

RESONATE



SHARING
Your Faith

Creating Connections
for Mission

MINISTRY AT THE MARGINS:

**SUPERHEROES
NEED NOT
APPLY**



GLOBAL
INTERACTION

Sarah



Sushi-eating, chai-drinking, bike-riding, *Resonate*-loving Sarah is passionate about sharing Jesus with people who have never heard about Him and encouraging them to share the Gospel with others. We caught up with her at Sydney's Macquarie University where she is well and truly living a life of mission.

Everyone has a passion – what is yours?

God has given me a love for Central Asia. Not only for the amazing food and scenery, but for the people. I enjoy learning about their worldview and being immersed in their culture. As I learnt about the numbers of men, women and children in Central Asia who have not yet heard about Jesus, my heart broke and I wanted to do something. Last year I went on one of Global Interaction's Global Xposure trips to have a taste of mission. It fuelled my desire to serve as a cross-cultural worker in that region in the future.

Does your time at university feel like a waiting game?

God has been teaching me to not view my uni experience as a waiting or transition period. I have learnt that I can still be part of God's global mission, even if I am not in Central Asia just yet!

I am the leader of a mission group on campus and it has been mind blowing to see how God is using my passion for Central Asia to open doors and change lives here at home.

What are the opportunities to share your faith with students from other cultures?

There are over 10,000 international students at my university, so there are heaps of opportunities! A few months ago at a social event I met a student from Central Asia who had never heard of Jesus. We developed a friendship and started exploring the Bible together. She has committed her life to Christ! I am excited that she will go back to her country in a few years, trained and equipped to share with her own people.

SARAH'S TIPS FOR SHARING YOUR FAITH WHERE YOU ARE

BE INTENTIONAL

When Jesus is leading the way in our lives, we can step out in faith and He does the rest.

BE RADICAL

When we are out of our comfort zone we are more likely to fully rely on God. This is usually followed by complete awe of His infinite power and love.

BE YOURSELF

For some reason evangelism is made out to be an awkward, unnatural thing. If you love Jesus and can socially engage with someone, congratulations you have what it takes to share your faith!

Behind THE VEIL



Global Interaction teams know that it takes time to learn about communities with different cultural and religious practices from our own. The process includes watching, listening and asking questions. Cross-cultural worker Heather continues to learn by spending time with her Muslim friends in Mozambique. She introduces us to Lola who is open to hearing about Jesus' love.

Lola lives nearby and has three children. The eldest is her biological son and the younger two were given to her by her sisters who had many children (yes, I still struggle to understand the logistics and emotional costs of giving away children!). In this community your children are your future as they look after you when you're old. To have only one child or none at all is very difficult.

Lola is married and her husband is a carpenter. Due to the shortage of work available there are often times when he is not able to work to provide for the family. He also struggles with alcohol dependency.

I love spending time with Lola and sharing the hope, love and power of Jesus to change situations in our lives. Each time we meet we speak about issues of faith and I try and share how God has responded to my circumstances. Recently she has asked me to pray regularly with her for God to bless them with more children.



– ADVENTURES WITH –

THE BEECKS

Being a hostess with the mostess comes naturally for Global Interaction team member Kath but in the Yao communities of Mozambique, she's adjusting to a different way of entertaining guests.

Our friends here do relationships and hospitality very differently from what is done in Australia. One of the more important aspects here is visiting. **It is perfectly acceptable to drop in unannounced to see a friend, or stranger, stay a short while and then politely say your farewells and leave.** If someone is sick or had an accident, there is no umming and ahing, wondering whether they will want you there. You just go.

In some ways it has been difficult for me to adjust to this aspect of the culture. In the beginning, I spent hours sitting in the backyard at my language nurturer's home, visiting new friends and neighbours or attending funerals. I would help with food preparation, mourn with grieving families or just sit back and watch and listen around a bubbling pot of beans.

Rocking up at an unfamiliar place with a bunch of people I didn't know was quite intimidating.

For a while I had absolutely no idea what was going on at any of the visits I made. Not being able to speak the language or understand the culture made things extremely awkward. I also found it difficult visiting people who were unwell, as friends and family sit and talk without acknowledging the people who are sick or hurting. I always felt compelled to spring into action, and at the very least, duck back home to get some Panadol!

In all the sitting, listening and learning, I have slowly grown in my ability to understand the culture and the language. Just as importantly I have grown in my appreciation of the value of just sitting with people in the struggle. For so long I truly had nothing to offer but my presence and now I realise just how valuable that is.

I'm still the stranger here but I'm learning how to offer true hospitality. It's not found in the food or drink I offer. It's not found in my expertise or advice or

ability to fix things. In the words of Henri Nouwen, "[Hospitality is] the creation of a space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place."¹

I see Jesus doing this kind of hospitality in the Gospels. He spends time with people and creates the space where change can take place. He sits at the well speaking with the Samaritan woman, a stranger invited to be a friend. **I've also experienced a loving God who invites me into His presence, just as I am, with the opportunity to be renewed and transformed by His love working in my life. To share about Emmanuel, God with us, in this culture is an incredibly powerful thing.**

I have grown in my appreciation of the value of just sitting with people in the struggle.

¹ Nouwen, Henri, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. Glasgow: William Collins, 1976.



Next edition...

we'll explore how to initiate conversations about Jesus and finally we'll look at empowering new believers to work out the implications of faith in their context. Buckle up (make sure your Resonate subscription is up to date) and read with two lenses – one learning about what happens overseas and the other applying the cross-cultural lessons for mission in your backyard.

SHARING *Your Faith*

Part I

Is Anyone Out There?

CREATING CONNECTIONS

for

MISSION

Last year, Resonate readers enjoyed a three part series called, 'A Dummies Guide to...'

a) Discerning a call to cross-cultural mission, b) Becoming a cross-cultural worker and c) Sticking it out. The articles were great reads, full of tips and ideas for a personal journey in mission.² Here we begin the next series about what cross-cultural workers actually do. First, Susan Campbell looks at making connections with people.

We know that preaching on street corners and delivering tracts are outdated strategies for sharing the Gospel, so how about these ideas for the next generation?

1. TWEET “DOES ANYONE OUT THERE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT JESUS?”
2. GIFT HILLSONG’S GREATEST HITS FROM ITUNES TO ALL YOUR COLLEAGUES.

Yeah right? As if! We all know that it rarely works like that. We know that it’s about relationship, relationship, relationship.

We know about Jesus intentionally choosing a group of followers with whom to share his life and mission. We know about Paul making connections with the Athenians by drawing attention to their altar to an unknown God before he made his God known. We know the catchcry about ‘meeting people where they are at’. And we have some (often avoided) sense that we should share our faith with those who are our nearest and dearest.

Yet there are times in our lives when our relationships have to start from scratch. We’ve moved to Brissie or enrolled in a Masters or started scoping at Boost or joined a frisbee team. Or, we scan through our contacts screen and realise that most of our friends are Christians and it’s time to move out of the bubble. We begin the exciting (for some) and exhausting (for others) path to making new connections.

This is the experience for cross-cultural workers who live among least-reached people groups around the world. They respond to God’s invitation to join Him among people who don’t know Him, pull up stumps in Australia and start from scratch somewhere else. They move into a community where, for a while, they don’t know its culture, its language or any of its people.

A tough gig! Where do they even begin to make connections? A few Global Interaction team members share their experiences.

Lulu teaches English to uni students in a bustling city in Central Asia. When she started, she’d hoped that she’d have plenty of opportunities in the classroom to get to know students, share their lives and faith journeys but it hasn’t been so easy. The limitations around religious freedom are stringent. The students are reserved in the classroom, hesitant to speak and focused on their grades. Undeterred, Lulu invited students to her home for food and fun. This year she’s had all of her 220 students over, twice, hosting a dozen or so students at a time! (And I was patting myself on the back for inviting a friend to the carols night!) The students love to eat together, talk in a casual setting and get to know their teacher in a personal way. Lulu says, “Because of the closer connections, individuals often share situations in which I have been able to offer help, such as counselling, prayer and support.”

DAN is a 30 something dad who lives in a small rural town in the Silk Road Area. Most young men in the town are involved in binge drinking, fighting, promiscuity and drugs which lead to broken homes, jail time and poor role-modelling for the kids. In addition the local people are suspicious of foreigners and building relationships with people is tough.

However, by noticing the advertising on billboards, jerseys on kids’ backs and many fields scattered around the town, Dan quickly learned that the blokes of the town love their footy (the round ball variety). Ah-ha, an opportunity for connection!

As well as joining a local team, Dan initiated a community sports festival to coincide with the hype surrounding the FIFA World Cup. He presented a proposal to local authorities and was given an enthusiastic thumbs-up from the Vice-Mayor. He worked with locals to organise the event, including welding and painting goalposts and marking out field lines with sawdust. 300 locals turned up! Following the success of the festival, Dan is exploring opportunities for coaching clinics, football camps and integrating life-coaching material.

He says, “Sport is a great way to connect with young men but to also promote good health, friendship and community. I hope that through my modelling and conversations I will see deep friendships formed and lives changed.”

Catherine first moved to Cambodia and one of her language teachers invited her to join some of the other teachers playing table tennis on a Saturday morning. Not the ideal day off - the mammoth effort of speaking Khmer the whole time, interacting with her teachers and playing a game she hadn’t played for a decade - it would be easier to stay home. She says, “The easier and more comfortable thing for me to do is to stand quietly in the back ground and hope that someone reaches out”. However, the desire to build relationships, she went along and stayed for lunch. And went back the next week. And the next. The regular interaction enabled the start of some rich friendships; “I ended up sharing a house with the teacher for a year and we continue to do life together.” Catherine believes that adopting the posture of a learner does amazing things for making connections; “I listen to their stories, I share my stories, I let them ask me lots of questions and I remember that those who come into my life are those God loves and longs to know.”

That’s the crux of it, isn’t it? Believing that we have a part to play in God’s mission of making God’s love known. That exciting and grace-soaked task is surely more than enough to motivate and inspire us to make the effort – to go to the party, send the dinner invitation, join the footy team, attend the school reunion... A critical task for cross-cultural workers is to be praying for the Spirit to open their eyes to the opportunities and possibilities around them. It takes a little bit of trial and error and a whole lot of listening. And also for us – paying attention, noticing the prompting of the Spirit in us and just getting out there and having a go. Catherine says, “Is it easy? No, not always but an incredibly rich, transforming, life-giving privilege. I wouldn’t want to do anything else!”

² If you missed seeing them, read back issues at www.globalinteraction.org.au/resonate



MINISTRY AT THE MARGINS:

SUPERHEROES

NEED NOT APPLY

Armen Gakavian is passionate about personal and community transformation. He is pioneering discipleship ministry for The Navigators, volunteers in his local public housing estate and is a researcher with The Salvation Army, the Centre for Public Christianity and the Christian Research Association.

Who comes to mind when you think of 'ministry at the margins'? A volunteer at the local soup kitchen? A couple who take a recovering alcoholic into their home? A university graduate who moves in alongside the urban poor instead of going back to the safe suburban nest?

Sometimes, ministry at the margins sounds like the stuff of superheroes.

I'm a middle class white Australian male. I come from a functional Christian family, have a university education and reasonable health. I live in a clean, tidy house in a middle class suburb. By nature, I am conservative – I like order and stability. But something inside me has always been attracted to the chaos and rawness of the margins, for there I find new insight into my own brokenness – brokenness that radically challenges the way I understand the Gospel.

Ministry at the margins is about prioritising the people that Jesus prioritised. It is about bringing the Good News of the Kingdom to those who are considered the least by society but the greatest by God.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus was on the lookout for the outcasts. He made His priorities clear from the start in His mission statement:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."³

The Pharisees and even Jesus' disciples didn't always get it but the ex-prostitute, the healed blind man and the penitent rich man instinctively grasped what Donald Kraybill calls God's 'Upside Down Kingdom'.⁴

In today's world, those at the margins are people who experience financial poverty, social isolation, homelessness, family breakdown, forced migration, discrimination, mental illness, physical, sexual or emotional abuse and other challenges to the rhythm of life.

Most of us will experience some of these things some of the time. The more I immerse myself with those at the margins, the more I become aware of my own financial, emotional and relational vulnerability.

Yet my own experiences of marginalisation are neither constant nor overwhelming. They do not define me. I do not feel them acutely because I have the support structures, confidence and capacity to deal with them. Those entrenched in the cycle of disadvantage, however, have few resources on which to fall back on.

So, as a middle class Aussie, I ask myself what ministry at the margins looks like from my position of privilege – not just in the soup kitchens, life among the urban poor or in the faraway people group but in my own suburb... or in the gentrified inner city, the fast-growing suburban sprawls, the isolated rural communities or the sparkling new housing estates.

First, I ask God to show me the margins in my own world. Who would Jesus spend time with if He were in my neighbourhood? Hidden behind the double brick walls and neatly kept gardens are people struggling with mental and physical illness, loneliness and alienation from God. In my extended family and among my friends, there are stories of broken marriages, wayward children and financial hardship. There is the socially awkward guy at church, the lady with a physical disability around the corner, the abused wife who keeps to herself, the neighbour who doesn't speak English and the lonely old man who sits in the same spot every day in the shopping centre.

Next, I identify a few people and immerse myself in their lives. In my first few years of involvement at the local housing estate, I spent a lot of time listening to stories. Each fortnight I went shopping with a dear friend who suffers from schizophrenia. I tried to understand their world and prayed for God to work in and through me. Together we ate, laughed, prayed and shared what God had been teaching us. As we spent time together, I looked for the signs of the Spirit of God. I watered the seed and watched it grow.

I recognise that life at the margins has its own unique rhythm. Especially for those experiencing multiple disadvantages, things are more often on the run, chaotic and intuitive than what I am used to. I've learnt to work around people's medication schedules and mental health cycles. I had to put aside my expectations of cognitive, question-and-answer Bible study when James, who has schizophrenia, asked if we could read the book of James because, well, "I wrote it as a letter to myself, you know!"

In all of this, I come alongside people with an understanding of our common humanity. At different times in my life, I will experience what it is like to be "Poor,

a prisoner, oppressed and blind". My encounter with the margins is like a mirror that highlights my own vulnerability. When my friend shares about his addiction to gambling, I see similar patterns in my own more respectable addiction to sugar. When my friend freaks out because Centrelink accidentally underpaid

him \$300, I remember what it felt like when I was overseas and couldn't access my funds. In our common humanity we journey together so that, together, we can grow in Christ-like maturity.

Ministry at the margins is not for superheroes. It is for us ordinary people who recognise our own vulnerability and can come alongside other ordinary people who are simply broken in more obvious ways. The margins are often messy, unpredictable and volatile. But that is where the Spirit has the greatest freedom to work – amidst the chaos of the unknown, where our well-rehearsed tools for controlling the agenda are suddenly unworkable. As we adopt Jesus mission statement as our own, we gain a deeper grasp of our own need for Him and fresh view of the Kingdom of God.

REFLECT & DISCUSS:

- Who are the people at the margins of your networks?
- What feelings, hesitations and anticipations do you have towards them?
- What are your points of connection with them?
- What practices in your life, church or ministry might be a barrier for those at the margins?
- What's one thing can you change or do?



³ Luke 4:17-19, quoting from Isaiah 61:1

⁴ Kraybill, Donald, *Upside Down Kingdom*, Herald Press; 5th ed., 2011

DOING LIFE *Together*

With a clear sense of God's call and a one and four year old in tow, adventurers Dave and Edwina headed overseas for the very first time. Their first 15 years were spent in Papua, encouraging a community of believers and sharing openly about Jesus. In stark contrast they are now immersed in a people group in South East Asia who have little knowledge of the Gospel and where sharing faith takes great sensitivity.

DAVE

I grew up in suburban Melbourne, playing football and cricket. Edwina and I married after a youth group romance involving singing and performing in musicals together. While I am fairly easy-going, Edwina is more strong-minded and passionate.

Together we've lived in some very isolated parts of South East Asia for most of our lives, both with, and later on, without our three children. The thing I love about South East Asia is that it is such a kaleidoscope of different types of people, culture, religion, geography, food... everything! There's always something exciting, surprising, often weird or infuriating happening.

One of the most memorable moments of our time in South East Asia happened when we moved from one province to another and needed to rent a house. We made a wish list of what we wanted and the very first house to which the agent took us fulfilled nearly every wish. We eventually rented it after feeling we should, at least, look at others. God is good!

It's been so important to be able to share my life with Edwina. I doubt I could have appreciated or enjoyed, or even done any of it without her. She keeps my feet on the ground when things start getting too crazy. And she gives me the push when I need to get moving.

EDWINA

I am not sure it was love at first sight. Dave and I always seemed to find ourselves together at youth group events. We decided to be friends but God had other plans and we were finally paired off together by a few matchmakers within the group!

Our church was full of faith-filled people who often talked about mission. It was at church that I learnt about Global Interaction (called ABMS back then) and their work.

I started my working life in administration but not long after we were married we moved to a small country town with Dave's work and met a special older couple who were our neighbours. They encouraged us in our faith, which led us to study at Bible College.

When we arrived in Papua in the early 80s we were greeted by people in national dress (not a lot of coverage at that time!) and a lady who was clearly unwell and who possessed an interesting odour gave me a big hug! Amazingly, my thoughts were, "What a warm welcome; I feel that we are home."

The best thing about cross-cultural ministry is that there is such a variety to life. Not a day goes by when we are not learning something new about the language, people or God's creation. I am constantly stretched and challenged, which is at times very frustrating – that is when I thank God for giving me a patient husband!

The culture of South East Asia demands that Dave takes the lead and I am content to let him do it. Dave is a gift from God. I love that he is a good listener who gives wise advice and when it's all too much I am grateful for his fantastic sense of humour.

Two Blokes who Changed Everything

What happens when we truly understand God's mission to all people? What happens when we dig deep into God's plan for this world and not just see it as some vague concept that has no great impact on our lives but take the time to get to know the heartbeat of God? Haylee Freudigmann gives us some clues.

A hint into the heart of God is shown to us in Acts 10.

There are two blokes, who in many ways are worlds apart. One is Peter – a Jew, a disciple of Jesus, the one who walked across the water, cut off the soldiers ear, denied Jesus three times and preached one of the earliest sermons on record.

The other guy is Cornelius – a soldier. His job was to make sure the Roman Empire remained strong and powerful. Cornelius had an understanding of God, something bigger than himself. The Bible said he was even a devout man but he was certainly not a Jew and knew nothing of Jesus.

At this stage of history, there was no great missional strategy as to how the message of Jesus would be spread across the globe. For most, it was still a Jew's only in-house gig. Yet God had other plans. He was about to reveal that salvation was for everyone. Yep, everyone.

God spoke to Cornelius by sending an angel with a clear message for him to find Peter (practically giving him Peter's address... don't you wish God could be that specific all the time?). Cornelius, faithful to the vision, sends out men to track Peter down.

Meanwhile, Peter also had a vision. He saw a large sheet being let down from Heaven with all kinds of animals and reptiles in it. God says (three times, just to make sure Peter got it), "Go ahead, kill and eat."

Peter's first response as a good and devout Jew was, "No Lord, I can't! These things are impure and unclean." To which God clearly replies, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This vision is kind of like a prelude, an important lesson Peter needed to hear from God in preparation for what was to come.

Peter was left to grapple with what God was trying to teach him when there was a knock at the door. It was the men sent by Cornelius. God affirms to Peter that He sent these Roman men and that Peter should not be afraid to travel with them. So Peter went, probably with much trepidation, to the house of an 'unclean', non-Jew, Gentile, Roman soldier. A bold move!

There waiting for him was not just one person but a house full of 'unclean people'. Cornelius had gathered all his mates together to hear what Peter had to say. Cornelius knew that something big, something life changing was about to happen. He was about to hear the Good News and there was no way he was going to keep this opportunity to himself.

Cornelius shared with Peter the words of the angel and said, "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything that the Lord has commanded you to say." Now that's an open door for conversation if ever I heard one!

Peter, putting it all together – his vision, Cornelius' vision, the men coming to find him and the invitation to share his message – had a realisation that has formed the basis for Christian mission ever since. He said,

"I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts people from every nation who fear him and do what is right."

Do we appreciate the power of that statement?

This message of Jesus was for *everyone*, not a select few but for all people on the earth... this changed everything!

Peter began to tell the people gathered in the room of Jesus and all that He has done. Yet before Peter could really get his sermon going, the Holy Spirit descended on the crowd of Gentiles and the room erupted with praise for God. Peter and his friends stood there stunned. The Holy Spirit had just been given to these Gentiles in the same way it had been given to the Jews. They did not see that coming!

This first great cross-cultural missionary journey of Peter and Cornelius tells us so much about God's heart of mission.

This story of two blokes, Peter and Cornelius, shows us that God's message is for all. Yet, despite the great missionary effort that has followed, there are still billions of God-fearing people just like Cornelius who still don't know the freedom of Jesus. Fast-forward a couple thousand years and Global Interaction is continuing in the footsteps of Peter. Average Aussies are responding to God's call to share His message with people among least-reached people groups in Asia and Africa. The work Peter began is still not done and God's heart has not changed; Global Interaction is working hard to share the message of Jesus in relevant ways with those who have still not heard – might God be calling you to step out and take part?



WHEN THE BUZZ STOPS: ONE MAN'S EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Ben lives with his wife, Sam, and two children among the Yawo people of Malawi.⁵ After living in Africa for six months Ben is searching for new ways of experiencing God's presence when it feels like God is not there.

In Australia, feeling the presence of God was a very real and tangible thing. Each Sunday the music team at church would crank out wonderful tunes that I sang along to at the top of my voice. My pastors would preach ripper sermons that gave me a new understanding of how wide and deep is God's love. I enjoyed being tangibly reminded of God's grace and forgiveness through drinking wine and eating bread during communion. Soft keyboard music accompanied powerful, heartfelt prayers.

But I've been away from Australia (and the worship band, my pastor's preaching, small group, etc) for six months now and I haven't once felt the presence of God like I did back at home. No buzz or spiritual high of any kind. Nothing.

To begin with I was worried. Was I having a crisis of faith? It entered my mind (for a split second) that because I couldn't feel God's presence, maybe He didn't exist. Can you imagine – a person called to share Jesus with those who don't know Him having doubts about whether He was even real?! (I said – only a split second.) I thought maybe it was my fault. Perhaps I was doing things wrong, praying wrong or reading wrong, or facing east when hopping out of bed instead of west or ...

It didn't matter what formula I used I could not manufacture a spiritual high. I did not feel God's presence like I did at home.

Then I thought maybe it was God's fault. Was He holding back, not answering my prayers, even the ones of utter desperation? I started to feel bitter – why would my God treat me like this?

As I've thought, prayed, read and talked with older, wiser people I've begun to see things differently. I've learnt that feeling God's absence doesn't mean I'm having a crisis of faith (I know with all my heart that God is real), it doesn't mean I've done something wrong (I know the Holy Spirit dwells within me) and it's not God's fault (He promises not to leave or forsake us).

Take me away from all the uplifting praise and worship music, the hard-hitting, high-energy sermons and what I am left with feels like silence.

I've come to a conclusion that I had become accustomed to experiencing God's presence in a particular way. There is nothing wrong with that way... but it is just one way. It is the dominant way experienced by young people in church in Australia and I'm a product of that church culture. To a tee.





Take me away from all the uplifting praise and worship music, the hard-hitting, high-energy sermons and what I am left with feels like silence.

I've come to a place where I need to discover new ways of sustaining a relationship with Jesus.

I'm only beginning to explore what the new ways might look like for me. Instead of expecting to *feel* the presence of God all the time I am content with *knowing* and *trusting* that He is with me. Instead of being in the passenger seat, passively letting my church leaders do the work for me, I am taking more responsibility for my own faith and spiritual development. I am becoming more aware of God's presence in the things all around me – in the laughter of my daughters and the graciousness of Sam, in those conversations where God is revealed to someone just that little bit more than He was before, in those moments when I choose Jesus instead of myself. I am learning to be with God in the 'silence'.

I've been using the *Book of Common Prayer* to help me pray three times a day with people all over the world.

We have a mosque over our fence and I use the calls to prayer (which are quite loud) to encourage me to pray. I am learning to pray in the local language, Ciyawo. It's a challenge but a great way to spend time with my language nurturer and God in a shared space.

Feeling God's presence can be celebrated but perhaps it shouldn't be expected. God is with us despite our feelings, despite the 'silence'. As Paul said to the Corinthians, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal."⁵ After all, feelings and spiritual highs fade. Jesus, the one who was and is and is to come, is forever. I'd rather put my trust in Him than my feelings any day! I hope I can press on, endure, persevere and develop a robust faith through all the highs and lows of the journey.

Check out more from Ben at <http://1lifetale.com>

⁵ Ben and Sam are planning to serve in Mozambique. They currently live in Malawi as they wait for visas.

⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:18

REFLECT & DISCUSS

When have you experienced God's seeming silence? How have you responded?

What are the triggers around you to remind and encourage you to pray?

Who and what do you rely on to develop your faith?

How might you cultivate a more robust spirituality?

What are the steps you need to take today, this week, this month?



COOKING

CULTURALLY



CREAMY COCONUT CHICKEN – AFRICA

Serves 6-8

Buy it

2 kilograms whole chicken, cut into pieces	3 tablespoons tomato paste
¼ teaspoon salt	2 tablespoons paprika
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper	2 tablespoons water
¼ cup vegetable oil	1 teaspoon ginger, grated
1 onion, chopped coarsely	1 cup coconut milk
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped	3 tablespoons peanut butter
1 or 2 large red chillies, finely chopped	½ cup fresh coriander or parsley, chopped
	Handful crushed peanuts

Do it

- Preheat oven to 220°C.
- Trim chicken pieces of excess fat, rinse and pat dry with paper towel. Sprinkle salt and pepper over chicken, set aside.
- Heat large frypan over medium-high heat and add half the oil. Stir-fry onion, garlic and chillies until soft.
- Stir in tomato paste, paprika, water and ginger, cook for 1 minute, stirring.
- Stir in coconut milk and peanut butter, simmer for a few minutes.
- Cool slightly and blend until smooth. Set sauce aside.
- Heat saucepan over medium-high heat and add remaining oil. Cook chicken, in batches for 5 minutes or until brown.
- Transfer to large roasting pan and spread 1 cup of the sauce evenly over chicken. Cook in oven, uncovered, for 30 minutes.
- Turn chicken pieces over. Mix remaining sauce with ¼ cup coriander or parsley and pour evenly over chicken.
- Cook for a further 15-20 minutes until juices run clear when chicken is pierced.
- Top with crushed peanuts and ¼ cup chopped coriander or parsley. Serve with steamed rice or salad.

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