



FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

Views From the Field

From the McRaes

We've been with the IMB almost 9 years and can honestly say that those 9 years have taken us to our breaking point at times. When we first started the application process, Ruthanne and I had no idea what would be required of us. I, Evan, had almost no overseas experience and had a very romantic view of what life might look like. Then we took our first assignment in southern India. The romance ended almost immediately. The two years spent in India would be a crucible of constantly dying to self and relying on God's grace to see us through what seemed like an endless, tortuous assignment. It brought the words of the Apostle Peter into a reality that we hadn't ever experienced before that time: "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:6-7)." It was two years of constant fire, constant refining. It's a process that strips our faith of impurities, impurities like finding our identity in our security and a life we assumed we could always control. It's a process where the fire is so insatiably hot that Christian platitudes and clichés could provide no relief. Rather, it was only the Living Water that Jesus offers that would keep us from getting consumed. When we felt as though we had been stripped of everything good (possessions, freedom, stability, etc.) we realised how much we found our identity in those things rather than Christ. But that two years came to an end. Whilst in India, we became quite taken by all things British. It was through this love that God moved us to England.

It was in England that God answered our 4-year ceaseless prayer for children and blessed us with our two babies (16 months apart). We had lived in the UK for almost 5 years before getting deported due to our visa being revoked. It's been two years of trying to get back to the UK, never feeling at home until coming to ELFBC. We never knew how devastating not being able to provide a stable home for your children could be. Fast forward to February 27th of this year, and we left ELFBC and set off for a new adventure in Bristol, United Kingdom. After a week of spending time with friends in London, we set off for Bristol to begin our new life and ministry. The coronavirus was being talked about in the news to the extent that I was a bit uneasy about flying for 8 hours with our two toddlers. However, we never could have imagined it would turn into the pandemic that has resulted in so much devastation. We had been in Bristol for about a week when the Prime Minister ordered everyone to be on lockdown. The chain reaction of events that proceeded from the Prime Minister's mandatory lockdown has taken what we were praying would be a transition of a few weeks and has extended it to much longer. We are now entering the third month since we moved to the UK with not much end in sight. One of the unfortunate fallouts of this devastating pandemic is that our supervisor has decided to retire earlier than originally intended. Because this would leave us as the only personnel in the city, our leadership has decided to move us to Leeds (a city about 4 hours northeast). A job and city that we had prayed and worked so hard to get to had now been taken from us. I write this sitting in another missionary's home in Cardiff, Wales, looking for housing remotely as the lockdown still prohibits us leaving our city. If I'm being honest, morale is low, but God is good. This is textbook "what not to say" in a missionary newsletter, but in an age of the social media mirage, a bit of transparency should do us all a bit of good.

I know that many are experiencing different trials. In fact, when writing about our experience the past two years, it seems minimal than the experience of having gone through it. I mean, in the last two years, we've always had a place to lay our head, which is not something the Son of Man could always say (Matt 8:20). God has always provided for our needs. However, the reality and emotion of going through loss is very real. It's something that a lot of other people can affirm as well. But that can't be the end of our story. Rather, it is in these times that we must ask ourselves hard questions. Even in these present trials, can we trust God to execute His will according to His own good purposes instead of ours? Can we really trust that He is good? Are we okay if He asks us to do things that we really don't want to do or allows things to happen to us that we don't want to happen? If we trust that Scripture is true (which it is) and makes the believer complete (2 Tim 3:17), then the answer to those questions is a resounding yes. However, trials aren't just a theoretical exercise. They are very painful and take a toll on each of us. We must trust that God is our good and loving Father who knows what's best for us even when our emotions scream the contrary. It was during those trials in India that we were given this advice: "In times of trial, react with what you know, not with what you feel." It is that advice that brings us back to the truth of Scripture time and time again. It's truth that breaks the perpetual cycle of insanity that screams that God is not good or life is too hard. In his song "Is He Worthy?", Andrew Peterson brilliantly (and antiphonally!) answers our emotions with simple truth.

Do you feel the world is broken?

(We do)

Do you feel the shadows deepen?

(We do)

But do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through?

(We do)

Do you wish that you could see it all made new?

(We do)

Is all creation groaning?

(It is)

Is a new creation coming?

(It is)

Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst?

(It is)

Is it good that we remind ourselves of this?

(It is)

Indeed! It is truth that cause us to see these present trials as only a hiccup compared with what awaits in eternity. May these present trials only prove our faith to be genuine. Please pray for our family and for each other during these unprecedented times.

With Love, The McRaes