psalms 66

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**Men:** Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of His name;  
Make His praise glorious!

---

**Women:** Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your  
power that your enemies cringe before you."

---

**ALL:** All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you. They  
sing praise to your name.

---

**Men:** Come and see what God has done, how awesome His works  
in man's behalf.

---

**Women:** He rules forever by His power, His eyes watch over the nations.

---

**ALL:** Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of His praise be heard.

---

**Men:** He has preserved our lives.

---

**Women:** And kept our feet from slipping.

---

**ALL:** For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

---

**Men:** You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs.  
You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water.

---

**Women:** But you brought us to a place of abundance.

---

**ALL:** Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what  
He has done for me.

---



## How to Tell Your Story

*In the book of 2 Corinthians Paul is telling part of the story of his life. He tells his story to a certain group of people, highlighting certain aspects of his life. His purpose is to glorify Christ in the telling of his story and to show that it is God who is at work in his life. Here are some key points from 2 Corinthians.*

### **S=Situation**

Some people in the church at Corinth doubted Paul's apostleship—his missionary calling. He wrote them this letter as a preparation for his next visit. He was clearly aware of the situation in which he would be sharing his story.

What are some situations in which you will share your story?

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### **T=Themes**

On the basis of his understanding of the situation, Paul chose certain themes to present. He did not tell his whole story but included only those parts that focused on themes that would meet the situation.

What are some themes that you would like to communicate?

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### **O=Openness**

In telling his story, Paul did not shy away from sharing both sides of the paradox. He shared the despair and the joy, the pain and the pleasure, his weakness and Christ's strength. He talked a lot about himself and a lot about Christ working through him. When you finish 2 Corinthians you know a lot about the person, Paul, but you also know a lot about how Christ worked in His life.

How can you share this kind of openness with others?

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Based on resources from the  
Seventh-day Adventist Institute of World Mission.

