

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. In the distance, a city skyline is visible, featuring several prominent domes and minarets, likely Istanbul. The sky is a warm, orange-hued gradient. Numerous birds, possibly seagulls, are captured in flight throughout the sky, their silhouettes contrasting against the bright background. In the foreground, the water is dark with gentle ripples, and a small, dark boat is visible in the lower center.

A WALK ON THE WATER

ONE FAMILY'S JOURNEY OVER THE OCEAN

EUNICE HO

Acknowledgements

1. Jesus Christ, who loves me and knows me better than I know myself. Thank you Lord for Your patience and kindness, for loving me and saving me.
2. My incredible husband and children. Chris, you are the greatest sign of God's love for me in this life. God knows me and He knows that you are the perfect man for me in every way! Thank you for choosing me to be your wife. Jonathan, Jeremy, Zach, Abby, and Joy, I love being your mom. You are each a priceless treasure and a delight to me. May you love God all the days of your lives and may you have the courage to say "yes" to Jesus, no matter the cost.
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A Walk On The Water: One Family's Journey Over The Ocean
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Cover photo by Logan R.

This book is memoir. It reflects the author's present recollections of experiences over time. Some names and characteristics have been changed, some events have been compressed, and some dialogue has been recreated.

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About The Author

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My Childhood

I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My parents were Korean immigrants who moved to the U.S. with my three older sisters in the 1970s. They held the hope and dream of giving their children a better, more prosperous life. My mom had an unintentional home birth with me. My parents didn't have a car and couldn't speak English yet, so when my mom went into labor, my dad first called his friend, who then called the ambulance. But I was born before the ambulance arrived.

I grew up with three wonderful older sisters, who have helped me greatly in life. When my parents both worked full-time, my sisters took care of me. They did most everything from making sure I took baths, feeding me, checking my homework, and anything in between.

Like many Korean immigrants in the 1970s, my parents owned a small store and worked very long hours to provide for our family. Monday through Saturday, for most of my life, they opened their store at 7 a.m. and closed their doors at 6 p.m. Often they worked beyond these hours to have everything ready for the next day. When mom and dad came home at night, they were utterly exhausted. Yet they got up the next morning to do the same thing. Every week for thirty years, my parents worked incredibly hard to provide well for us.

My parents are strong Christians. Growing up, they faithfully took us to church every single Sunday, unless there was a major hindrance. I remember one Sunday we woke up to over a foot of snow and ice that had fallen the night before. My parents were undeterred, so we began the hour-long drive to church in our station wagon, only to discover the highway had been shut down. We turned around and my parents had a mini church service at home with us.

My hardworking parents instilled in all of their children a value to follow the way of Christ in all things. I have vivid memories of my parents reading the Bible and praying together every single day. My parents still do this in their retirement, sitting together each morning and evening, reading the Scriptures together and praying. They live their lives with

conviction, always trying to help the orphan, widow, and poor. They are very godly people, and I am so thankful for their legacy.

I am the youngest of four girls and we were “latchkey kids.” We ran wild most of our days with no parents at home. We weren’t bad kids; we just didn’t have any adults around to supervise us. I remember when I was around four years old my sisters would smoke cigarettes with their friends. Since I followed them everywhere they went, my sisters would feed me candy so that I wouldn’t tattle on them. We did foolish things like this, but by the mercy of God, we never got into any major scrapes.

God protected us from so many terrible things that could have happened to us. We were four little Asian girls, living in the inner city, just wandering around with no supervision. It’s a miracle that we were physically safe.

I don’t remember too much about my childhood except that I was very lonely since my parents were always gone and at work. We grew up in the inner city until I was about five years old. My parents must have seen how unsafe our neighborhood was, and after a few years they moved us to a nice suburban neighborhood, an hour drive outside of the city. The hard part about moving to the suburbs in the 1980s was that the area was predominantly Caucasian. Often I was made fun of by random peers for being one of only a handful of Asian students in school. There were only two other Asian kids in my entire grade.

Hearing frequent racist remarks made me really insecure about myself. I was proud to be Korean, but I was shy and lacked the confidence to speak up. I always felt so out of place. I was a pretty melancholy kid and have memories from my early elementary school years of praying each night before going to bed, asking God to end the world so that I wouldn’t have to go to school the next day. I prayed this same prayer almost every night in my childhood until I went to college.

I am thankful that God never answered those foolish and short-sighted prayers.

Youth Group and My First Experience Outside of the U.S.

Observing this need in our lives to be around more Asian people, my parents started taking us to a large Korean church in Philadelphia when I was in seventh grade. This church was an hour away. (We lived that far from other Koreans!) I loved it and had such a good time there. I thrived being around other Korean-Americans and our church had an active, fun youth ministry.

I remember observing this popular girl in youth group named Kathryn. I admired her for her spunk and outgoing nature. At one family retreat we attended together, she befriended me. She was such an outgoing and bubbly person to be around. Kathryn made friends so easily; it was a quality that I really admired and wanted to have too. After the retreat, I decided I wanted to be more like Kathryn and determined to come out of my shy shell.

Following that retreat, every other time I was at youth group I made an effort to initiate friendships. Rather quickly, I had many friends in youth group, and this became a place where I thrived socially. It was also the place I encountered the Lord.

In tenth grade, our youth group held their annual retreat. I don't remember the preacher's name or face, but for the first time in my life I encountered God in a new way. Through the speaker's messages, I acknowledged Jesus as not only the God my parents worshiped, but the one I wanted to worship too. I had a genuine revelation of a God who loved me and wanted a relationship with me. I met a God who cared about me and cared about what I was doing in my life. It was at that retreat that I gave Christ lordship over my life.

He became real to me.

When I returned back to school after the retreat, I began praying to God more. I would actually stop to ask myself questions, "I wonder how it makes God feel if I cheat on this test?" or "I wonder how God feels about

how I treat this person?" I started becoming convicted of my sin, and wanted to be a good witness to people by showing godly character.

I went on a short-term missions trip to Mexico with my youth group in the summer of 1994. I was fifteen, most of my friends were going, and it seemed like a fun thing to do. To be completely honest, the trip was awful. I had never been outside of the U.S. before, and the conditions of this ten-day trip were pretty rugged. The missions base fed us boiled rice and beans at almost every meal with no seasoning. I was hot and uncomfortable the entire ten days. We did outreach, hosted a Vacation Bible School, and helped with some other things. We went to the bathroom in outhouses, and the one time I saw a western toilet in a Mexican home, I almost cried with joy. Sadly, I had no idea Mexican food was actually delicious until I became an adult.

This trip solidified my love for the U.S. and all things comfortable.

Recently, I was talking to an old youth group friend about that trip. She had also been on mission trips with that same organization. She laughed at my narrative of the trip and said, "That wasn't a missions trip; that was intentionally structured to be a boot camp for spoiled kids!"

I wish I had gotten that memo before I went on the trip! That Mexico trip honestly jaded my view of overseas missions for the next twenty years. I wrongly assumed that all overseas work, in any country, was rugged and uncomfortable.

In high school, I just tried to survive until I went to college. I had a handful of good friends in school, but I never fully felt like I could be myself. I'm not a very academic person, but I was looking forward to college as a time where I could have all the friends around me that I wanted. I dreamed of finally being able to fully be myself in school, instead of feeling so insecure about being the only Asian person around.

I am so grateful for my youth group because that was definitely the main highlight of my high school years. I have such fond memories of all of my youth pastors, teachers, and friends from this church. I loved the friendships that I built there. I grew a deep foundation in my relationship with Christ that carried me through college and beyond. I

am so thankful for all that the youth group poured into me during that season of my life.

During my senior year of high school, we had a guest pastor come and speak at our Good Friday service. I was deeply moved by the sermon and I wanted to thank the pastor for coming to speak. Pastor Seth was a kind fatherly figure, and as we chatted a bit I found out that he was planting a church at the university campus that I was planning to attend that fall! I was so excited and decided that night that I would become a regular member of his new church.

3

My Zealous College Years

College was an amazing time for me. I had applied to schools that were within two hours of home, but only ones that had at least a ten percent Asian demographic. I ended up attending a massive, out-of-state, secular university. I left all of my childhood insecurities behind and I jumped into university with great excitement and enthusiasm. I did indeed join Pastor Seth's new church and was one of his first ten members. He and his loving wife became mentors to me, and I am so grateful for all that they poured into me in my very immature youth.

I loved our church so much that I literally invited everyone I met to service. It was such a lively place, full of youthful zeal. During my senior year of college our church started moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We were so hungry for God's presence. We would have powerful prayer meetings at 8 a.m., committing our days to God and inviting Him to do more in our midst.

We didn't see anything very miraculous at the time. But I personally think it was a miracle in itself that 10-20 college students would wake up earlier than necessary just to pray. We were hungry to know God and for Him to move on our campus.

Our church was an oasis for me in this ginormous, secular university: a place where people could come and encounter God in a new way. We weren't a huge group of students, yet we were growing spiritually and thriving.

Pastor Seth personally had a great burden for overseas missions. He would often preach about missions and, when he did, many young people around me would be deeply convicted by his message and would make commitments to go. I, however, would sit there time and time again, completely unmoved and unwilling.

I loved Jesus, but I had every plan and intention to serve Him in the U.S. By the time I started my senior year of college, I felt very strongly that I

was called to full-time ministry and I had a desire to marry someone with a similar calling.

Meanwhile at church, whenever there was a time of prayer for people who would be willing to serve Jesus in missions overseas, I would hang out in back and watch as my friends filled the front of the church to be prayed for. Later they would share their tearful testimonies of how they felt the Lord calling them to missions. I would bless them and feel very excited for my friends. However, I was completely devoid of any conviction that this could be a possibility in my own life.

My husband, Chris, always jokes about how my attitude was back then. He says that my heart cry was, "Here I am Lord, please don't send me anywhere!"

When I graduated from college, my life's desire was to marry an awesome man that loved God and together be partnered in full-time ministry... in the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (and hopefully by the age of 23...at the very latest).

In September of 2000, when I was 21 years old, Lou and Therese Engle, founders of TheCall, invited young people to the National Mall in Washington, D.C. for a historic gathering of prayer and fasting. For some reason, when I heard about it, my heart was so stirred to participate. I have no idea why I was so eager to attend this gathering, since I had never heard of the Engles before that time.

I can't fully articulate what I experienced that day at TheCall D.C., other than I encountered God in a life-altering way.

As we walked onto The Mall that morning, the tangible presence of God could already be felt. It was a day of fasting and praying, not a festival to watch. I heard people on stage share things that touched my spirit in a way that it had never been touched before. The two main messages that burned in my heart that day were the Nazirite lifestyle and the ending of abortion.

Lou Engle preached from Numbers 6 on the Nazirites and how, like them, we too can be consecrated unto God in a specific way. It was as if for the first time in my life, I was given a deeper understanding of who

God created me to be. I have always felt a little different, crazier, and bolder than most. When Lou described what he felt was the Nazirite call - choosing to be set apart from the status quo for the purposes of God - my heart was stirred and affirmed in a new way.

Later in the day, several speakers shared on the topic of abortion. It made me reconsider the debate from a new perspective. At one point, a man named Ryan came on stage to share his powerful testimony. I remember he said something along the lines of,

“Many Christians say that they are against abortion, except in the case of rape...but I am one of those cases...”

And he went on to tell the story of how his birth mother was raped and he was conceived. He shared about how God had a destiny and purpose for his life, despite the horrible circumstances of his conception. My heart was deeply convicted. A woman becoming pregnant from rape always seemed like the one case that I always questioned in the abortion debate. And here this young man was standing on the stage, thanking God for saving his life!

Could God truly give a violated woman a “crown of beauty instead of ashes...” as Isaiah 61 describes? His life was a testament that indeed God could make beauty from ashes. His testimony began a journey of searching in my heart. It challenged my view of children. Did I agree with what the Bible teaches, that children are indeed a blessing from God?

Psalm 127:3-5 says, “Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.”

I always had a deep longing to be married, but I never thought much about children or God’s heart towards children.

People who knew me when I was younger are often surprised that I now have five kids because I was never much of a “kid person.” I never noticed any babies other than my nieces and nephews (who are all super precious). I rarely even babysat because I never cared much about children. However, Lou Engle’s challenge at TheCall D.C., along with

Ryan's testimony, planted a new desire in my heart to see things more from God's perspective and not my own clouded and worldly one.

Romance and Marrying My Love

Little did I know it that day, but my soon-to-be husband Chris was also at TheCall D.C. and he was becoming deeply moved and convicted from the same messages that touched me! He and I were barely acquaintances at that time, but God was clearly preparing us for one another.

I graduated from college in May 2000 with a degree in social work. After graduation, I worked part-time as a caseworker for children in the foster care system. I also worked part-time as an intern at my church. I enjoyed my life after graduation and was making just enough money to be independent from my parents. For the first time in my life, I was paying for my own rent, car, and food, and had my own spending money. It was a great season because I loved working at my church and I had a busy social life. Our church was still thriving and growing. It was a special time for me.

One day in October of 2000, my good friend Carla asked me if I wanted to go to a nearby town with her to see a play. She was taking a theater appreciation class at the time and needed to attend this play for school credit. I had nothing going on that night, so after work I hopped into her car and together we headed to the play. As Carla drove, she ever so casually said to me, "Oh, since we will be in the area, I asked my old youth group friend Chris if he wanted to hang out afterwards."

I was immediately suspicious. She had been dropping hints to me about Chris ever since I had first met him a year earlier. But being the extrovert that I am, despite my reservations, I decided it would be fun hanging out with a new acquaintance.

That night ended up being quite divine. As the three of us hung out, Chris and I realized that we both had been to TheCall D.C. We excitedly talked about that day and how it impacted us. As we talked, we realized we actually had quite a bit in common. We both felt a calling to full-time ministry work (in the U.S.) and we both had a passion to see people

come to know Jesus in a deeper way. Looking back, an interest on both sides was definitely sparked that night.

Carla must have noticed this connection because from that night on she started inviting Chris to our church prayer meetings and even to my birthday party.

I was friendly to Chris, but since he was a youth pastor at a different church at the time, I honestly didn't consider him as a dating prospect. I was too narrowly focused and overly zealous about my current church to even consider dating someone outside of my immediate sphere. I'm not exactly sure why I used to think like this, since my church circle was not very big and there weren't many prospects for me there. (To all my single readers, it's ok and good to look beyond your own immediate surroundings. You never know who the Lord might bring into your life!)

That following January, our church hosted a week-long conference. It was an awesome week for many reasons, but the main reason was Chris!

Chris brought a group from his church to the conference that week, so we were able to spend a lot of time together in a group setting. It was during this time that his interest in me became very evident.

In each session, I would sit in the front pew of the church. Chris would sit in the back with his friends, but as soon as each session ended he would be suddenly right next to me, ready to chat.

Initially, Chris' overt attention really caught me off guard because I never had anyone so openly admire me. My entire church noticed, and everyone started asking who that guy was that was always by my side. The funny thing about it was Chris didn't seem to mind at all the fact that people could see that he liked me. He was really bold and it was refreshing for me.

With the wise counsel and encouragement of Pastor Seth, Chris asked me out. We had a wonderful season of dating. We spent most of our dates talking about what God was doing in our lives and dreaming about the future. We had a whirlwind romance and were married ten months after we started dating. We got married at Princeton Theological Seminary (where Chris was a student), in a beautiful chapel with 400

guests! The sunny weather that day was divine and memorable for a winter wedding in New Jersey.

Pastor Seth officiated our wedding. In his wedding sermon, he spoke about how well-matched Chris and I were because we are both ones who are faithful and obedient to God. He also said one thing randomly in his message to illustrate this point and it struck us both. He said, "Chris and Eunice are ones who, if God told them to go to Africa, they would go!"

On our honeymoon, Chris and I were reflecting on our wedding ceremony and we both had a good laugh over Pastor Seth's words. I said, "Chris, why in the world would Pastor Seth say that in our wedding message? That was hilarious! I would never go to Africa!" I never desired to leave the U.S., much less travel to Africa (or anywhere else for that matter).

Well, God has a sense of humor. And although I have not been to Africa yet, my husband now has, and we have both traveled to places that I never would have imagined.

Ministry in the U.S. and Dreams

Shortly after we were married, Chris began serving as a pastor at our wonderful church in New Jersey, a season that lasted about seven years. After that, we felt led for him to transition and join the staff of a ministry in Kansas City, Missouri.

While living in Kansas City for a year, my husband's friend, who was also a part of the same ministry, had a desire to start a school for training and sending young missionaries into nations in the 10/40 window that have very little Christian witness. His heart was so heavily burdened for Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist-majority nations. He was willing to commit to a long-term vision of starting a school for young people and reaching these nations with the message of Jesus Christ.

Up until this point, my husband and I primarily only had vision for ministry in the U.S. But out of love for our friend, we decided to join in this paramount endeavor. They launched the school in 2011 and began training young Christian leaders to move overseas.

To serve the school, our family volunteered to host small group meetings in our home for these amazing young men and women. I attended a few meetings here and there and I got to know these young people. I heard some of them share how they had dreamed of being a missionary since they were children. I admired them for their passion and courage. But in the beginning, to be honest, I thought their zeal and willingness to go to these unreached nations was crazy. However, they still inspired me with their great faith and willingness to say "yes" to God's calling.

Chris continued to happily serve the organization for about a year and a half in Kansas City. He was extremely busy doing administrative work for the school, and he felt very fulfilled at his position. We loved working with the young people there.

During this time, on one seemingly ordinary spring night, I had a very clear and dramatic dream that would steer the course of my family's lives for the next four years. In the dream, I was inside of a church,

kneeling at the altar. The speaker had invited people who wanted to respond to the call to serve Him overseas to come to the front and pray. I was sobbing at the front and I said to the Lord, “The Parks are going. The Mitchells are going. I guess I have no excuse.” And I committed our family to go for one year to the Middle East.

Can you sense my enthusiasm even in my dreams?

I woke up from this startling dream around 4 a.m., in complete shock and panic, as if I had just had a nightmare. But immediately I felt the Lord put one particular nation on my heart. I knew that He was likely calling our family to go to this foreign land.

I usually love when God speaks to me in dreams. In fact, before I go to bed, I often ask the Lord to give me dreams like he gave people in the Bible (Joseph in Egypt, Daniel, Jesus’ father Joseph, etc.). I love dreams because I love to sleep. But let’s just say that this dream was not the most welcome. For a long while, I lay awake pondering if I just had a nightmare. Would the devil send me a dream to torment me about my family going to serve the Lord in a Muslim-majority nation? I laugh at myself now for questioning whether or not it was God who gave me this dream, but my emotions were honestly that intense at the time.

As I lay awake, I tried to unpack the dream in my mind. I thought of the two families who were mentioned, the Parks and the Mitchells. The Parks are an awesome, sweet family with five kids that we were friends with. They were preparing at that time to move for one year to the same country in the Middle East that I felt the Lord put on my heart. The Mitchells are an equally incredible family. They were preparing to move to South America with their seven kids.

Did you catch my emphasis on the number of kids that each of these families has? The Parks and the Mitchells had large families, just like us! People often think I have lots of kids. Thankfully God has blessed me with other awesome friends who have lots of kids too.

Even though the interpretation of this dream seemed rather obvious, I was still hoping to find some other hidden meaning. I rationalized, hoping the dream was just symbolic. Unfortunately, even though I racked my brain for ideas, I could not think of any other interpretation.

God even had me talk in my dream, the way that I probably would have spoken in real life! He knows me better than I know myself, that is for certain.

Unfortunately for me, the theme of larger families moving overseas seemed pretty obvious.

I anxiously waited for Chris to wake up that morning. I needed someone to calm me down and he is very good at that. My husband and I are very opposite. I can be overly intense and emotional at times and he tends to be more level-headed and rational.

As soon as Chris woke up, I told him the dream and then asked, “Have you been secretly wanting to go overseas and asking God to speak to me because you know that I am resistant?”

This was the only logical conclusion that I could come to after having such an overwhelming dream.

My husband looked at me, equally puzzled by my dream, and said, “No, not at all, but that’s a pretty crazy dream.”

During his high school and college years, Chris went on many two-week overseas missions trips. He has been to almost every country in Central and South America. Even after being on so many impactful summer trips, he had never felt a particular call to overseas missions. That’s why Pastor Seth’s statement at our wedding ceremony was this ongoing joke between us, because we both had every intention to stay put in the U.S.

Chris knows I am a dreamer, and that I tend to hold on to my dreams more tightly than I should at times. He tried to reassure me by saying, “Eunice, this dream could mean anything. It could happen ten years down the line! Why don’t you just put it on the shelf and forget about it for now?”

He was trying to reassure me while getting ready for work, but I was still inwardly panicking because this was not something I hoped for, not even in ten years or twenty years!

I made him promise not to tell a soul about my dream. Our friends were all so zealous for the nations, and I was scared that if he told his co-workers, they would have our bags packed for us by the end of that week!

Chris left for work that day and I tried to pull myself together and feed the kids breakfast. However, a few hours later, I got a text from my husband. Anna, one of our young friends, was preparing to leave in a few months and move to the nation in the Middle East that God put on my heart after my dream. She randomly approached Chris at work that day and said, "Chris, your family should come with us to the Middle East!"

Because of my vivid dream that morning, Chris inwardly paid careful attention to her words. But outwardly he just casually laughed and asked her, "Are you prophesying or is this just a random idea?" Anna just shrugged her shoulders and smiled while walking away.

After this brief conversation, Chris immediately called and told me about what she said. We were both baffled. No matter how hard I tried to "put that dream on the shelf," I was getting more worried that God was indeed trying to speak to my unmoving heart.

About one month passed by and I tried my best to push that dream as far onto that mental shelf as possible. Around that time, our friends, the Parks, were having a large yard sale to raise funds for their big move to the Middle East. I asked Chris if we could go. I love this family, but because of our busy lives, I had not yet had the opportunity to hear the story of how they decided to move. Chris agreed to go that day because he was equally intrigued.

The night before the Park family's yard sale, I had another significant dream. In this dream, I was packing our family's suitcases to move overseas. I was crying over the suitcases as I was packing. I asked God, "Please, can we just go for six months instead of one year, Lord? I am going to miss my family too much." But in the dream, I knew that I was packing our bags for one year.

As I mentioned earlier, I have three older sisters. My eldest sister has three children, my second sister has four children, and my third sister also has four children. My kids absolutely adore their cousins. They are

the best of friends and have a very close bond. My parents and my sisters' families all live within thirty minutes of each other in Pennsylvania.

When we felt led to move to Kansas City, it was really challenging for me to be so far away from my side of the family since we all missed them so much. My kids used to get to see their cousins at least once a month when we lived in New Jersey. So when we moved halfway across the country, it was really sad for my kids not to see their cousins on such a regular basis. Although we only got to see my family twice a year when we lived in Kansas City, it was the longest stretch of time I thought the kids and I could handle.

I woke up from that second dream so depressed and troubled. I had a heavy heart that whole day. The weightiness of what the Lord might have been saying was too great for me to respond.

I told my husband about my second dream as we headed over to the moving sale. He and I both sat there in a mutual daze, wondering what the Lord might be saying.

It was really good to hang out with the Parks that day. We ended up staying for hours chatting. Without them knowing, Chris and I were soaking in all their words about how they made their costly decision to pack up their family and go.

As Chris and I drove back home, we were processing together all we discussed with the Parks. Chris told me how encouraged he was in hearing their story, and I could see that seeds of faith were being planted in him. I was still just sitting in a strange fog trying to wrap my head around the fact that a family as large as ours might be moving overseas.

A few weeks later, we attended the Parks' going away party. My friend, Mrs. Park, must have sensed my worry for their family and she gave me a hug, reassuring me that their family would be safe in the Lord's hands. She told me, "Eunice, don't worry. God will take care of us." I remember her comforting other friends in a similar way as they gave everyone hugs good-bye.

Looking back, I find that scene kind of ironic. The Parks were the ones taking this enormous step of faith. *They* were the ones who were selling everything, saying “yes” to Jesus, saying good-bye to everything wonderfully familiar, and yet they were the ones comforting many of their guests. Looking back now, I wish that I could have been the one encouraging them, fueling their faith for what God was calling them into. But I was just not there yet in my own faith.

After a few more weeks passed, one day our friend Rick texted my husband out of the blue. He said, “Chris! I had this dream with you in it last night. In the dream, you were in the Middle East (in the nation that God had put on my heart in the first dream) with Kate and me.” My husband immediately read me the text and we both sat there stunned.

Chris, whom I had still sworn to secrecy, texted Rick back thanking him for sharing the dream. They casually texted back and forth for a bit. But, Chris and I were freaked out and really shocked.

At the time of the text, Rick and Kate were engaged and were about to get married in a couple of months. They were in our organization and in the process of getting ready to move shortly after their wedding to the Middle East - to the same exact location that God had put on my heart in my first dream!

For the first time in this process, my husband suggested that maybe the Lord was actually trying to speak to us about moving a lot sooner than we thought. I agreed, but I still asked him to not tell another soul yet about what the Lord was saying. I was not ready to say “yes” to God about going overseas, so I didn’t want anyone to know.

Shortly after Rick’s dream, I was scrolling through my social media feed. A friend named Annie, a young lady that was being trained in our organization to move to the Himalayas, wrote on her wall:

“Saying good-bye to my family is one of the hardest things I will ever do, but I am reminded, God wants a family too...”

When I read this, I immediately started weeping with conviction. I kept thinking, “Doesn’t the Bible say that we must be willing to forsake all for

Him? God wants a family too and I am unwilling to fully commit my family to Him..."

God gave me a glimpse into His heart through Annie's words that day. God longs for His family too. His heart breaks for those that don't know Him, those who have never heard His name, those that hate Him, those that are completely lost without Him.

Matthew 19:29 says, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

There are literally billions of people that the Father is waiting for to join his family. Yet, I couldn't fathom sacrificing one year of my life or my family's life to help expand His eternal family?

And the reality of my selfishness and lack of good excuses finally hit me.

It hit me hard.

For the first time since my dream, Chris and I could actually dialogue about what God might have been speaking to us through these dreams without me drowning in fear. We started discussing the possibilities of moving in very general terms.

In May of that year, we went on our usual road trip back to the Northeast to visit our families and friends. As Chris and I were conversing during the long drive, he turned to me and randomly proclaimed, "Eunice, if the team leader for the upcoming Middle East outreach drops out, that is our sign that we are supposed to take their place and lead a team to the Middle East in the next school." He and I both laughed at the ridiculousness of his statement because the next school was just a couple of months away. Also, the current team leader was already announced, so we just breathed a huge sigh of relief because surely, the Lord would not be asking us to be going that soon, right?

Our two-week trip to the East Coast was fun and pretty uneventful, until one evening when we were having dinner at a friend's home. We were watching TV and there was a news segment about these volatile protests

that were happening in a city in the Middle East. Scenes of protesters, police, tear gas, and people being arrested flashed on the screen.

Well, lo and behold, it was the same country that God put on my heart after my first dream. I remember looking on in fear, watching the passionate protesters getting tear gassed in the streets. Sitting with my friend as we watched the news, I said,

“Man, can you imagine if God ever asked you to go there?” I was kind of testing the waters to see what my friend would say.

And when I said that, she quickly responded, “Yeah, I wouldn’t go.”

That conversation really troubled me that night, because I too, was not yet willing to go.

I quickly emailed my friend, Mrs. Park, that night. I said, “Hey I am watching protests in your country that seem pretty intense. Are you guys ok?!” She emailed me back right away, letting me know that they were indeed fine since the protests in the news were actually in a different part of the country. She reminded me that she was not worried because God was taking care of them. I certainly admired her faith because, from the news footage, that country looked unstable and scary. (Ironically, the city that was in the news that day was the very city that our family ended up moving to for three and a half years).

On one of our last days on the East Coast, Chris showed me an email he had just received from work. He looked pretty surprised so I asked him what was going on. He said, “Eunice, you will not believe this. I just got an email from my office, and they said that the Middle East team leader just dropped out and they need a new team leader!” He and I just stared at each other in shock.

After a few minutes, he then got a text from one of his co-workers, Scott. Scott wrote, “Chris, for weeks my wife Becky has been telling me that your family is supposed to lead that outreach!”

Scott and Becky had no idea whatsoever about our dreams and conversations. It was just a burden that our friend Becky had been

feeling for weeks! Chris and I were now really in shock because again the Lord was speaking.

On our drive back to Kansas City, Chris and I just knew that we had already gotten enough signs from the Lord about what we should do. At that point, it just felt disobedient to not give this outreach a try. When Chris returned to the office, he told everyone about our process and how the Lord had been speaking to us, so we signed up to co-lead the next Middle East outreach with that soon-to-be wed couple, Rick and Kate.

Our Ten-Week Outreach

Preparing for the ten-week outreach to the Middle East was a huge stretch of faith for me. I love the United States of America so much. My parents made tremendous sacrifices for our family to immigrate and thrive in this country. I really had no idea what to expect in the Middle East. I had a lot of negative assumptions about what the Middle East would be like from the news and my own uninformed imagination.

In some ways, the idea of taking our five young children to the Middle East felt unwise. At that time, our first 4 children were nine, eight, seven, and four years old, and I had just given birth to our newest addition only five months earlier!

I had deeply longed to have another baby after our fourth child, but we waited awhile because we wanted to see if adopting a baby was an option. We love adoption and wanted to help a baby in need if possible. After two years of paperwork, money invested, and waiting for a match, the adoption agency that we were working with closed down. Chris and I took that as a sign that maybe adoption was not meant for us, so we tried to have a baby on our own.

We were overjoyed when baby Joy arrived. She was such a beautiful gift to our family. We were thrilled that our family was growing. But to be honest, we quickly realized that having another baby was not as simple as I imagined it would be. Joy was a cranky, colicky baby. She wanted to be held all the time, and I anxiously wondered how she would do on the long airplane ride and in a foreign country.

One day, when Joy was around five months old, we heard the terrible news that a family in our church, the Wrights, had lost their youngest child. Even though I didn't know this family personally, they were well-respected in our community, and when I heard the news I was completely shocked and began weeping for them.

Immediately, all of my seemingly large problems were put into perspective. I looked at my baby and I thought about how stressed and

overwhelmed I had been since her birth because of her colic. I thought, “I bet the Wrights would literally give anything to hear their child cry again.” In that moment, I determined in my heart that every single time Joy cried, I would say a prayer of thanks to God for her cry because it meant that she was alive. For the next few months, every time Joy cried I would thank God for her cry and her life, and pray for the Wright family to be comforted in their grief.

God used the Wright’s loss to mark my heart in a new way. As I prayed for them several times a day, my heart began to truly overflow with a new thankfulness for life and for the breath each member of our family had been given. I didn’t get irritated by Joy’s loud, frequent cries anymore because I was just thankful that she was healthy and alive.

I began to feel the reality of Luke 12:48b. Jesus said, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”

My family has been given so much. We are blessed with love, health, stability, and much more. What was stopping us from going to the Middle East to share the good news? I certainly didn’t want to be the one to make excuses before God on Judgment Day.

During our three months of training with the school, our family had to raise about \$20,000 to cover the cost of our entire trip. It was incredible to see our family and friends rally behind what God was calling us to. We were thankfully able to raise the money we needed for our large family rather quickly. It was a miracle!

Although I was scared when the time finally came for our trip, I was also very convinced that this was the Lord’s will. Our family and team settled on the airplane and flew across the world to bring prayer and the gospel to this very foreign nation.

I had no idea what it would be like in this small city in the Middle East. I packed everything I could think of that our family might possibly need. I even packed enough diapers for the ten weeks we would be there, not knowing if I would be able to find any. I packed dish soap and sponges because I didn’t know how soon or quickly I would be able to go to the store. I quickly learned that I had ridiculously overpacked because we

were, in fact, still close to stores and civilization, and I could get all of our necessities very easily.

Our organization at the time had a heavy emphasis on prayer and “breaking through” the spiritual atmosphere of a region in the heavenly places. In the first week that we were in the country, our team was having a prayer meeting in a tiny local church. Rick was the prayer leader that day. He very passionately said to our small team, “We are going to pray that God would give this nation 100 new missionaries who will move here and labor for the gospel!”

As we started praying, I immediately felt the conviction of the Lord. I felt Him ask me, “Eunice, how can you pray this if you aren’t willing to come and be one of them?” A strong heaviness came upon me and I stopped praying in that moment because it was true. The Lord knew my heart. I said to Him, “Lord, you know my heart and you know that I want to go back home after these ten weeks, so I am going to stop praying now.”

I knew the Lord had me.

He knows everything about me, so I couldn’t sit there in that prayer meeting and keep praying in agreement for something that I was not willing to do. I felt the weightiness of His question so heavily that day and the weeks to follow. I kept complaining to the Lord, “Isn’t it good enough that my entire family is here for ten weeks? Isn’t that enough Lord?!”

That night as Chris and I were falling asleep, I told him about what I felt from the Lord that day. He and I fell asleep discussing the question, “Could it really be possible for our family to move here for one year?” Every night during that outreach we would discuss and brainstorm this possibility more and more.

A few weeks into our trip, we met an incredible couple that was passing through the city we were in, Deborah and Steve. They were old friends of our Middle East landlord, and they would be guests in her home for a few days.

The first morning over breakfast, Deborah said that the Lord spoke to her while she was still in bed about our team. She said God was going to

use the movement of prayer to light on fire that which many others had labored for. She went on to explain that many missionaries she knew were discouraged because they had seen little fruit despite many years of hard work. I felt so deeply humbled that she would encourage me in such a passionate way, considering she was a veteran missionary.

My kids got the stomach bug the week that Deborah and Steve were guests at the house. In hindsight, this was actually a divine coincidence because I was housebound with the kids that whole week. As a result, I was able to glean from this amazing couple and learn more about the 26 years that they had labored in the country before being kicked out. They were allowed to still come on short visas, but weren't allowed to reside there any longer.

Deborah was so peaceful, joyful, and sweet-spirited. She shared with me about what life was like raising her three children overseas. They told me about amazing seasons they experienced, as well as incredibly hard ones. Deborah also shared with me how she once had an opportunity to lead a session at a well-known missions conference in Urbana, Illinois.

She surveyed a hundred missionary kids who grew up overseas. She asked the children what their experience was like growing up on the field. Deborah found out that 99 out of 100 were truly happy and thankful that they had been raised overseas. Her mini-survey was a testimony to me of how children could actually flourish and treasure their overseas experience.

One evening our team had dinner with Deborah and Steve. Steve was telling us about how he had observed the political climate of the nation over the past 26 years that they lived there. He randomly made this statement, "I believe that the window for foreigners to be able to live in this nation will close in the next ten years."

For whatever reason, his words pierced both me and my husband. That night when we were going to bed, my husband and I began talking about how we were both so convicted by Steve's statement at dinner. When I had my first dream, Chris attempted to reassure me that we weren't moving soon, if at all, by telling me to "shelve my dream for ten years." And now, Steve was predicting that the window to this nation might close in the next ten years!

The Lord unexpectedly grabbed ahold of our hearts that night. Chris and I both confessed that we thought we could do things according to our own timetable and what we thought was best for us. But for the first time in this process, we were able to see that perhaps God had a different timetable because only He knows the future and how long the doors will stay open to Westerners.

This might not seem like a mind-blowing revelation, but it was actually incredibly convicting, as God was yet again showing us another self-centered layer of our hearts and minds. Chris and I were both struck with the question, “What if we don’t have ten years? What if God is saying the time is now?” It was a deeply sobering thought.

This question was heavy on our hearts. But as the days and weeks of the outreach passed and we saw our family flourishing and enjoying ourselves, we realized that perhaps moving overseas with our large family was an actual possibility. Chris and I would discuss it each night as we were falling asleep and throughout the day, we would ask the kids “casual” questions, like:

“Do you guys like it here?”

“What would you think if we ever lived here?”

“Could you imagine living here?”

The kids had actually been enjoying our trip, so moving was beginning to seem like a real possibility in all of our minds.

One day, we were on a long bus ride touring ancient ruin sites. I was listening to worship music with my headphones on and looked out of the bus window into the countryside. In the distance, I saw two young boys in the field. One boy looked like he was five, and the other maybe six. I saw the older boy had a stick in his hand and was hitting the younger one with it. I was horrified. I hate bullying! I prayed, “Lord! Please do something to stop this!”

I then saw the younger boy grab a huge rock and start to chase the older boy with it, threatening to throw it at him! It looked like they were both going to need some stitches if an adult didn’t intervene immediately. God

suddenly broke my heart for those boys and I started weeping. I felt the Lord saying, “Eunice, look at this injustice. Who is going to show them right from wrong? Will you come and help bring justice to this nation?”

When I used to think of injustice, I used to always think of issues like sex trafficking, racism, sexism, or some other social justice issue. I never thought about how a lack of access to the gospel could also be an injustice. I had heard our friend passionately preach before that he believes one of the greatest injustices on the earth is the lack of access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But that idea never connected in my heart and mind until that moment.

I began thinking about how these people could live their entire lives without meeting a single Christian. If someone wants to hear the gospel in the U.S., all they have to do is knock on the door of one of the many churches in their city and someone would most likely be able to share the gospel with them. Even if it is not the greatest presentation of the gospel, they still have a chance to hear it.

But in some countries, even if people want to hear about Jesus, they could knock on door after door and walk for endless miles, and still maybe never meet even one Christian in their entire lifetime. This nation is less than 0.001% Christian. I could not even wrap my head around this statistic until I moved here and saw the overwhelming abundance of mosques everywhere. There are so few churches in comparison to the mosques. There are even historic churches that were taken over and are now mosques! Hearing the Muslim call to prayer five times a day over loud speakers certainly opens one's eyes to a new reality. The contrast of living in the U.S. and living in a Muslim-majority nation is mind-blowing at times.

This was the moment that I knew the Lord had me right where He wanted. All of my arguments, fears, and hesitations in that moment suddenly paled in comparison to this new revelation of God's heart. God is justice. It's His character. His heart was hurting for His lost people - the ones He longed to bring into His family.

I love how my husband Chris articulates this revelation for both of us. He often says, “This nation was never something on our hearts or our minds. We never dreamed of serving God overseas as some do from a

young age. We never felt called here or cared much about this nation before. But thankfully this story isn't about us; it's about Him. God loves this nation, and that alone is a good enough reason for us to bring our family here."

As we returned to the U.S. from our short-term trip, our hearts were fully committed to returning. We started talking to our kids about this big move and preparing them to move back for at least one more year.

Our Big Move

As soon as we got back to home to the States, we began the process of telling all of our family and friends our new plans to move overseas. We sold what we couldn't take with us, packed or stored what remained, and put our little three-bedroom house in Kansas City up for rent. We sold our minivan and gave away our second car to a friend in need. We tied up any loose ends, all while trying to homeschool the children. It was definitely a whirlwind.

Our family started a fundraising tour to raise the money we needed to move and live overseas, and my husband wrapped up his job in the States. We have amazing family and wonderful friends that we have made throughout the years. As a result, our fundraising tour was fun and relatively easy. Because of family and friends partnering and linking arms with us in our crazy journey, we were able to raise all that we needed in a matter of three months! It was incredible.

We drove around the country, meeting with different friends and churches along the way. About a month into our fundraising, we were heading to meet our old college friends for brunch. Chris mentioned to me how it would be nice if we could buy our plane tickets within the next few weeks. We met up with our friends and in the middle of the meal they casually said, "Oh, we received your newsletter. We wanted you to know that we are going to give you \$13,000 for your move." Chris and I just sat there in momentary shock. We heartily thanked them as we explained the conversation we just had in the car. Now we had not only enough money for the plane tickets, but also enough money for our visas, furniture, appliances, apartment deposit, and more!

We left that meal in complete awe of what God was doing and how He was so clearly making a path for us. Our gratitude grew for the amazing friends and supporters God had provided for us. In college, I barely knew this couple. After graduation, when my husband was their pastor, we got to know each other better. But now, many years later, this couple wanted to sow \$13,000 into our lives and ministry! How incredible is

God? He knit our paths together so many years ago when we had no knowledge of how significantly we would be connected in the future.

Only God can write stories like this!

That week, Chris booked our tickets, and shortly after that our family was packed and ready to move.

In my usual fashion, I cried many tears when I hugged my family goodbye. I have wrestled with mom guilt in moving our kids far away from family that loves them dearly. I have had to surrender this to God over and over again. But we did it. We boarded the plane and took our massive leap of faith.

In all honesty, our first month living overseas was a time of grieving for me. I was homesick and on the verge of tears almost everyday. The reality that my family, friends, and anything familiar were oceans away made me very sad. Thankfully, there were plenty of errands to distract me and keep me moving forward. We were so incredibly grateful that there was already a team living there to greet us and make us feel welcome.

We quickly found an affordable apartment, jumped into language learning, and adjusted to life in a new city with millions of people. Not having a car, we had to learn how to travel, go grocery shopping, and do errands on foot in this new city we called home. Overall though, the adjustment was remarkably smooth.

I've homeschooled my kids their whole lives, so this helped to make the transition more natural. Whether we were in the U.S. or overseas, the kids had the same teacher and classmates. Homeschooling provided flexibility and consistency in the midst of our changing lives. After the first month passed, I started to enjoy life here. Once the weather outside cooled down, it became enjoyable being outdoors and exploring our new city.

The city we lived in is stunning as it sits by the gorgeous, blue water. In my opinion, it is perhaps the most beautiful city in the world. We lived a three-minute walk from the sea, shops were close by, and the rhythms of life quickly became familiar and enjoyable. I also noticed that our

marriage was getting closer. Something about moving overseas together and having the confidence that we were exactly where God wanted us to be drew Chris and I closer in so many ways. We had to pull together as a team and became one solid unit in order for this move to work.

Our family was thriving in our beautiful new city. Chris was enjoying himself in language learning, worship leading, and outreach. Our family was walking in a remarkable grace.

We had to learn how to do many new things. Language learning was a very humbling process for me. Even simple things, like figuring out what the items were at the grocery store every week, was a learning curve. Cooking was also a new, eye-opening experience. I quickly learned that if our family wanted to eat familiar foods, I needed to learn how to cook meals from scratch at home. In the States, I had leaned very heavily on pre-made meals. Our first year overseas, I couldn't even find spaghetti sauce and salad dressing at the stores.

Despite having to learn lots of new things at once, our family flourished in very surprising ways. And even though we were thriving, I firmly held on to my first two dreams, believing we would only be overseas for one year. One day when our first year was almost over, my family was walking along the seaside. I was admiring my husband and the kids walking and enjoying city life. Thankfulness began welling up inside my heart as I saw my beautiful family strolling the streets. Walking at my usual slow pace in the back, I felt the faint whisper of the Father clearly say, "Eunice, could you give this up so easily and move back to the U.S. now?"

When the time came for Chris and I to make the decision to stay longer or return home, I was all ready to pack our bags and fly home. I just assumed that my husband was on the same page. Thinking back on my first two dreams, they both spoke about us being overseas for only one year. But it was at that time that my husband challenged me.

Chris said, "Why are you holding those dreams so literally? Our family has been flourishing here. Don't you think that might be a sign we should stay longer?"

His challenge really did surprise me and make me wonder about what the Lord was doing. It was clear that Chris loved our life in our new city and we were all actually enjoying it too. Our heart for the local people grew tremendously. I was really torn so I fasted for a few days over this decision. But at the end of my fast, I felt such grace from God to continue on.

8

Our Second Year

In the fall of our second year overseas, our team was asked to help a local pastor plant a church. This was a huge privilege for us. Some foreigners have been seen as unreliable in the past, so it was an incredible honor to be invited by our pastor to help him launch his church.

Our visionary pastor had a heart to start a church in one of the most conservative areas in our city. Chris and our team worked very hard to make sure everything was ready for the opening day. I honor my pastor's family, my husband, and our team for all of their labor and sweat. They worked so hard to have the church nicely decorated, assembled endless amounts of furniture, and were the sole cleaning crew for many months. In addition to this, our team was in charge of the worship at the church in the local language. There was intentionally no English spoken at our church. We were there to serve and bless the local people.

I remember one night, our team was mopping the floors after service. A Korean missionary who has lived in the city for over twenty years remarked to me, "Wow, I have never seen American young people work as diligently as your team." I felt so honored and proud of Chris and our team.

I had some amazing moments in that little church, even though I rarely understood what was going on most Sundays. One particular day, Chris was leading worship for the congregation. I love hearing my husband sing and play the piano or guitar. I am his biggest fan.

But on this day, as Chris was leading worship in the local language, I felt the Lord's supernatural love for the nation swell up in my heart and I started crying. I felt such a tremendous gratitude that we could be singing in the native tongue. I thought, "How many people are singing worship to Jesus, in this language, on the earth today?" Sadly, the number is utterly miniscule.

The reality struck my heart about what a privilege it truly is to be worshipping God in the local language, where so few worship Him. Since that revelation, I loved worshipping Him in the language there, even though I rarely knew what I singing about. God loves it. I know He does. He longs for His family in the Middle East to grow in numbers and strength. He loves hearing them praise His name.

At the same time that this tremendous opportunity unfolded for our team to work in a local church, new levels of fear started creeping in. Our church was located down the street from one of the biggest mosques in our city. When you go to this area, many women wear hijabs and if they don't, most at least have their heads covered. The physical contrast between our tiny church and this massive mosque was quite remarkable.

Intimidated could be a very accurate word for how I felt most days.

We lived in a Muslim-majority nation and although it is legal to be a Christian, it is not welcomed by most locals.

There was a large sign in front of our building that heralded the name of our church to the community. It was very obvious that we were there. In fact, the doors were often left open during the day for people to freely come in and ask questions about God. Sometimes people were genuinely interested. Other times, people were openly hostile and ready to argue, suspicious and angry about why we were there.

Meanwhile in the news, a terrorist group was making headlines with dramatic acts of violence. At first the incidents were taking place in neighboring countries, but eventually the group started claiming credit for attacks within our borders as well. Some of them took place in cities several hours away, but then I started reading about events that were happening in our own city!

When Fear Began to Take Hold

It was at this time that I started struggling with anxiety. It was not a paralyzing anxiety, but it just camped out in the pit of my stomach and mind each day. It began each time my husband would leave for various meetings at church.

For the first several months of our church beginning, I would anxiously pray each time when Chris left for work, "Oh Lord, please bring him home safely tonight." I would never mention this to my children or anyone other than Chris. I didn't want people to be worrying about us, but it was a definite heaviness hanging over me daily.

We took a ten-day trip to Thailand for some work meetings and relaxation later that year. The day we left, there was a terrorist attack in a popular, touristy part of our city. This was about 45 minutes away from our apartment. Chris was literally walking those same streets the day before our trip, shopping for souvenirs to bring to our friends in Thailand.

I was immediately alarmed by this attack, since Chris had just been walking along those streets the day before. But since we were in Thailand, having a wonderful trip, I temporarily stuffed down my anxieties. Since this attack was in a famous, historic area of our city, it was all over the news. Worried friends and family in the States were emailing us to make sure that we were safe. We were able to let everyone know that we were indeed safe and in Thailand enjoying ourselves.

But when we returned to our city after that Thailand trip, I opened up our email. It was Easter Sunday, and sitting in my inbox was a news update from the U.S. Consulate. It was alerting U.S. Citizens to stay vigilant because terrorists had been threatening to attack the churches in our nation on Easter Sunday.

As I sat there reading, I was suddenly consumed with fear. My anxiety hit a whole new level. I was inwardly stewing in fear, but tried to appear

normal on the outside for my kids' sake. We didn't actually attend church that day because we were flying back from Thailand, but this email fueled my fears to a whole new level.

Thankfully everyone at church that Easter Sunday was safe and fine. Because of the warnings, our church had asked the police to come to service to watch over the safety of the building and people. Our church already had security cameras in place, but I noticed from that service and the next few months after, our pastor and other congregants were closely watching the video surveillance cameras and they began locking the doors during our church service.

I heard that one international church, two streets from our apartment, installed bulletproof glass in their building's front windows because of the threats terrorists were making towards them. This was the amazing church that kindly hosted my kids' homeschool coop each week. I was alarmed and started worrying about going to our homeschool coop.

This new heaviness came upon me in a way that I couldn't shake off. I was still functioning on the outside, but inside I was full of fear. Worshipping on the piano, praying, and talking to my husband wasn't helping me. I reached out to some close friends in the U.S. for extra prayer, but that didn't seem to help either.

The Monday after Easter, my kids were doing their schoolwork. I was sitting on the couch pretending I was sick, but in reality I was overcome with fear and depression. Chris left for work and the familiar thought passed through my head, "I hope he comes home tonight."

"God please bring him home tonight."

My eldest son, Jonathan, interrupted my depressed thoughts and asked me, "Mom, can you print that song 'No Longer Slaves to Fear' out for me right now? I want to learn how to play it on the piano."

I fought back visible tears as I processed his request. "How in the world does he even know that song? We don't live in the U.S., and we don't sing that song in our local church (they don't sing songs in English). I don't recall the team ever singing it in a prayer meeting."

And I knew in that moment, without a doubt God was speaking to me.

I pulled myself together and printed the song sheet for him so that he wouldn't see me in my rut. That day and every day that week, every chance Jonathan had, he would practice that now-famous Bethel Music song in our apartment.

Over and over Jonathan would play that song, and over and over I would want the words to break through my fear, but instead they felt like they were just bouncing off of me. I could not get free from my anxiety.

Later that same day that Jonathan asked me to print the song, our history-loving son Jeremy, came to me with his history book. He has never done this before and has never done this since. He said, "Mom! You gotta read this amazing story! It's about St. Simon and he actually **MOVED A MOUNTAIN** in faith to show the Muslims that he served the real God! Can you believe it? I want to see something like this happen one day."

I knew God was again trying to speak to me, but I still felt deaf to it.

My son Jeremy is *never* like this. He usually just wants to get through his school work as fast as possible. But something that day compelled him to physically bring his book to me and ask me to read the story that very moment, out loud to him.

St. Simon was a humble Christian in the Egyptian Coptic Church. God used him to move an actual mountain, and as a result the Muslim King declared an end to the persecution of the Christians in his kingdom.

My voice was shaking and I cried reading the story. I knew God was using my boys to speak to me, to call me out of my oppression. But even still, I sat heavy with fear. It felt like fear was trying to consume me. I continued on each day, trying to give this burden to the Lord, but was still daily plagued by anxiety.

Friends and family would email and text asking how I was doing and I would just lie and tell them that all was well. I mainly did this to protect them from worrying. Most of our friends and family were already anxious about our safety because of the almost monthly terrorist attacks

happening in our nation that year. The news reports were daunting about the nation and the direction it was going. It was so depressing.

Still we plowed on.

Thinking about supporting the local believers is what kept us going. The Christians in the nation still went to church when terrorists were threatening, so how could we not? They risk so much in order to walk out their faith in this country. How could we leave them now?

After a few weeks, I reached a more normal balance in my emotions. Over the next few months, my anxiety and fear levels decreased, but didn't fully go away. I was very functional, but still struggling with my inner, hidden fears.

With all these things running through my head, we plowed on until our furlough, when we would return to the States for two and a half months.

When we went back to the States that summer, I was still somewhat confident that we were supposed to return overseas and keep helping out with the local church there. Chris on the other hand was fully confident that this was the Lord's will for us, so we began asking our partners to continue supporting us as we returned overseas.

My entire family loves the U.S., so from day one of our furlough, we were having great time. It was so wonderful being reconnected to friends and family. We were able to share what had been going on in our lives in the previous two years. It was a great time of fellowship and I was not wrestling with fear.

We were having such a fun time, hanging out with loved ones, and stuffing our faces with every familiar food that our hearts desired. I remember about a month into our trip, two of our good friends asked us if they could treat our family to a day at an amusement park. I was so excited that such a generous opportunity was given to us.

Our family had such an awesome time at the amusement park that day. We rode fun rides, ate yummy food, and caught up with our friends. But while we were rounding everyone up to head back to our host home, my

husband got a news alert on his phone. A suicide bomber had hit a major landmark in our city and many lives were lost as a result.

We were in complete shock. This was a place that our family was very familiar with and passed through often. We immediately texted our team to make sure everyone was safe, and thankfully they were all safe and accounted for.

That familiar anxiety crept up, trying to overwhelm me. My husband and I didn't really know how we should tell the kids. We didn't want them to become fearful, but we knew they needed to know what had happened. We were in the process of deciding how we could discuss this with them and what timing would be appropriate.

Unfortunately though, that evening, our well-meaning hosts came home from work and as soon as they walked in the house they said, "Oh my goodness, we heard your city was bombed." Two of my kids were sitting with my husband in the living room and they just sat there staring not quite sure what to make of the host's statement. Our generous hosts of course had no ill intentions, but it did catch Chris and I completely off guard.

We later sat the children down and had to tell them the grim news report. I am so glad we told them that night because the incident was all over the news that week and the kids would have inevitably seen it on a TV somewhere. I was trying to be supportive about us returning, but I was really struggling. I was also intentionally trying to walk my kids through any fear or anxiety they may have been feeling without showing my own. I honestly don't know if I did this well, but I tried my best.

I remember reading my Bible one day and the story of Lot and his wife was highlighted to me. I felt like the Lord was saying, "Eunice, don't look back like Lot's wife." That was a really hard for me to hear from Him. The Lord had given us the grace to say "yes" again, so I knew most likely the Lord was saying it was going to be fine when we returned.

We continued our furlough and had just three short weeks left before we had to return. I was feeling somewhat better about returning but still a little nervous. Our team told us that that the atmosphere seemed relatively normal and little seemed affected by the incident. This helped

reassure me about our return. I also called a few friends to see how things were settling in the city, and they said it was a little weird, but overall normal. This helped assuage my fears and gave me a measure of peace.

Before our furlough, Chris and I had decided that upon returning overseas, we would move our family to a different neighborhood in our city. Our apartment at the time was about 1,200 square feet and infested with black mold. We wanted somewhere a little less busy, less moldy, more family-friendly, and more spacious if possible. One day we researched all of these apartments that we wanted to look at when we returned. I remember Chris emailed the list to our local friend who would help us apartment hunt. Within five minutes of pressing the send button, his phone got a news alert.

Chris looked at his phone and had this strange alarmed look on his face, so I immediately asked him what he was reading. The news alert this time said that there were large, violent clashes breaking out in our city, prompting the involvement of the military. He immediately turned on the news and we watched as familiar areas in our city were occupied with tanks and guns. It was absolutely surreal.

We quickly texted our hosts and asked them to please not mention anything at dinner about the violence to our kids. Chris was immediately on the phone, making sure our team was safe and inside their apartments. Again, thankfully everyone was safe and accounted for.

This news hit me very hard.

The new area that we were planning to move our family to was one of the places that was overrun by soldiers and tanks. Later I found out that this normally quiet area of the city was targeted because of a television station that was located there. Some of the crowds behind the violence were trying to take over key media outlets.

I was scared and fearful when I saw the news footage. I remember the day after the events, I met up with a kind friend and supporter. She said, "Eunice, is what the news showing accurate to what's happening right now in your city?!" I immediately burst into tears telling her that at least the day before, the news was indeed true. I explained how Chris was

talking with one of our team members who was sitting inside his apartment and my husband could actually hear the gun shots that were in the streets through the phone. I was scared and worried.

My friend prayed for me and listened to me so sympathetically that day.

My husband was closely watching the news. The violence was very quickly squelched. A few days later, after lots of discussion, Chris was still adamant that since everything had been relatively resolved, we should still return to our team and church. He wanted to stick with our original departure date that was just three weeks away.

Chris was so convinced that the Lord wanted us to go back. Earlier that year, he promised me that if war ever came to the nation, we would reconsider our plans to stay. I was equally trying to convince Chris that we should not go back. Chris argued that armed clashes were not the same as war. I challenged back that in my opinion, military tanks and guns on the streets, in our city, indeed counted as war, although it was admittedly very short-lived.

We were at a standstill.

I decided that I would begin a liquid fast (only eating and drinking soups, juices, and water) in order to hear from God about our return. To be honest, I didn't feel much like eating anyway. Anyone who knows me, knows that me losing my appetite alone is indicator that I was in the depths of despair. I (and my entire family) normally love to eat.

But I needed to hear a word from God for myself. I wanted the Lord to reassure me that we truly would be in His will if we returned. I was scared! I didn't want to show my kids how scared I was, but I was so depressed and torn. Thankfully my kids were too busy enjoying their last days with their cousins to notice my anxiety.

Who could I turn to except God?

My husband and I were not in agreement about our return date.

Most of our family and friends were already very worried for us and asking us to stay, so I could not share my fear with them.

I was asking God to speak to me. Any sign, word, or dream. Please Jesus!

But nothing came.

After fasting for about a week, the only word I felt God saying was, "Trust your husband Chris. Trust him."

I was like, "Huh?! What Lord? I can't hear you. Could you please say something else? Something more profound? Or at least give me a dream?"

But literally the only clear thing I heard God say in my heart repeatedly on that fast was, "Trust your husband Chris."

Honestly, I was pretty annoyed at Chris and God. I was skeptical about God's words to me. But in my heart, I did have to admit that Chris was a trustworthy leader and he would never intentionally put our family at risk. I also knew myself well enough to know that I am prone to fear and worry.

Two weeks later, with nervousness, fear, and trepidation, our family got on the plane again. We did not push our plane tickets back to "wait it out and see what happens," like I had really wanted to. In faith, I had to muster up all the weak courage I could find, and we returned to the Middle East on our original ticket date.

I wept again saying good-bye to my family, but we did it. We got on the plane and flew back home.

When we arrived back to our city, things thankfully seemed relatively normal. The areas where the violence had broken out were in the process of being cleaned and repaired. The streets were also normal, but seemed quieter than usual. The normal hustle and bustle was more subdued. Everyone appeared to be nervously watching and waiting to see what, if anything, would happen next.

I was heavy and depressed our first week back. I didn't want to leave our apartment. I told everyone that I was jet-lagged and just stayed at home, laying on the couch. I barely left the couch that week, but I did manage

to take care of my family, feed them three meals per day, and unpack our bags.

I knew I needed to encourage myself in the Lord somehow. We had a suitcase full of these homeschool books about Christian missionaries and heroes of the faith sitting in our living room. I began reading them. I started feeding my mind and spirit with stories of missionaries of the past, like Amy Carmichael, Lillian Trasher, Hudson Taylor, C.T. Studd, Jim Elliot, Gladys Aylward, Mary Slessor, Adoniram Judson, and many more. I read through about 25 or more of them in the span of a week. Their stories fascinated me and consumed my heart and mind.

Deliverance from the Stronghold of Fear

Miraculously, after that week, the fear and anxiety that I had been experiencing since the beginning of the church plant completely lifted off of me. One day, I realized the heaviness that I had been struggling with was broken and had stopped. The depression was gone!

Did my husband stop going to work at our local church in that conservative area? No! But I did notice that each time he left for work, I would give him a kiss good-bye and I didn't have those thoughts about him possibly dying anymore. I just kissed him good-bye and waited for him at dinner time, like a normal person. When we were at church, I noticed that I stopped compulsively looking at the surveillance cameras and just relaxed when I was there.

Fasting and praying, obeying God by following the lead of my husband, and reading the testimonies of those who have gone before me actually delivered me from my fears and anxiety! The current events in our nation brought the climax of my fears to the surface, but God used this to force me to lean closer to Him and He faithfully carried me through it. I deeply struggled. I wrestled with the Lord, my emotions, and my darkest fears, but I overcame.

I am amazed by the miraculous breakthrough from fear I have received. 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10 says, "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." I am thankful that God is so faithful and still uses me even in my weakness.

An Open Invitation for the Church in the U.S.

I hope that as you read my story, you can see God's incredible faithfulness woven throughout my life. My testimony is about His great love and deep kindness. We have a faithful Savior named Jesus Christ.

The Father's heart is longing for all of the nations on the earth, even places far away and unnoticed by many of us.

My story is about a God who loves us so much that He gave his perfect son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. If you haven't given your life to Him yet, I urge you, please don't hesitate any longer! He loves you so very dearly!

You can pray right now, "Dear Heavenly Father, I love you. Please forgive me for my sin. I want to give you my life and make you Lord over my life. I give every area of my life to You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

But my guess is that most of my readers already know Jesus and that is why you are reading this book.

If you do know Jesus already, I wonder if God might use my story to highlight any areas in your life that you haven't fully surrendered to Him?

Would you allow God, who gave you everything, to take all of you? Would you allow Him to interrupt the plans you have for your life and allow him to use you in His story, a story that is far greater than you could have ever imagined or dreamed of?

One morning, as I was walking to the grocery store, I felt the Lord put a clear message on my heart specifically for the church in the U.S. that He dearly loves.

Why has God allowed the United States of America to flourish so much financially?

Is it simply to give us more opportunity for ourselves and our own families? Is it just for us to live comfortably? Is it just for us to have a financially secure future, bigger houses, fancier cars, more lavish vacations, the newest electronics, nicer jewelry, perfect décor in our homes, etc.?

I am not saying that any of those things are bad, but I am asking each of us to question: is that God's only desire for us? Is His dream for us to enjoy the luxuries of the U.S. while closing our hearts, eyes, and minds to the pain and injustice in other nations? Or has He given us this gift of affluence to pour out His heart unto all the world, beyond our own borders?

There is a reality and injustice that many people in the 10/40 window face everyday. Many are deprived of the opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Even if they want to hear about Jesus, a person living in some of these unreached nations could literally knock from door to door to door and never once meet a Christian in their entire lifetime. If these lost ones can't even meet a Christian, how can they be saved? How will they hear about God's love for them if no one is there to share it with them or explain it to them?

God in His infinite power can easily send them a dream or vision and show them Jesus in a miraculous way, and I believe this does happen.

But what if He also wants to use real people to partner with Him, to share the gospel with these lost souls, to further explain the dreams people have in the night of Jesus, to invite them personally into His family?

What if He wants to use you to disciple these new believers?

You might be feeling nervous about what this means for your life as you read my words, but please don't be scared.

God has a plan far more beautiful for your life than you or I could ever imagine.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Looking back over my life, I realize that I didn't really believe this verse until I fully obeyed Him. After I fully said "yes" to God, I discovered and am still discovering that He is indeed a kind Father, who actually has good and wonderful gifts for His children...and for me!

First, I had to push through many fears and doubts, and grab onto courage.

And when I did, God met me.

He not only met me, He planted me and my family to live beyond just surviving but actually thriving in a foreign land for three and a half years.

I am just one ordinary woman, but God kindly uses me anyway.

I have been stretched and have grown in undeniable ways. Our marriage has become closer and richer, my kids have physically grown taller, and all of us have grown spiritually as well. Our world views have gloriously expanded, beyond anything I could have imagined.

John 12:1-8 shares an account of Mary of Bethany. "Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." (v. 3)

Afterwards, Judas Iscariot criticized her actions as wasteful saying that the money should have instead been given to the poor, since that perfume was worth a year's wages. But Jesus did not criticize her. He did the opposite. He delighted in her offering. He cherished it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." (v. 7-8)

Have you ever thought about Mary's incredible, extravagant, expensive offering?

When I reflect on my story of how God led us overseas, I am humbled and convicted about my stubborn heart. While Mary seemingly gave her offering so willingly, I very reluctantly obeyed while figuratively kicking and screaming.

Why should God, who has given me everything in this life, have to deal with my selfish, reluctant spirit?

Thankfully God is loving and so patient, and He waited for me to come around.

But what if He had a church full of believers who are willing to be like Mary, who voluntarily give an extravagant offering without hesitation? Just out of their grateful hearts, lovingly pouring out their jar of perfume for Him? Precious, humble believers who care more about showering their love on Jesus than the opinions of men.

Couldn't these ones radically change the world?

I believe that everyone has their own, very personal jar of perfume. Each of our jars may come in a different package than the person next to us, but we each have one that we cherish.

For some of you, maybe your jar looks like singleness. Perhaps you are scared that if you indeed pour that bottle of perfume on Jesus' feet, and you leave for the nations, you may never get married. But what if you stay in the U.S. and still never get married? Will you have any regret? How long will you wait? Or what if you do indeed get married, but your spouse is unwilling to go? Would you then have regret?

For some of you, maybe your jar is a prominent career. "Let me get all of my necessary degrees, establish my career first, gather more qualifications and then I will go." At what point will you have had enough preparation to take the step?

For others, your jar could be your goal of financial security. You may think, "I will go to the mission field as soon as I am financially set for my

kids' college funds, pay off my mortgage, and have abundant retirement savings." But at what point have you saved enough to actually go and take a risk of faith?

For people like me, your jar looks like safety. We want to shelter and protect our families and spouses. This is not a bad desire at first glance, but if it hinders us from taking risks that God might be asking of us, that's fear! At what point are the foreign nations "safe" enough to go to?

I have often thought back to my first dream where I was committing my family to one year in the Middle East. At the time, I thought my extravagant offering of perfume was one year of my life. But I now realize that He was asking for way more than that. He was asking me to give Him everything. Safety. Finances. Security. Family. Friends.

As you read my words, God may be calling or re-calling some of you to serve Him overseas, like He asked of us.

I also believe that many others of you, He may never call overseas. But you are still such an integral part of His story for the nations. He may be calling you to join another person's story by extravagantly sowing your finances into another family, person, or ministry in order to see the gospel go forth in nations unknown and unfamiliar to you, like many of our dear family and friends have done for us.

The ones who are willing to go overseas as ministers of the gospel cannot do it alone. Many of them need your financial help in order to be sent. Would you consider joining their story?

My family has been blessed with incredible financial partners. Our amazing partners chose to sow into a Muslim-majority nation by providing for my family to go. They are the ones who prayed for us and offered their money in faith, believing that God could do something through us. They are indeed as much a part of our story as we are!

These friends have blessed us beyond measure. Through our generous financial partners, God has cleared the path for our family to walk out our calling and destiny.

I believe that God is inviting many of you to financially partner with overseas missionaries and organizations, in an extravagant way.

In faith, will you help build and expand His family in the nations? It may be into a country that your feet may never touch, but God's heart is burning for that people group to join His family. He is longing to bring hope, truth, and justice to people that are completely lost without Him.

What is something that God may be asking you to proactively sow today for His Kingdom? I believe if you start asking Him, He will be faithful to show you somewhere you can sow into.

I want to invite you to do better than I did. I want you to soar higher than I have! I urge you, please do not be like me in my 30's, saying "yes" with such reluctance and dread in your heart. God loves you and He has a good plan for your life. You can trust Him! That is something invaluable that I learned moving abroad.

I wish that instead of grudgingly saying "yes" to Him, I could have been a friend like Mary. I wish that I eagerly poured my offering out onto His feet when He first invited me. I regret that I so tightly held onto my "jar" for so many months. I wish that when I finally said "yes" to Him, I did not just give Him one stingy drop of perfume at a time. I wish instead that I had just wholeheartedly poured out my all.

Please, I want others to learn from my story. Would you pour your jar on His feet without hesitation, letting go of fear, not withholding anything and go forth into His good plan and purpose for your life?

He is a good, good Father!

In some way, in some extravagant measure, won't you eagerly, lavishly, and abundantly partner in His story?

Matthew 28:18-20

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have

commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

My Mid-Life Crisis

I recently was talking to a good friend in her twenties. I told her how I feel like I am in this new season of life where I am just sick and tired of wasting time. I am tired of wasting time stewing in fear, stress, anxiety, and worry.

I just want Jesus to have all of me, including all of my thoughts, fears, time, my husband, and my kids. I have deep regret when I think of all the mental and emotional energy I have wasted in the doubts and fears that plagued too many years of my life.

When I shared all of this with my young friend, she sweetly responded, “Wow, it sounds like you are having a GOOD mid-life crisis.”

I laughed at first, but later as I processed her words, I completely agree with her.

I am almost 42 years old. I do not know how many more years the Heavenly Father will give me, but I do know that I want to walk in the fullness of everything and anything He has for me.

This is my heart’s cry for the entire Body of Christ.

Please, friends, no more wasting time! Let’s all seek and determine to walk in the fullness of all that He has for us, whatever and wherever that means.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I pray that every person reading this book will be touched with a holy dissatisfaction with anything less than Your fullness for their lives. Let them each experience your presence in a new and life-altering way.

***In Jesus' beautiful name,
Amen***

About The Author

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