

The Journey Home
by Mia Horner
10th Grade, Age 15
International Virtual Learning Academy

"Where are you from?"

That's always been a tough question for me. I have many answers, a common one being: "It's complicated."

Usually, people will answer with whatever country they live in. Usually, people don't live in many countries. So, when someone who has lived in more than one country gets asked that question, it becomes hard to answer. One of the easier questions to answer becomes one of the hardest.

Me? I'm one of those people. I am a TCK. A Third Culture Kid. I've lived in four different countries and sometimes that *"Where are you from?"* question pops up and I don't know what to say.

The journey of a TCK isn't always easy; it isn't always fun and exciting. Sometimes, it can be really hard, but sometimes a hard journey has more lessons and memories than an easy one.

Your whole life is a journey, and for so long, mine has always been a journey home. Whether that's to go back home or to find a home. My life is constantly switching between the two.

With living in different countries, I've learned about different cultures and languages. I find that knowing and understanding different cultures gives you a unique perspective of the world around you. I have friends who have lived in one country their whole life who agree with that. The more you understand about the world, the more perspectives you have. The more perspectives you have, the easier it is to understand and get along with other people.

I'm not saying that it's easy. I'm not saying that - BOOM - just like that, you're going to be friends with everyone. I'm saying that when you give people a chance, that when you take a moment to look from their perspective, you might just understand more.

Now, all these perspectives don't fully help you understand everyone and everything. Something I like to keep in mind is that God is the one who grants these opportunities. God is the reason I'm able to look from all these different points of view.

For example, one of my favorite Bible verses is Proverbs 3:5-6:
"Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

I like to keep this verse in mind because I often forget it. I like to lean on my own understanding, but I wouldn't even have that understanding if God didn't give it to me.

The second part there, about acknowledging him, and straight paths? I'm not lying when I say my path has never been clear to me. It is at times like this, when I'm writing and I get to acknowledge that this gift is from God. That's when I get a glimpse of God's path for me. I acknowledge Him in what I do and He makes my path straighter.

I understand this verse because I acknowledged that He gave me the understanding. To be honest, I didn't even understand it until I wrote these last few paragraphs.

That's another thing I've learned on my journey. That being honest and vulnerable is hard, but it can and will benefit others. Being able to be vulnerable with someone shows that it's okay for them to be vulnerable, too.

Not too many people these days are able to be vulnerable and honest with one another. It's sad. I get it. Being vulnerable is something even I struggle with. Everyone struggles with it. Just taking those small steps, little by little. Just show a bit of that vulnerability, just show your honest emotions. Then, it won't be so hard to be vulnerable.

As a third culture kid, I've always had to say goodbye. I've always had to learn about emotions and how I should talk about them and be vulnerable. It took me years before I decided to give it a try. That try helped me grow closer with a friend. That try helped him learn that it's okay to feel things, that it's okay to be vulnerable.

You know, sometimes the journey isn't physical at all. You don't have to go anywhere. A journey can be a personal one. Like a character arc, for example. A character can start out one way and be completely different by the end of the story. A journey takes place in the mind.

A journey isn't about traveling, it's about learning. That's what it's always been to me. I've enjoyed the experience of living all over the place. I love the memories I have from everywhere I've been. And, I love the lessons I've learned along the way.

Your experiences and memories can shape the lessons you learn. You can share the same experiences and memories as someone else, but it doesn't mean you've learned the same lessons.

Life's complicated. That's something that I know for sure. You forget things. You become busy and don't have time to do the things you enjoy anymore. You lose that feeling you had from your journey.

You don't have to, though. Find a way to keep those memories, to remember those experiences.

I write to remember what I've learned and how I learned it. I write to shift my focus to something important, someone important.

I started out saying that my journey home has always been about me going home and finding a home. My journey isn't all just that. God is using my journey as a way to teach me things, to help me grow closer to Him, my true home.

My journey isn't over, and neither is yours.

So next time you're on a journey, ask yourself this: What lesson did I learn from that experience? What memories do I need to keep? And, what is God trying to tell me? Because believe me, he's always trying to tell you something, even if you don't believe in him.