

Is this home?

by Chad Karger

Is this home?

Home is the place, metaphorically speaking, where we have all we need. It is the safe place at the end of the day's journey where we can put our feet up. It is our refuge from the torrent of demands and pressures that threaten to drown us on any given day.

We are still very young and early on in our journey in this life when reality of home presents itself as an imperfect reflection of what we had hopped for. For some home was relatively happy with normal struggles and disappointments. For others home was more like a prison where the greatest threat and betrayal faced them every day. Home was never perfect; but it was home. Still, deep within burns a desire for a perfect place of rest, unblemished honesty, and unconditional acceptance... a desire for home.

As the years begin to pile up and with them struggles, failures, disappointments, and sorrows, even our homes don't feel like home. Our wife feels like a stranger, our kids like our biggest problem, our jobs the biggest disappointment. Where is home?

At the turn of the century, a man by the name of Chesterton made an astute observation about the human condition. In his book *Orthodoxy*, he writes...

The modern philosopher had told me again and again that I was in the right place, and I had still felt depressed even in acquiescence. But I had heard that I was in the wrong place, and my soul sang for joy, like a bird in spring. The knowledge found out illuminated forgotten chambers in the dark house of infancy. I knew now why grass had always seemed to me as queer as the green beard of a giant, and why I could feel homesick at home (Ignatius: 1908).

Many men and women struggle beneath a weight of shame and guilt, especially Christians, as they try to bury their discontentment with schedules, right behavior, smiles, or dutiful living. Chesterton sort of turns on the light with this observation and says, "Hey! We all feel it! This place, even though we call it home, isn't really our home. Be honest." Be honest about the fact that life sometimes feels like it is unfolding in a foreign land, a land where we don't speak the language, don't have the

currency, a land for which we have no map. The landscape can feel like a deserted island. Another writer, Walker Percy, calls us “castaways.”

At that very moment when he should feel most at home on the island, when needs are satisfied, knowledge arrived at, family raised, business attended to, at that very moment when every criterion of island at-homeness he should feel most at home, he feels most homeless. Not one moment of his life passes but that he is aware, however faintly, of his own predicament: that he is a castaway. (“The Message in the Bottle”, p. 143, Picador, 1975)

Throughout the Old Testament, Israel, the chosen people of God, live between God’s promises made and, for the most part, God’s promises fully realized. Stories of desert wanderings and exile graphically portray the spiritual reality of ebb and flow, ups and downs. Numerous Psalms (ancient Hebrew poetry and music) are honest portraits of the believing soul waiting upon God.

Psalm 137 is an example:

**¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.**

**² There on the poplars
we hung our harps,**

**³ for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"**

**⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?**

**⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill .**

**⁶ May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.**

**⁷ Remember, O LORD , what the Edomites did
on the day Jerusalem fell.
"Tear it down," they cried,**

"tear it down to its foundations!"

**⁸ O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is he who repays you
for what you have done to us-
⁹ he who seizes your infants
and dashes them against the rocks**

In the New Testament book Hebrews, the writer highlights the certain ancient Hebrew people whose faithfulness was steadfast (not perfect) in the face of tremendous uncertainty:

All of these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcome them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own...Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Like these ancient Hebrews, all of us long for a better “country,” a “heavenly city.” We are most desperate and lost when we fail to admit this openly and honestly. We are moving further away from finding home in our dishonesty. God is waiting for us to first admit what he already knows: This is not your home.

Discontentment is not the same thing disbelief or disease. The desire for home that God put within each of us causes the hunger pangs of discontentment we all feel. Desire for rest and honesty and complete satisfaction can serve as reminders of our Creator.

Desire is either the first step toward an honest and faithful life. Or it is one step deeper into addiction, depression, and despair.

Apart from God the search for home leads to addiction, obsession, and, eventually, death. Sex, drugs, a lurid fantasy world, buying things, eating, and even risk taking are the shrines to which we turn for meaning. As it turns out, they are simply escape routes leading us further away from reality, from the people we love, from home. Instead of crying out and reaching for the hand of God in Christ, our souls decay in impulse and panic.

We begin our journey home, in part, by being honest about where we are. A new orientation can only be obtained with an accurate orientation of our present location. The Scriptures provide us songs, poems, stories, and characters who cried out to God. These images and words will prove powerful beginning places for us.

Read Psalm 84:

**¹ How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD Almighty!**

**² My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD ;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.**

**³ Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young-
a place near your altar,
O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.**

**⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.
Selah**

**⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.**

**⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.**

**⁷ They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.**

**⁸ Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty;
listen to me, O God of Jacob.
Selah**

**⁹ Look upon our shield, O God;
look with favor on your anointed one.**

**¹⁰ Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;**

**I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my
God**

than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

**¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.**

**¹² O LORD Almighty,
blessed is the man who trusts in you.**