

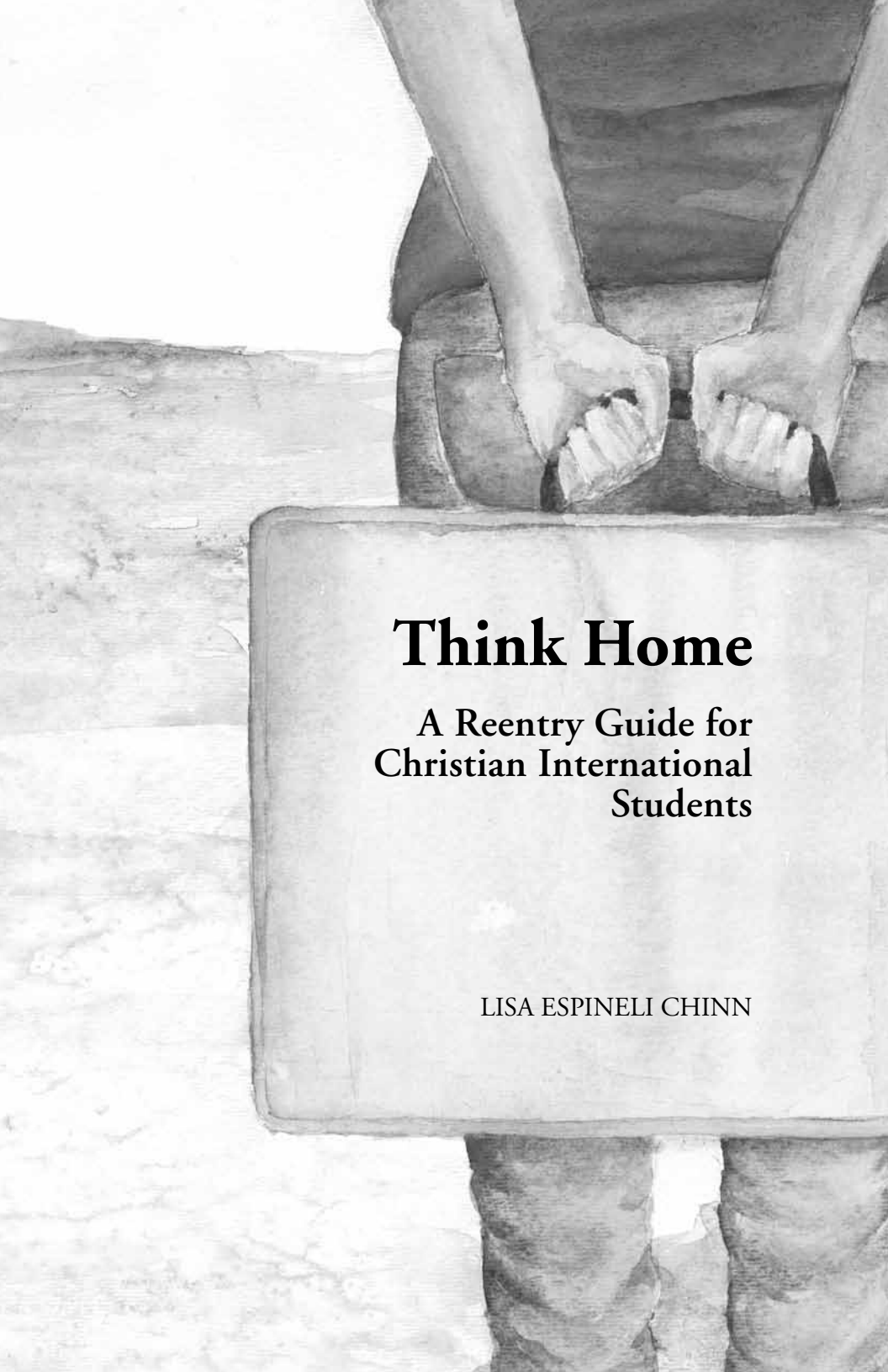


Think Home

A Reentry Guide for
Christian International Students

LISA ESPINELI CHINN

Janet
Atkins

A grayscale illustration of a person from the waist down, holding a large, thick book. The person's hands are visible, gripping the top edge of the book. The book is the central focus, with the title and author's name printed on its cover. The background is a textured, light gray.

Think Home

**A Reentry Guide for
Christian International
Students**

LISA ESPINELI CHINN

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Introduction

I am not very good with driving directions. Without a personal navigator, a detailed map, or my GPS, I will get lost. The same is true of life and its many transitions. We need good directions.

When I returned to the Philippines, the word *reentry* was mostly understood as a space shuttle's return to earth. In fact, there were no seminars or books on the subject of reentry and reverse culture shock. My own preparation was a day retreat to read God's Word, reflect on what God had done in my life while I was away from home, and pray for the appropriate reentry attitude. It was a necessary pre-departure commitment, but it did not address the larger questions and concerns of reentry.

The first *Think Home* edition was my attempt to capture, through over 200 questions, the issues a returning Christian international student may face. Since its first publication 27 years ago, it has been adapted for use in the U.K., New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Japan, and with Chinese students and scholars. This new version, though written for internationals who studied in the U.S., has applications for Canadian students as well.

This revised *Think Home* is your transition guide. It has a new format and includes additional materials. Treat it like a map to help you navigate your way back home. It provides you with the general landscape, but you will have to build your own roads. The questions in the book serve as markers to provoke you to look deeper. They are signs to point you to an unseen path, to alert you to a potential danger, or to invite you to stop, take in the scenery, and dream about your future. You will also read of heroes of the faith who reentered their countries and left you with helpful signposts. Advice from other fellow travelers are added in this edition.

I invite you to linger in this book. Do not rush answering the questions. Pause. Meditate. Invite God's Spirit to speak to you (and to others who may be working on this guide with you). Stop and notice what new paths you have created. Share your insight with others.

In the end, I hope your reentry preparation, through this guide, will encourage and inspire you to re-imagine your future back home and re-align your dreams with God's purpose in your life and in the world.

Lisa Espineli Chinn
Director, International Student Ministry
InterVarsity/USA
April 2011

How to Use *Think Home*

Suggested Approach	If you are...	Advantages	Comments
Personal Study	Self-motivated Able to work on it over a period of time	Privacy protected Freer expression and honest answers may be encouraged	Consider sharing with a friend your discoveries and any new reentry path you are creating
One-on-One (You and another returning Christian international or an American Christian friend)	A new or young believer Not fluent in English Motivated by structured style of learning Willing to meet several times	Built-in accountability Enhances your relationship with another person Areas of need are more easily recognized and considered because of the interaction	For best results, come prepared to share your answers Identify which chapters you want to work on alone or together
Group Study	Motivated to learn in a group Already part of a fellowship Used to group discussion and sharing	May be less intimidating than one-on-one Learn from others Group becomes a support community after your return Provides multi-cultural interaction and insight	Needs a good facilitator Do assigned chapters ahead of time Encourage commitment to complete the book
Think Home Getaway Weekend (Building on the advantages of Group Study)	Eager for a returnee community Willing to invest time Need to get away to focus and reflect	Extended time for guided study, reflection, and prayer Strong community and prayer support Personalized attention and mentoring	Consider a winter break or an early spring date as a possible time Look for a place that allows for undisturbed personal reflection and group discussions



A helpful map tells you where you are in order to find your location and direct you to your desired destination. Naturally, pondering the why question is a good place to start thinking about returning home.

1. Why Are You Returning Home?

Deciding to return home is not an easy task. Consider Grace's example. After finishing her graduate degree, she extended her student visa and interned with a non-profit organization. As the internship was about to finish, she asked her family if she should go home. They said no and told her she would be of better help to the family if she remained in America. However, she was also convinced that she could make a contribution to her country by serving with a Christian ministry. With her student visa about to expire, she had to make a decision.

What about you? What is your situation?

1. Consider the following reasons for returning home. Check the ones which apply to you:
 - ☐ Visa has expired
 - ☐ Finished your studies
 - ☐ Family needs you
 - ☐ Country/church needs you
 - ☐ Job waiting for you
 - ☐ Honor your commitment to company/government/church
 - ☐ Other commitments to honor
 - ☐ Ready to go home
 - ☐ Want to go home
 - ☐ Home is God's place for you
 - ☐ Financial reasons
 - ☐ Goal(s) for coming to the U.S. achieved
 - ☐ Other
2. Have you seriously considered staying in the U.S. long-term or permanently?
 - ☐ Yes ☐ NoWhy?
3. What are your concerns or fears about returning home?
4. Are you confident that returning home is God's plan for you? If yes, how did God show this to you? If not, what do you need from God at this time?
5. How will the confidence or absence of assurance that God is leading you to return home affect your reentry experience?

2. Your Life in the United States

Takuya was extremely sad at the thought of leaving the United States. He called it his "country." He became a Christian in America, made numerous friends, finished his degree, and loved the lifestyle of freedom and creativity. As he packed, he was grieving the loss of his community.

This exercise will help you remember and establish the significance of your overseas experience. You may feel sad along the way, but accepting your sadness is part of the grieving process.

USE A FEW WORDS TO DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE U.S.:

_____	_____
_____	_____

General Experience

1. What factors (people and events) made your stay positive and pleasant?
2. What experiences made your life unpleasant and difficult?
3. What do you like or not like about living in the U.S. (e.g. beliefs, values, attitudes, practices, products)?
4. From the list of things you like, which ones would you want to take home with you? Why?

LIKE

DON'T LIKE

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. What were your goals in coming to the U.S.? Were they accomplished?
6. Who are the significant people in your U.S. experience?
7. What friendship(s) influenced you the most? Why?

Church/Christian Experience

1. What are your observations of Christianity in the U.S.?
How is it different from Christianity back home?
2. How did your relationship with American Christians affect your attitude towards Christianity?
3. What factors helped or hindered your Christian growth while in the U.S.?
4. What did you appreciate about your American church life and experience?
5. What American church practices will not work or fit back home? Why?
6. How do you distinguish between cultural and biblical values?

7. Mark "C" if you think the statement below is a cultural value and "B" if you think it is biblical:

For Example:

C To be on time at every meeting and appointment.

B To be prayerful.

___ To line up when waiting for a bus or paying for something.

___ To make sure you call before visiting a person's home.

___ To send thank you cards.

___ To express your feelings openly and directly ("tell it like it is").

___ To be honest.

___ To have wine, instead of grape juice, at communion.

___ To think of others before yourself.

___ To support your parents materially and in every way you can.

___ Everyone is entitled to freedom and the pursuit of happiness.

___ Save up money for your retirement.

___ Respect the elders among you.

___ God helps those who help themselves.

___ Greet each other with a kiss.

___ Have a church building.

___ Cleanliness is next to godliness.

___ Do things decently and in order.

___ Drums, pianos, guitars—any musical instrument can be used for worship.

___ Little children should have their own church service.

___ The democratic process.

___ Practice hospitality.

___ Give to those who are in need.

___ The capitalistic way of life.

___ Caring for the environment.

___ Tolerance towards a gay/lesbian lifestyle.

___ Pursuit of life, liberty, and justice for all.

___ Right to happiness, wealth, and health.

3. Who is going home?

A returnee to Asia declared, "Coming home is like re-caging a freed bird." International students from other regions of the world may also experience that same feeling. The foreign sojourn invariably expands the "wings" of international students. But imagining "being re-caged" as a returnee helps with determining realistic expectations.

"I had to be well-dressed all the time and meet the expectations of being lady-like." For a returnee who may have enjoyed the casual American ways, the adjustment to socially conform and not offend people could be very challenging.

How Much Have You Changed?

1. PHYSICALLY:

- a. What are noticeable differences about you now?
- b. Are you more or less fashion-conscious? Who or what influences your choices now?
- c. Have you developed a taste for other kinds of food? Give examples.
- d. Other changes:

2. SOCIALLY:

- a. What kinds of friendships have you developed and appreciated?
- b. In what ways have your attitudes towards people of different race or ethnicity changed?
- c. Have you become more or less outgoing?
- d. Have you changed your manners or attitudes towards older people?
- e. Are you more or less class/status-conscious?
- f. Do you now prefer being or living by yourself?
- g. Other changes:

3. ACADEMICALLY:

- a. What new intellectual habits have you developed?
- b. Do you feel more or less academically prepared in your professional field?
- c. What academic pursuits motivate or interest you now?
- d. Other changes:

4. EMOTIONALLY:

- a. Are you more or less comfortable expressing your feelings with others?
- b. How differently are you handling your emotions (happiness, anger, disappointment) now?
- c. What surprised you about your emotional responses to life in the U.S.?
- d. Other changes:

5. **POLITICALLY:**

- a. How much attention have you paid to the political situation at home?
- b. To what degree have your attitudes about politics been affected by the U.S. media, professors, fellow students, or other people?
- c. Have your views concerning the role of government back home or concerning U.S. foreign policies changed?
- d. How has your friendship with students from other parts of the world changed your interest and engagement with global issues?
- e. Other changes:

6. **FINANCIALLY:**

- a. In what ways have you changed your attitude towards material wealth?
- b. How have your buying habits changed?
- c. Are you more or less generous with your money and possessions?
- d. What have you learned about the use of credit cards?
- e. Other changes:

7. **SPIRITUALLY:**

- a. How has your attitude changed regarding the religious beliefs and practices of your family and/or friends back home?
- b. To what degree have your theological or doctrinal views changed?
- c. Is your relationship with God stronger or weaker?
- d. What new spiritual disciplines or habits are you practicing now?
- e. Other changes:

8. **PURPOSE AND AMBITION:**

- a. How have your purpose and goals in life changed?
- b. Would you consider your foreign experience life-changing? Why or why not?
- c. Are you more or less ambitious?
- d. Other changes:

4. Your Experience with Christ

1. Write your story. How did you first know about Jesus? When did you decide to follow him? Who and what did God use to attract you to him?
2. What is Jesus changing in your choices, attitudes, relationships, and decisions?
3. What area of life is hardest for you to surrender to God?
4. What have been some of the greatest needs and concerns in your life?
5. How have you experienced the grace of God in relation to these needs?
6. How are you integrating your faith with your profession and career?
7. What new things is God teaching you about how to love your parents and family?
8. What are your responsibilities towards God's creation?
9. How and where do you see the Kingdom of God expanding in your home country?
10. What have you learned and appreciated about:
 - a. God the Father
 - b. Jesus Christ the Son of God
 - c. The Holy Spirit
 - d. Bible/Word of God
 - e. Prayer
 - f. Fellowship
 - g. Church
 - h. Spiritual Gifts
 - i. Christian Witness/Sharing the Gospel
 - j. Christian Service/Ministry
 - k. World Missions



You just finished looking at your reasons for returning home, your life in the U.S., the changes you have experienced, and your relationships with Jesus and his people. The following chapters will help you to look to God and his provisions for you.

5. Developing a Spiritual Support Group

One returned student advises: "Have a good fellowship in the U.S. They will pray for you and communicate with you." "Have a vision," says another returnee "and share it with an important person (friend or pastor) in North America for prayer and accountability."

God's family is worldwide. When you became God's child, you became a part of his global family. Perhaps your first taste of that family was in the United States, or maybe it was back home. Nonetheless, you have experienced in your host country and in varying degrees the fellowship of God's people and its value in your own growth as a Christian.

As you anticipate returning home, consider the following:

1. Recognize the importance of a community of supportive people and begin to make a list of friends you can invite to be a part of your prayer support group. Have a plan on how to communicate regularly with them.

FRIENDS TO INVITE:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Remember you are returning as Jesus' ambassador back to your home, workplace, and community. Which group(s) could send you off with a commissioning prayer? Your church, Bible study group, or your campus fellowship?

PEOPLE TO CONTACT:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. As you are being sent off, you should also be making important connections back home. Who are your Christian contacts back home? If you do not already have Christian contacts back home, check with your staff member or campus pastor as well as with other Christians from your country who are on your campus or in your community.

In addition, you can check the following:

www.ifesworld.org – IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) is a Christian network and fellowship of high school and college campus groups around the world. InterVarsity/USA is a founding member of this organization.

www.acmi-net.net – ACMI (Association of Christians Ministering Among Internationals) is a North American network of ministries, churches, and individuals working among international students.

www.jcfn.org – JCFN (Japanese Christian Fellowship Network) focuses on helping Japanese Christian students transition back to Japan.

Facebook groups

Other groups

4. How do you maintain a healthy balance between maintaining your American Christian relationships and cultivating your local Christian community after returning home?

6. Reentry Bible Studies

These studies will encourage you to look up to God. Encounter him and see what wonders he can do!

You are not alone in your reentry. Meet Moses and find out how different life was for him after his reentry. Follow the chain of events after his return to Egypt and pick up precious lessons along the way. Or learn about Naomi, the widow, who took the difficult journey back home. Share her delight as she held her grandson, Obed, and imagine what could have happened if she did not decide to return to Judah.

Discover how Jesus expressed his humility and obedience in Philippians 2. Learn from Paul about loving and caring for others who have different views from you.

A. Naomi: A Returnee Surprised by God *Book of Ruth*

CHAPTER 1

1. Why did Elimelech's family leave their home country (v. 1)?
2. Describe their foreign experience (vv. 2-5).
3. What major turn of events caused Naomi to return home (v. 6)?
4. What realistic options concerning moving to Bethlehem did Naomi present to her daughters-in-law (vv. 7-14)?
5. How do you think Naomi felt as she and Ruth made the trip back to Bethlehem?
6. What kind of reception did Naomi receive? In what ways had she changed (vv. 19-21)?

CHAPTER 2

1. Describe Ruth's first job in a foreign country. What made her experience a pleasant one?
2. In what ways was God watching over Naomi and Ruth's welfare (vv. 3, 10-12, 19-21)?

CHAPTER 3

1. What did Naomi ask Ruth to do? What does that tell you about Naomi? After 10 years of being away from home, what did Naomi remember?
2. What stands out about Ruth (vv. 5, 13-14)?
3. How did Boaz respond to Ruth (vv. 9-15)?

CHAPTER 4

1. What is the happy ending (vv. 9-13)? What factors brought about this good finale?
2. In what ways was Naomi an effective returnee?
3. What rewards did she enjoy (vv. 14-16; see also Matthew 1:1, 5, 16)?

Application

1. What bitter experiences did you have, if any, while away from home? How did you respond to them? How are you dealing with them now?
2. How do you see God's hand in your life in the U.S.?
3. As you imagine yourself returning home, what role do you see yourself in? How is Naomi's life and example an encouragement to you?
4. Who are the foreigners in your country? How are they treated?
5. What groups are reaching the foreigners in your country (v. 2:10)? What are some ways you can help and partner with these groups? What individual steps can you take to welcome the strangers?

2. Paul: Love Supersedes Knowledge

1 Corinthians 8

1. What issue or problem does Paul address in this chapter (vv. 1, 4)?
2. What knowledge does Paul say is not possessed by every Corinthian believer (vv. 4-7)?
3. How does this knowledge or lack of it affect a person's behavior (vv. 7, 10)?
4. How does Paul resolve the issue of differing views on what is sinful and what is not (v. 13)? Who is more responsible? Why?
5. Why is wounding the conscience of a weak brother a serious offense?
6. What is more important, your freedom or your brother or sister's spiritual welfare? Why?
7. In the end, what truly matters before God?

Application

1. What practice(s) or behavior could potentially become a source of conflict between you and other Christians when you return home?
2. What principle should guide your response and behavior?
3. You have enjoyed much freedom while in the United States. Now surrender it to God and ask him to help you put people and their spiritual welfare first in your life. Personalize this by writing your own prayer of surrender.

3. Moses: The Reluctant Returnee

Exodus 3:1-4:17

1. In what setting did God choose to reveal himself to Moses? What does this show about God?
2. What did God want to impress upon Moses in verse 5? Why?
3. Why did God introduce himself in the way he did (v. 6)?
4. Look closely at verses 8 and 10. Are they contrary to each other? Why or why not? What do they reveal of God's way of achieving his purpose?
5. What are Moses' objections and excuses (vv. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13)? What was his basic problem? How did God answer each objection?

Application

1. Where and when has God appeared or spoken to you? How did you respond?
2. Who might be the "Pharaoh" that God wants to send you to confront?
3. What other tasks is God asking you to do back home? How do you feel about them? How will God's answers to Moses comfort and give you courage?
4. When and why do you find it difficult to trust God? What things about God should you remember when faced with the temptation of unbelief?
5. How may you be a part of God's plan to liberate your people?

4. Jesus Christ: The Returnee's Model

Philippians 2:I-II

1. What would make Paul's joy complete (v. 2)?
2. What is unity's enemy (vv. 3-4)? How can unity in the Body of Christ be maintained?
3. Who is Jesus Christ (v. 6)?
4. What was Jesus willing to give up? What was he willing to learn and become (vv. 7-8)?
5. What does it mean to have the "mind of Christ?"
6. After humiliation came exaltation. What honor and authority came with Christ's exaltation (vv. 9-11)?

Application

1. In what areas may you be tempted to be proud as a returnee?
2. How may you learn from your people back home? What do they offer you? What can they teach you?
3. Jesus Christ, who is God himself, was willing to be a servant. What do you need to give up in order to serve others?
4. Identify a few people who you can serve now. List ways you can put their interests first.



In this reentry journey, you need warning signs.

They point to difficult and dangerous places ahead. A wise person who sees danger will be careful, but the foolish keeps going and suffers (Proverbs 22:3). Remember you are not facing these challenges yet, but by knowing them ahead of time, you will know how to prepare and respond.

7. Potential Reentry Challenges

Returnees advise:

Expect difficulties. Deal with them with God's power.

Go slow, stay low. Don't blow it. Change does not come overnight.

Be prepared to make adjustments in all aspects.

Try to be a good observer and gradually readjust to the situation.

Every returnee will have his or her own set of reentry adjustments. Your success, however, will depend on how well you adjusted to your host culture, your emotional resilience, your unique situation, and your reentry preparation.

The following list is a compilation of challenges other returnees have faced. Identify which ones you think you may face.

Cultural Adjustment

- ☐ Identity confusion—who are you now?
- ☐ Unrealistic expectations
- ☐ Changes in lifestyle
- ☐ Changes in fashion
- ☐ Localized or “provincial” mentality of relatives and friends
- ☐ Different concept of time
- ☐ Different pace of life (faster or slower)
- ☐ Family or community pressure to conform
- ☐ Other

How are you going to handle the challenges you identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

Social Adjustment

- ☐ Loneliness and alienation
- ☐ Envy and distrust in interpersonal relations
- ☐ Tension between individual and family focus
- ☐ Feelings of superiority due to international experience and travel
- ☐ New and different interests from local peers
- ☐ Lack of modern conveniences
- ☐ Role or status changes
- ☐ Dissatisfaction with some patterns of social interaction like...
- ☐ Indifference of friends and relatives to your foreign experience
- ☐ Lack of serious, interested, and willing listeners to your stories
- ☐ Adjustment to noise, pollution, crowds, city congestion, unsanitary conditions, etc.
- ☐ Other

How are you going to handle the challenges you identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

Communication Barriers

- ☐ Adoption of verbal and non-verbal codes which are not familiar to your own people like...
- ☐ Speech mannerisms which may be misinterpreted
- ☐ Impatience with roundabout, indirect communication style
- ☐ Absence of colleagues who speak the same "language"
- ☐ Unfamiliarity with new forms of communication and modes of expression; current jargon and slang
- ☐ Difficulty in speaking your own language
- ☐ Other

How are you going to handle the challenges you identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

National and Political Problems

- ☐ Changes in country's conditions, national priorities, policies, or views
- ☐ Political climate not helpful for your professional activity and/or advancement
- ☐ Economic uncertainties and conditions
- ☐ Changes in leadership or ruling parties
- ☐ Bureaucracy
- ☐ Reluctance to live in a setting of political uncertainty
- ☐ Dissatisfaction with political situation
- ☐ Observed lack of national goals
- ☐ Other

How are you going to handle the challenges you identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

Educational Problems

- ☐ Relevance of U.S. education to home situation
- ☐ Lack of facilities and resources for research or application of skills
- ☐ Absence of professional education programs to keep up with new developments and knowledge in the field
- ☐ Little opportunity to improve skills
- ☐ Incomplete fulfillment of educational goals in the U.S. and its implications back home
- ☐ Lack of opportunities to apply U.S. education and expertise
- ☐ Other

How are you going to handle the challenges you identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

Professional/Work Problems

- ☐ Long work hours
- ☐ Gender bias
- ☐ Relationship with supervisor
- ☐ Expectation to participate in questionable or unethical behavior
- ☐ Inability to work in chosen specialty
- ☐ No job openings
- ☐ Feeling of superiority due to U.S. training
- ☐ Isolation from academic or scientific developments in the U.S. and in own field
- ☐ Non-recognition or appreciation of foreign degree
- ☐ Jealousy of colleagues
- ☐ Unrealistic expectations (job position, salary, what a U.S. degree "should" bring, etc...)
- ☐ Low compensation; few benefits
- ☐ Concern with quick material success
- ☐ Corruption issues
- ☐ Impatience with rate of promotion
- ☐ Perceived lack of enthusiasm and/or commitment among co-workers
- ☐ Other

How are you going to handle the challenges you identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

(The above list is a modified version of an inventory by participants in the University of Texas' Janus Program.)

Spiritual Problems

- ☐ Absence of fellowship, support, and security of Christians who love and care (especially for those who became Christians while in the U.S.)
- ☐ Difficulty in finding a good church, which leads to “church hopping”
- ☐ Not being welcomed in some churches
- ☐ Young people are expected to listen and accept what older people say
- ☐ Some churches want to check the returnees’ commitment to Christ and to the church before accepting them
- ☐ Returnees may be viewed as threats to the pastor or church leadership
- ☐ Over eagerness to be a part of the church either the person ends up ignored or overloaded with work
- ☐ Judgmental attitude toward the church at home in comparison to the U.S. church
- ☐ Sharp contrast between the clergy and laity
- ☐ Returnee is often perceived as aggressive, pushy, arrogant, critical, and know-it-all
- ☐ Difficulty in distinguishing between what is Christian and what is “American”
- ☐ Some U.S. methods or models of promoting Christianity using mass media or one-on-one; forgetting the family approach
- ☐ Lack of appropriate small group fellowship or Bible study
- ☐ Difficulty in using or applying some ministry skills learned in the U.S.
- ☐ Impatience by the returnee: program, process, or “production” may be slower compared to the U.S. church experience
- ☐ Temptation to feel superior towards church leaders who did not have an experience abroad
- ☐ Other

How are you going to handle the challenges you identified?

Who can help you face these issues because they have walked that road before?

8. Tough Questions

This part of the reentry map is where you find yourself before a “fork in the road.” It means you are faced with a situation where you do not know what to do or which direction to go.

The following questions relate to the various ethical, moral, social, and religious dilemmas which you may face back home. This section **raises the questions but does not give you the answers, intentionally**. As you work through the questions that apply to you, ask more questions, like:

What does the Bible say about the subject?

Who do I know faced this problem before? How did they handle it?

Who should I ask to help me with this question?

What is written about this subject?

Does “Google” know?

1. Is **idol worship** part of your former religious life or culture? How should you behave when put in a situation where you are asked or expected to participate in idol worship?
2. Is **ancestor worship** part of the religious setting to which you are returning? How should you relate to it as a Christian?
3. Will you be the **only Christian** in your immediate family? When and how might you start sharing your testimony and/or the gospel with them?
4. Will your **life be in danger** because of your commitment to Christ? How are you preparing for it? What do you think of “secret Christians?”
5. Will you go home to **pre-arranged marriage** practices? How would you respond to a pre-arranged marriage to a non-Christian? What are your standards for a life partner? What does the Bible say about marriage and whom to marry?
5. Are you seriously **dating someone in the U.S.**? How is that relationship going to affect your decision to return home? If the person is of another race, culture, or religion, how will your family respond?
6. What attractive **job offers** or options do you have **in the U.S.**? What factors should affect your decision to accept or decline these offers? How will accepting the job affect your Christian walk, influence, and impact in the U.S. or at home?

7. Is **bribery** a widespread and accepted practice back home? How are you going to respond when you see it happen in your presence or you are directly confronted to participate in it? How will you answer if your boss asks you to tell a lie on his/her or the company's behalf?
8. What do you consider an **"honest day's work?"** Will you face pressure from society to put in less or more time for a day's work? How will you respond?
9. How will you respond to **crowded housing conditions** or relatives visiting and staying indefinitely?
10. What do you say to relatives or others who perceive you as rich and want to **borrow money from you?**
11. Are you part of a **minority group** in your country? How do you view the dominant group(s)? How will you respond when you are discriminated against (professionally, racially, etc...)?
12. If you are a **woman**, will your foreign education be recognized and accepted back home? Will you experience gender discrimination? How will you respond if you sense that you are unjustly treated in your profession or society? How might other women, who did not have your foreign experience, relate to you?
13. How involved will you be **politically** when you return home? How will your political involvement affect your Christian witness?
14. What involvement will you have in your country's **social issues?** How will you relate the gospel with issues like poverty, malnutrition, HIV-AIDS, human trafficking, and other forms of injustice and oppression?
15. If you wanted to **introduce change in your church** back home, what, how, and when would you do it?
16. **What additional tough situations might you face?**



On any journey, it is important to pace yourself and take appropriate breaks. You recall the stress of learning a new language and a new culture. When you return home, you will feel like the new outsider again. Someone described himself upon returning home as "a stranger in my own hometown. Out of touch in many conversations. I remind myself continually to keep my eyes open and my mouth shut. Not an easy task."

Consider a break while still in the United States

Dr. Richard Swenson, in his book, *A Minute of Margin*, describes our lives in the United States as non-stop. He writes, "We walk fast, talk fast, eat fast, and then excuse ourselves by saying, I must run." He also reminds us that overload and hurry are really enemies of faith.

You may have picked up that fast pace of life or feel it more as your time of departure nears. You may feel like going 100 miles an hour. Instead of stepping on the gas even more, take your foot off the accelerator. Schedule a time to slow down. Ask someone to help you find a place where you can catch your breath. Or find someone to go with you to a quiet place. Find out what feeds your soul and discover God's invitation to wait, be still, and rest.

Consider a break when you are back home

This may sound like an impossible idea, but it is necessary. God designed our bodies to take regular rests. That is why he commanded us to take the Sabbath—a day to rest from work. Taking your breaks back home may call for both determination and creativity. Here are some ideas: unplug yourself from all electronic connection and stimulation for a few hours or a whole day; sit still for 5 minutes; mark a place in your home where you meet God; sit in a church or sit in your car and breathe slowly. Whatever it is you do, make sure that they reconnect you to God and recharge your spiritual, physical, social, and emotional batteries.

Consider what other returnees have said:

- *"Do not overrate yourself. Be more humble."*
- *"Set your focus on Jesus."*
- *"Be patient and humble and rely on God."*
- *"Trust in the Lord that he will do his best for you."*
- *"Be in fellowship with the Lord always."*
- *"Work slowly and prayerfully."*
- *"Keep in mind that God is always with you regardless of where you are."*

When you take time to slow down, their advice will be easier to follow.

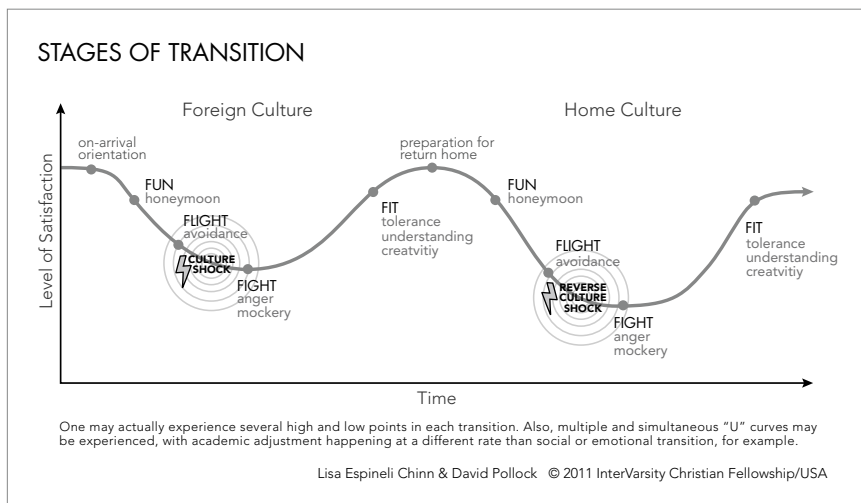


This is the part of the reentry map
where you stop to look and listen closely.

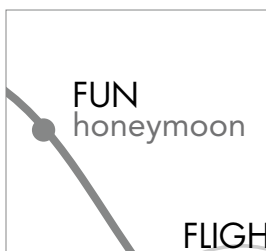
Imagine a tour guide giving you a little
historical background and additional
information in this section of the reentry
landscape. The information may sound
theoretical and distant from your home
situation, but trust me, you will be grateful
you know about the reentry phenomenon
before you return home!

9. Resettling In

The reentry transition has similar components as the entry transition into a new culture. In 1955, Lysgaard (sociology professor from the University of Oslo, Norway) developed a tool to help describe the transition phenomenon. He called it the U-curve. It describes the different feelings that one experiences when entering a new environment from a definite high point, a clear low point, and another high point, signifying recovery and adjustment. Although life in another culture is not a clean series of ups and downs, the model nonetheless helps identify the feelings and when they occur. There are various names given to the phases in the U-curve, but I have named them Fun, Fight, Flight and Fit Stages. (See first half of the diagram.)



In the early 1960s, Gullahorn and Gullahorn studied a similar pattern of feelings when returning home and they called that pattern the W-curve. The same up and down feelings in the U-curve are experienced in the W-curve.



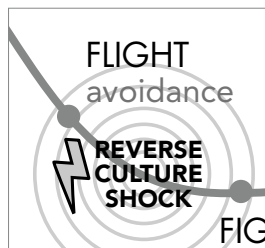
The FUN Stage: *When everything is working fine.*

This period is characterized by a brief or extended time of euphoria over being back home. You may be excited about certain features of the home environment. You may cherish the time spent with family and friends. The initial days and weeks may be spent visiting people, enjoying local food and sights, and sharing photos, videos, stories, and souvenirs.

The FLIGHT Stage: *When your “celebrity” status is over and you are faced with the daily demands of work and life back home. You begin wishing for your life back in the U.S.*

The Flight Stage may last for days and weeks, and the feelings of loneliness or “homesickness” for friends and experiences abroad may begin to dominate your world. You may be more aware of how different “home” is from the home you recall. You may feel “out of step” with the rest of your people and culture. You may have the sinking feeling of being the outsider in your own home.

You may begin to withdraw from people and be critical of how things are done. This is when you may begin to experience reverse culture shock – that emotional and social imbalance that results from a variety of changes in yourself, in others, and in your environment. It is your response to the magnitude of adjustments you have to make. At this stage you may want to “flee” abroad, or wish for your former life in the U.S.



The FIGHT Stage: *When there’s a lot of frustration and anger towards your home situation, and you criticize and distance yourself from others.*

This is the bottom of the W-curve. You slide into this stage as your reverse culture shock intensifies. At this phase you may begin to seriously question why you even returned home. You may hear yourself say, “I hate this place!” Others may experience acute loneliness and depression.



The late David Pollock of Interaction, Inc., in his reentry seminars for missionary kids, diplomats and business people, described anger and mockery towards home as a typical response at this stage of transition. You may be angry towards things which have changed and which now look bad to you and your new standards. Or you may mock or make fun of practices in your culture that now seem to you, “old fashioned,” unnecessary, foolish, and even childish.

When you look at the U and W-curve diagram, you will notice that the bottom of the curve on reentry is lower than on the entry side. You may be surprised at how much harder it is to readjust back home. You expected to make adjustments when you entered another culture, but you did not expect or prepare to make adjustments when you were returning home. You thought you were “just” going home.

“Continuing reentry stress,” says Dr. Clyde Austin, a Christian psychologist and editor of two reentry books, **“is normal for six to twelve months.** A significant minority may experience readjustment stress beyond that point.”



The FIT Stage: *When you are able to resolve your inner conflicts, find your place back home, and feel confident you are making a positive contribution to others.*

Over a period of time, you may discover that the things that used to bother you have diminished. You may find yourself making your peace with what is different and what you cannot change back home. You may find that your internal disharmony and discontent are being replaced by acceptance.

At this stage you may be more open to understanding your culture again. You may be energized to re-engage and participate in life back home. However, your merging with your culture does not mean uncritically embracing everything at home. You may now have a greater confidence in the "new you" and can therefore hold your own views and values and still relate with those who are different from you.

Transitions can be messy. Remember you are readjusting on many levels simultaneously. You may be in the Fit Stage in your job, but you are in the Flight Stage in your home. Relationships may be great, but you are disappointed with the political situation of your country.

Returning home is like being in two worlds.

You may discover that although you may feel comfortable at home and you are more accepting of the ways things are done, you *do not feel fully at home*. This is what Dr. Miriam Adeney, an anthropology professor, says is "the price we pay for the richness of having experienced more than one culture deeply." She further tells her students that they "will never be able to go home again...they will probably always leave part of themselves behind, and thereafter will be split...and home may be in more than one place."

So remember to:

- Be patient with yourself and others. Do not rush your readjustment.
- Let your reentry work for you. Use it to discover what it means to be a global person.
- Not take yourself too seriously. Learn to laugh at yourself.
- Not be surprised if some people, including family and friends, do not listen too long to your stories of being in America. Be sure to ask them about their lives too.

10. Your Coping Responses

Someone, long ago, observed that we are not distressed by things, but by the views which we take of them. Reentry transition can be stressful, but how you view this experience will affect your well-being and full participation back home. Therefore it would be helpful to consider the following responses.

1. **Imitation**—You may find yourself copying what others are doing or reverting to old routines and habits. Or you may quickly plunge into the pace and rhythm of life back home as if you never left. You may have a strong need to meet people's expectations and at the same time discover that the things you used to do are no longer appealing.

Word of Advice: Some imitation is necessary to fit back into your home culture, but it should be done without compromise or loss of your values and integrity.

2. **Isolation**—It may seem strange to discover that you are feeling like a foreigner in your own culture. Your response may be to retreat or be in the company of expatriates or other fellow returnees. This is a normal response. Longing for your former lifestyle and friends in the U.S. may bring pain, intense loneliness, and isolation. Isolation is not all negative; in fact, you may welcome times to be alone as a “breather” from the stress and fatigue of reentry.

Word of Advice: There is a place for appropriate isolation without loss of opportunities to grow, relate, and give to your people.

3. **Integration**—You are beginning to merge with your home culture with ease and you like being back home. Without abandoning your newly acquired values and perspectives from abroad, you feel that you are making significant strides in readjusting. You have a new appreciation for your home culture and an increased ability to relate on different levels. Congratulations!

Word of Advice: Integrate in every way possible and be true to who you are becoming.

Summary

During your life back home you will find yourself moving from one response to another, but remember that:

- To relearn your home culture, a good amount of imitation is a must.
- To maintain some amount of cultural equilibrium and sanity, some isolation is necessary.
- To be effective back home, integration is required.

Like a dance, you will need to learn all three steps. Use them frequently and gracefully.

Imitate, isolate and integrate.



You are not home yet. You are just focusing on home. You are thinking home. As you stop at this part of the reentry map, you will have different feelings. Excited, sad or fearful, perhaps. These are natural emotions. Pay attention to them. You will also notice how much you have changed as you respond to the questions. Accept and recognize those changes.

**If you are doing this study with others, this may be a good time to play Customs and Culture, a reentry role-play, designed to be a fun and interactive learning experience. See Reentry Resources, pg. 51-52.*

11. Evaluating Your Ties Back Home

"While away, keep yourself informed of current events in your home country so that you'll be up-to-date and not be shocked by major changes when you return home."

1. Do you feel informed and close to people back home? Why or why not?
2. What are your sources of news and information about people and events in your own country?
3. Do you have friends in the U.S. from your country? How does your relationship with them affect your ties with your people?
4. Do you enjoy being with your own people while in the U.S.? Why or why not?
5. What major changes have occurred in your country while you were away? How will they affect your return home?
6. How many times have you traveled to your country while studying in the U.S.? How did those visits help you connect with your own people?

If you were a Christian before coming to the U.S.

1. How have you maintained and strengthened your relationship with your church back home and with other believers?
2. What can you do now to renew or strengthen those relationships? If you were not a Christian before coming to the U.S. (Should this be below the bar?)

If you were not a Christian before coming to the U.S.

1. Who, from home, knows that you have become a follower of Jesus?
2. What kind of help do you need as you relate with your family and friends back home?
3. What is your family's attitude towards Christianity or towards Christians? How are you praying for them?

12. Who Is Back home?

"I was changed a lot while I was away from my country. That made me really confused."

"My country is too competitive. I felt like everyone was pressed for time, money and so on. They don't smile a lot and never say "excuse me" when they passed or even touched me."

"Do not expect that you can share all your experiences and memories with your family and friends."

"Because I was away for so long, I had to visualize meeting my family at the airport and what that was like. I imagined what kind of greeting would welcome me."

If you have been in the U.S. for over 2 years and did not have the opportunity to visit your country:

1. Due to advanced technology, communication around the world is now possible at a fast speed. Faces of loved ones and live videos of them instantly appear on the screen of your computer or your smart phones. But do they mean that you understand the magnitude of the changes they have undergone? Do they comprehend the ways you have shifted in your tastes and values?

Recall what you remember about your family. Write a sentence describing each person:

Father:

Mother:

Brother(s):

Sister(s):

Grandfather:

Grandmother:

Aunties/Uncles:

Cousins:

Other:

2. What have been some major changes in your family since you left (marriage, births, deaths, new home or location, etc.)?
3. What aspects of family life do you expect to be the same?
4. What family practices and traditions have you come to appreciate more while in the U.S.? Which ones will it be difficult to re-engage in?
5. Who are your friends back home? What are they doing now?
6. How different do you think your relationship might be when you return?
7. What concerns you about your reunion with your friends?
8. Describe what you remember of the physical, social, economic, and spiritual conditions of your neighborhood and community.
9. What concerns do you have about finding a job or returning to a former job back home?
10. How are you preparing to interview for a job back in your own country? What office behavior do you need to remember and readjust to? Who can inform you about the differences between job interviews in your own country and the U.S.?
11. What major adjustments will you make as you join or re-join your church back home?
12. If you were not part of a church before you came to the U.S., what qualities would you be looking for in a church back home? Why?

13. Welcome Home!

Imagine your plane landing and you are about to meet your family and friends.

By anticipating what kind of reception you will receive, you will be better prepared to respond to people.

1. What do you think will be the kind of reception you might receive from the following:

Who (be specific)	Kind of Reception	Why
Family		
Friends		
Colleagues/Work		
Neighbors		
Church		

2. What will your family and friends first notice about you? What will they say?

14. Growing Spiritually Back Home

Like a plant, you will be transplanted again from foreign soil to home soil. How will you grow in loving God in the midst of change and a different spiritual environment? Here are a few words from those who returned:

- *"Seek Christian fellowship or a join a cell group and be close to God."*
- *"You need to reach out, to get to know, to encourage, to fellowship with other Christians."*
- *"It is hard when there is an absence of Christian fellowship."*
- *"Keep close to God. He is the only one who can help you in every problem you face."*
- *"Guard your personal devotional life."*
- *"Be patient in finding your place of service in the church."*

1. What spiritual habits and disciplines have you developed in the U.S. that will help you flourish back home?
2. What do you think are the basic essentials to your spiritual growth? Where and how will you find them?
3. What is spiritual warfare? What does it mean to be involved in spiritual battle?
4. What do you need to know and do to be victorious in Christ?
5. Can you recall some spiritual victories in the U.S.? Describe them.
6. What spiritual battles might you face back home?
7. Do you feel prepared to face spiritual battles back home? Why or why not? If not, how can you prepare and who can help you?
8. What are some other factors that could affect your spiritual flourishing after returning home?

15. Serving God Back Home

Gifts and Service

1. What gifts has God given to you?

(See Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 4.)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prophecy | <input type="checkbox"/> Healing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serving/Helping | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching/Speaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Preaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging | <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelizing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leading | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mercy | |

To what degree were and are you able to discover and use your gifts while in the U.S.? Are you being encouraged to do so, and in what context?

2. In what area(s) of God's work at home do you see your gifts being used to his glory?
3. Who could be a potential mentor who can help you identify and use your gifts?
4. What does it mean to serve God in your profession? Check all that apply.
- ☐ Having a Bible study in your office
 - ☐ Keeping a good, unblemished performance record
 - ☐ Being an honest worker that will lead to being trusted
 - ☐ Being committed to biblical standards in your values, relationships, and behavior
 - ☐ Seeking to excel in your profession
 - ☐ Sharing the gospel
 - ☐ Other
5. What training do you need while still in the U.S. to serve God more effectively back home? Where is the best place to get that training, and from whom? Why?
6. What do you think may be some possible problems or barriers in your service?
7. What dreams and visions do you have of what God may do in and through you back home?

Sharing the Gospel

1. Do you know the basic contents of the gospel, and do you feel confident sharing it with another person? Have you shared the Good News with people in the U.S. with those from your own country and/or others?
2. Who do you think is most spiritually prepared and hungry among your relatives and friends?
3. Which do you think is an appropriate approach in sharing the gospel back home? Why?
 - ☐ Have a party and share
 - ☐ Share one-on-one
 - ☐ Allow your relatives and friends to observe the change in you first, and then share later
 - ☐ Loan evangelistic books, CDs, videos
 - ☐ Invite people to a Bible study
 - ☐ Use every natural opportunity
 - ☐ Share your testimony in public
 - ☐ Use the *Jesus* video in different ways (host a showing, loan it, give it as a gift, etc.)
 - ☐ Other
4. What are some barriers for you in sharing the gospel?
5. What are some bridges for the gospel you can use?
6. What evangelistic resources should you take home with you?
7. In what other places can you serve God?

16. Closure and Packing

You are about to close the U.S. chapter of your life. How do you do it?

1. **By saying “thank you” and “goodbye.”**

List those to whom you should say thank you and goodbye (e.g. professors, roommates, host family, church and fellowship group, etc.):

2. **By leaving behind good relationships.**

Is there anyone whom you should forgive or from whom you should seek forgiveness?
When will you seek reconciliation?

Are there bills to pay? Books or other borrowed items you need to return?

3. **By keeping tangible reminders of your foreign sojourn** (photos, souvenirs, music, etc.).

Checklist for Packing

ACADEMIC LUGGAGE

- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Hard copy of thesis/dissertation
- ☐ Books
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Class notes
- ☐ Other

PHYSICAL LUGGAGE

- ☐ Identification tags; locks
- ☐ Clothes
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Passport (current?)
- ☐ Gifts for family and friends
- ☐ Souvenirs
- ☐ Other

SPIRITUAL GROWTH LUGGAGE

- ☐ Bible in your own language
- ☐ Bible in English
- ☐ Christian books (relevant to personal growth, ministry, missions, your country, etc.)
- ☐ Reference books: concordance, Bible dictionary, one-volume commentary, Bible handbook
- ☐ Journals
- ☐ Bible software, e.g. e-Sword
- ☐ Other

OTHER

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



When Joshua was very old, he assembled the tribes of Israel and gave them God's instructions. Find out two important transition guidelines as Israel faced changes ahead.

17. God's Instructions through Joshua

Read Joshua 24 slowly. Read it a second time. Imagine what Joshua was feeling. Observe the action words used. Stop to meditate on a statement or a word.

This chapter can be divided into two main instructions. As Israel was about to transition to losing Joshua as their leader, God reminded them of their history and gave them a challenge.

1. **Remember** (vv. 2-13):
 - a. What did God want Israel to remember? Why?
 - b. List the different things God did for Israel.
 - c. What does memory of God's work do to a nation? To you?
 - d. List God's acts and interventions in your life while you were away from home.
2. **Recommit** (vv. 14-28):
 - a. What did God, through Joshua, command Israel to do (v.14a)?
 - b. What specific action did God want Israel to do to show their faithfulness to God (v.14b)?
 - c. Joshua was clear about where he stood in relation to God. What choices did he give the Israelites?
 - d. The Israelites were quick to recommit. Why did Joshua not believe their immediate response?
 - e. What idols did your ancestors worship? What idols are you tempted to worship in the United States?
 - f. If jealousy is the intolerance of any rival, what reasons may God have to be a jealous God with you?
 - g. Why is it important to have a visible reminder of your commitment to God? What reminders do you have to help you in your walk with God?

Joshua used several words to indicate commitment to God: *fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness* (v. 14), *serve the Lord* (v. 15), and *yield your hearts to the Lord* (v. 23).

Write a prayer of recommitment.

Remember and recommit: Take these words with you as your transition back home.

18. On the Plane Home

This page may be completed while you're flying home.

LEAVE WITH A GRATEFUL HEART.

As you reflect on your time in the U.S., what are you thankful for (Psalm 57:9-10)?

LEAVE WITH AN EXPECTANT HEART.

What are you trusting God to do in, for, and through you back home (Psalm 37:3-5)?

LEAVE WITH A CONFIDENT HEART.

What promises can you claim from God (Psalm 11)?

ARRIVE WITH A SURRENDERED HEART.

Write out Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 1:20-21; Luke 9:23. Meditate on and apply these verses.

You are grateful because God has done great things for you; expectant because God promises to do great things through you; confident because he goes before you; surrendered because he is worthy of your complete devotion and undivided worship.

Reentry Resources

Books:

Austin, Clyde. ***Cross-Cultural Reentry: An Annotated Bibliography***. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 1983.

Austin, Clyde, ed. ***Cross-Cultural Reentry: A Book of Readings***. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 1986.

Chinn, Leiton. ***International Student Reentry: A Select, Annotated Bibliography***. NAFSA: Association of International Educators Publications, 1992.

Chinn, Leiton. ***NAFSA Working Paper #24; Reentry/Professional Integration: NAFSA A.I.D. Project Grants Summary Report 1974-1991***. NAFSA: Association of International Educators Publications, 1991.

Chinn, Lisa Espineli. ***Back Home: Daily Reflections on Reentry. Madison, WI: InterVarsity/USA***.
store.intervarsity.org

Eaves, John. ***Preparing Your International Friend for Life Back Home***. Colorado Springs, CO: International Students, Inc.
www.isionline.org

Hamrin, Carol Lee and Stacey Bieler, (eds). ***Salt and Light: Lives of Faith that Shaped Modern China***. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009.
www.wipfandstock.com

ISI. ***New Horizons***. Colorado Springs, CO: International Students, Inc., 2008.
www.isionline.org

Mirza, Nate. ***Home Again: Preparing International Students to Serve Christ in Their Home Country***. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2005.
www.navpress.com/store

Returnee Handbook: On the Road of Homebound Journey. Torrance, California: Overseas Campus Ministries, 2008.
Email: info@cefocm.org; oc.org

Returning Home to China: An Equipping Guide for Chinese Christians Returning Home. Mechanicsburg, Pa: China Outreach Ministries
Email: ChinaOut@aol.com; www.chinaoutreach.org

Storti, Craig. ***The Art of Coming Home***. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997.
www.nicholasbreaaley.com

Role-Play/Reentry Simulation Game:

Chinn, Lisa Espineli. **Customs & Culture**. Madison, WI: ISM Department, Intersivity/USA, 2005.
store.intersivity.org



A reentry role-play designed to be a fun and interactive learning experience. Participants “pack” their luggage with the host culture’s values, which they have ranked and chosen according to their perceived importance. Upon their arrival back home, they encounter a very strict customs officer who decides if they should be allowed to reenter their home country with this new baggage. The game centers on the lively and often revealing exchange between the returnee and the customs officer.



About the Author

Lisa Espineli Chinn is the national director of International Student Ministry for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA. She is the author of *Customs and Culture: A Reentry Simulation Game*, *Back Home: Daily Reflections on Reentry*, and the *Reentry Guide for Short-Term Mission Leaders*. Lisa has her MA in Communications from Wheaton Graduate School and is originally from the Philippines.

Endorsements for *Think Home*

"Thank you for writing Think Home. It has helped me a lot in my reentry."

A returned international student

Lisa Espineli Chinn is highly regarded within international student ministry and university international support circles within New Zealand. It is because her work has greatly influenced us to think carefully around preparing international graduates for reentry transitions. I wholeheartedly recommend this new edition of Think Home to international student ministry workers, ISM organisations and international students.

Terry McGrath

National Director, International Student Ministry, New Zealand

My friend and inter-organizational colleague of thirty years, Lisa Espineli Chinn, is the quintessential example, teacher and coach in preparing global students for returning to their home culture as disciples of Jesus Christ. This latest edition of the Think Home workbook is the best resource of its kind. All international students workers should use this.

Nate Mirza

Senior Staff, International Student Ministry, The Navigators

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