

The Long Journey

By Bonnie Rose Hudson

David tossed his books onto his bed and plopped down beside them. He was more sad than angry. His dad had just told the family the news. His orders had come; his unit was being sent to the Persian Gulf. He would leave in a few days to join a war that had just begun.

David had to wonder why. Why were his father and the others leaving their homes and families behind and going on such a dangerous mission? Why were they risking everything to save someone else's family? What about their families? What about David?

He grabbed his Bible and his notebook from beside his bed. Youth group was in an hour, and he hadn't finished his assignment from last week. His heart wasn't in it, but he didn't want to have to explain why his notebook was blank. It'd be easier if he could just go, get through the meeting, and come home.

They were supposed to be studying Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan. He sighed. He'd read it a dozen times. The traveler got attacked and left along the road. A man approached, saw the injured stranger, crossed to the other side of the road, and passed by. Then, a second man did the same thing. Only the third man, a Samaritan, saw him and felt compassion for him. He bandaged his wounds, got him to an inn, and paid for his stay while he recovered. He was the one Jesus said had been a good neighbor.

The last words of the story drew his attention: "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37 KJV). David was sure he had read them before, but he had never really noticed them. What did Jesus mean? How was he supposed to do the same thing?

He glanced at the clock. Time to get going to youth group. He gave his mom and dad a quick hug and headed out the door. Church was only a few blocks down the road, and the fresh air helped him think.

Youth group passed slowly. Everyone knew he was depressed, and he imagined most of them could guess why. It was no secret that his dad was in the military. And, it was no surprise that he was being deployed. His friends gave him some space, and his youth pastor just told him that he was there to talk whenever David wanted.

They watched a short film about a missionary who had left her home to work in the slums of Lucknow, in Uttar Pradesh, India. She lived with the destitute and loved them. She walked their road and introduced them to the road to Heaven. In an interview, someone asked her when she had made the decision to serve God in such a lowly place. She said, "I had a dream one night. In my dream, I was standing by my window and looking outside. But, instead of seeing my own neighborhood, I saw the slums of Lucknow. When I woke up, I couldn't stop thinking that God was trying to tell me something. That's when my journey began."

On his way home after youth group, David's mind kept replaying the events of the night. His father making the announcement. The parable of the Good Samaritan. "Go, and do thou likewise." The missionary's long road to India.

And, he remembered another story, one his father had told him a long time ago, about the time he felt God calling him to serve in the military. His father said that it was the road God was calling him to walk.

Maybe that was what his dad and the missionary had in common. Just like the Good Samaritan, they were each walking down the road one day, living their lives, when God drew their attention to someone who needed help. They could choose to pass by on the other side, or they could choose to help. His dad and the woman had chosen to help.

"Go, and do thou likewise."

For his father, that meant deploying with his unit and serving wherever his country sent him. For the missionary, it meant moving to a slum on the other side of the world.

"God, do you want me to go overseas?" he prayed.

More people came to his mind, like his youth pastor at church. He thought about his dentist and the way she helped little kids not to be scared during their visit. He thought of the handyman who had helped fix their leaking pipes when his dad was overseas last time. And, he thought of his neighbor, who had fixed their car last summer when it broke down and they couldn't afford to take it to the garage.

Those people all served God by helping the people God brought to them. Their roads led through their hometown. His dad's led overseas. Where was David's leading?

"Go, and do thou likewise."

He prayed God would give him the strength and courage to do likewise, wherever the road led.