

THE NEXT CHAPTER

As I laid my son down to bed tonight and he slowly drifted off to sleep, I hummed to him, taking deep breaths, and tried to emanate a sense of stability in the midst of so much change. He was restless and I was too. At the end of the month, we are leaving. We made this decision as a family for so many reasons, but suffice it to say that it is simply the right time. God brought us this far by faith and it is with a strengthened sense of that very same faith that we will close the seven year chapter of our lives as missionaries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

To be a missionary is complicated to say the least, but it is also as simple as being a part of God's mission, of what God is up to in the world. Some do this locally, others in another city, state, or country. We have been blessed these past seven years, to not only be missionaries, but to be missionized, transformed by those who have loved us and become our "chosen" family. We leave with hearts bursting with stories and memories of time spent with our companion church brothers and sisters, their joys and struggles, and above all, we leave enriched and fed with their love and care.

Everette finally fell asleep and as I plotted my escape plan (so he wouldn't wake up- ha!) the Christmas lights in his room that stay up year round because he just simply likes them, shed light on the world map on his wall, appropriately titled, *Our World*, and I was inspired to write this to you. Our world is about to change. Everette is excited and eager to see his grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and his dog again, find a new house, make new friends, learn new things, and yet as a five year old he does not quite understand how his best friend won't be able to come over and play every week or how at his new school, they



Oh Lord, in the turbulence and the loneliness of my living from day to day and night to night, keep me in touch with my roots, so I will remember where I come from and with whom; keep me in touch with my feelings, so I will be more aware of who I really am and what it costs; keep me in touch with my mind so I will know who I am not and what that means; and keep me in touch with my dreams, so I will grow toward where I want to go and for whom.

O Lord, deliver me from the arrogance of assuming I know enough to judge others; deliver me from the timidity of presuming I don't know enough to help others; deliver me from the illusions of claiming I have changed enough when I have only risked little, that so liberated, I will make some of the days to come different.

O Lord, I ask not to be delivered from the tensions that wind me tight, but I do ask for a sense of direction in which to move once wound, a sense of humor about my disappointments, a sense of respect for the elegant puzzlement of being human, and a sense of gladness for your kingdom which comes in spite of my fretful pulling and tugging.

O Lord, nurture in me the song of a lover, the vision of a poet, the questions of a child, the boldness of a prophet, the courage of a disciple. O Lord, it is said you created people because you love stories. Be with me as I live out my story.

Ted Loder, "Keep me in touch with my dreams"

will sing different songs in another language, or how he won't be able to buy a Kinderegg on Fridays. In different ways, Justin and I will do the same. Like Everette, we are excited for what's in store, but know that it will take us probably a year or two to adjust, to begin feeling our roots grow deeper in new soil, and truly at "home" again. While we are still and always will be just Kari and Justin despite our physical location, things about us have changed and when we open up our storage unit of stuff in the US, we're bound to notice. Our next year will be about letting the first part of our lives meet the last seven years of our lives and seeing how that beautiful combination fits perfectly into our new calls.

On the other hand, our next few weeks are sure to be packed with emotional highs and lows as we sell our things, spend time with friends here, and prepare for the journey ahead. These past seven years for us have been a chapter well worth writing and I hope on your side, worth reading. I want to thank you for all your years of accompaniment, kind words, and support. Sharing our journey with you has been an important and fun part of it all.

Our world is your world too. We are all in it together and as our world

constantly changes, it is made better when remember that we are not alone, nor are we forgotten. God's mission is about being a good neighbor to whomever is in need and our neighbors are both close and far away. This will be my last newsletter and although they will stop coming, I humbly ask that you continue to keep those far-away neighbors in your prayers and with your actions, and in your words locally, remember them globally. We will begin our reintegration process spending time with our families in NC during the first few months, attending Summer Missionary Conference in Chicago, and once we know where Justin will be called, we will publicize it on my website (karieller.weebly.com) that I will keep up for a while until the end of our reintegration.

As we reflect on where we have been and weave it into where we are going, we are steadied and propelled by this prayer called *Keep me in Touch with my Dreams* by Ted Loder. May it cover you as well with peace that is beyond understanding as you gaze into your future and discover that God is already at work in your story.

With much love and blessings,
Kari (and Justin)