



coming home

Rachel went On Track to Pakistan working for two months as a midwife in a hospital there. The following reflection is taken from a letter she wrote to friends upon her return.

Well, I made it back, a little weaker in body, especially due to the salmonella friends I brought back with me, but stronger in the broken places and stronger in my walk with God.

Things I noticed when I got home

- Everything was so green and all the food tasted so good. I saw the world with new eyes, nothing deterred me, not even hardly sleeping for three days.
- I caught myself still checking the floor when I got out of bed to make sure I didn't step on a scorpion.
- I don't have to cover my head, but I feel half naked without it, and the clothes I wore for two months straight now feel like pajamas.

- I don't shower three times a day and I wear socks and usually a sweatshirt because I'm always cold.
- People aren't always holding my hand anymore, reaching out to stroke my blonde hair, kissing my head, laying hands on me to bless me or asking me to do something I don't know how to do in a language I don't understand. (I think I've lost some popularity and status.)
- I wear a seatbelt and people use breaks – amazing!

And so much more. It's a totally different world.

So what about God?

Never once did I question whether or not God had called me there, but I

did question why he had called *me* and not someone else. Why did he lead me out of my comfort zone, away from the life and people I cared so much about and to a life of pain and starvation and to one that is threatened on a daily basis?

I guess because that was his plan for me. It was his way of refining me. He had prepared a place for me there and I needed to fill it.

I found my heart growing with love for the broken people that I worked with all day, everyday and sometimes through the night, but it was also growing for the people back home in Canada with whom I couldn't even keep in touch.

It takes tremendous courage to love when we are broken, yet I wonder if



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love becomes more authentic when it matures out of brokenness. Brokenness compels us to find a force outside of ourselves and leads us to God, whose essential nature is love.

Through being stretched by grief, suffering and loss, my heart and soul were able to feel more peace, strength and joy. In the valley of suffering, despair and bitterness are

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brewed, but there also character is made. The valley of suffering is the vale of soul-making.

You realise as everything is crumbling around you that you're falling – falling straight into the arms of the one who created you, the one who calls you son or daughter. All you have to do is trust that he'll catch you.

What else did I learn? I learned the truth of the saying, 'Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less'. We're not home yet – this earth is not our home – we're only here for a short while.

So what's really important? When we pass into eternity, into our Father's

presence, what will matter? Not the things of this world. What counts are people, service and relationships.

A story of brokenness

She looks at me, her face contorted in pain as we inspect her contracted belly. Tears fill her eyes as we tell her she really could not have been feeling her baby move; there is no heartbeat.

How she must have worked to get that baby where she did: I can see the head, but there he sits, stuck, with the life squeezed out of him, on

his way into this world but skipping it and passing straight into eternity.

I see his lifeless purple body lying there on the table. Perfect. Every finger and every toe in place, but no breath, no heartbeat. Gingerly I touch him and gently place him in the water, washing away the blood, the dirt. His body is here in my hands, but he is not.

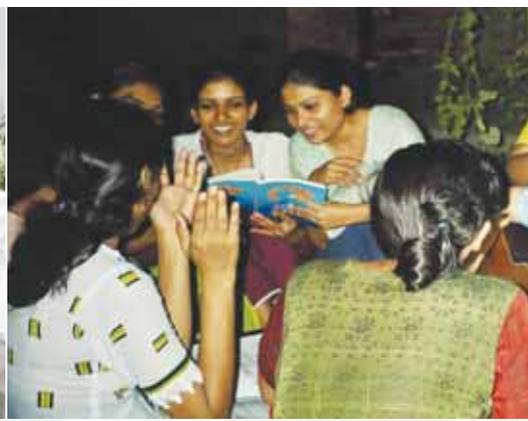
Where is he? Why God? Why must it end like this? How can I stand by and watch? What is happening to my heart?

I have not been called to the wisdom of this world
 But to a God who's calling out to me
 And even though the world may think
 I'm losing touch with reality
 It would be crazy to choose this world over eternity.

Lyrics by Mercy Me

Prayer pointer

- ⇒ *Pray* for Rachel as she continues to integrate her On Track experiences into her Christian journey. May her story inspire others to serve cross-culturally.
- ⇒ *Pray* for all those who are broken – that in their pain they would meet the suffering Christ and know the love of God.



Rachel's journal - an extract

Most of the people who come to the hospital are Pushtu speaking Phutans. They are probably the poorest tribe in Pakistan, but they look regal and elegant as they are often tall (apparently they are descendants of Alexander the Great) and appear to be floating under their large burkas which cover them from head to toe. You never know if the person standing before you is a beautiful 20-year-old carrying her first child or an ancient, wrinkly woman until she leaves the presence of men and lifts up the front of her burka.

The men are often herdsmen or businessmen, and the women have children and run the home. The average woman has 8-12 children. It is more important to have sons, so the boys are often fed first. And if they are ill, their parents are more likely to bring them to hospital instead of just letting them die.

When taking obstetrical histories, one often discovers that it is the females who have died. In one example of 2-month-old twins (non-identical), the boy weighed 10 lbs while the girl only weighed 6 lbs.

We also have some Afghan refugees coming through. The hospital was built on one of the main routes for the purpose of helping refugees.

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