

# Lessons From around the World

When you serve the Lord, you never quite know where you may go or what you will learn there. On all of our family's journeys we have come home with a special gift from God – a lesson learned somewhere around the world. These special experiences from God are treasured more than any "souvenir" we could bring home!

## Israel

By a gracious gift of God our family was able to take a trip to Israel when a friend of the family was living in Israel who generously offered to take his vacation time to help us tour the Holy Land.



One of our wanderings led us to the top of the Mount of Olives just outside the walls of Jerusalem where a young Arab was giving camel rides. We watched as other tourists climbed on the camel, the young man led them around in a little circle, and then the rider dismounted. It took a lot of convincing, but I finally mounted the camel behind Christa. The young Arab coaxed the camel off of his knees and took off (not in a circle!)... with us on his camel! I must say, it was quite an experience to be trotting off down the road camel-back; but I became quite anxious when I realized that we were not on the "normal" camel ride! "Where are we going?" I whispered loudly and nervously to Christa. "I don't know!" the reply came back. "Ask him!!!" She leaned forward and posed the question. "I'm taking you for the LONG ride!" he responded.

Well, I had no idea what "the LONG ride" meant; but I began hoping and praying that "LONG" meant shorter than I was fearing! He presently turned and guided the camel safely back to where our family and friend were waiting. The camel knelt down and I slid off the side of the camel feeling greatly relieved. The picture you see above is when we are on the return trip from "the LONG ride." You can decide if you think our smiles are a result of our feeling relieved or because the ride was unusually exhilarating... perhaps it was both... regardless, it was an experience we remember fondly as "the LONG ride."

Are you possibly embarking on a "LONG ride" as you begin home-school this fall? Do you know where you are going? Are you apprehensive about whether you will make it to your goal and finish successfully? Do you have a lurking fear that you will be led astray to some nameless disaster or somehow be lost on the road you are traveling?

As you see, I really had no reason to fear. We were in God's capable hands and that rope connected to the harness of the camel had another end attached to the back of the young Arab's burro. He knew where we were going, and I could trust that God was in control. We got back safely; yet, I could have had an even more enjoyable time on the way if I hadn't fretted over where we were going and instead just rested...trusted...enjoyed.

If God has called you to your new venture of home-school or if He is calling you to a deeper walk of faith and trust in another area of your life, commit your path to the Lord; and He will guide you safely through to success. He will never leave you or forsake you and is surely on your side!



Enjoy making memories with your family this year. All too soon these fresh young lives of your children will be entering adulthood, and they will begin to build families of their own based on what they have learned from you and experienced with you. Home-school is a useful tool to help you build lasting, meaningful family relationships with your children. Spend time together... laughing, learning, enjoying each others' company, and bringing pleasure to the heart of our Heavenly Father. May your "LONG ride" be an enjoyable one!

## Ireland and Scotland

Another of our family's journeys took us to the Emerald Isle and Scotland. In Ireland we discovered mostly tiny, little, horse-and-buggy roads (or cow paths), and many of them were unmarked. Map reading was extremely difficult, and we had to stop often to ask directions and in the process met a few Irish locals, each of which had a different, intriguing, Irish accent. Because their roads were mostly unmarked, we often received directions like this: "Go up here a little piece, turn left, then right, around the corner and go... here look... follow my finger."

We dearly loved the Irish people. Their country was absolutely lovely; and they were always helpful, kind, and generous. Even though they always carefully repeated their directions twice, finding our way around was quite an experience we'll never forget.



When we arrived in Scotland a week later, we rented a small Toyota to drive around Scotland and England. After a few days of confusion in another new country, we discovered that our car had a glorious, computerized satellite navigation system. All we had to do was to enter our final destination; and the navigation system figured the quickest route and checked for heavy or stopped traffic. Then a computerized voice we named

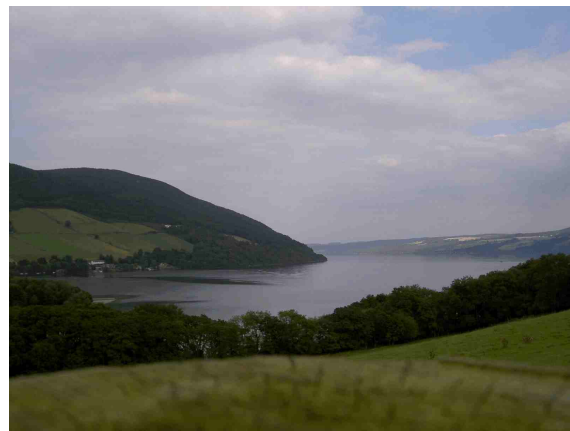
"Margot" began to give us directions... kilometer-by-kilometer, and turn-by-turn. We were guided through each roundabout (they're wild intersections where you have to enter a circle to make any turn) and were told exactly which exit to take. We were informed of meter distance and time left to our destination as well as which road we were on at every moment.

If we accidentally made a wrong turn, we didn't have to worry - the navigation system refigured our route, time, and distance. We were never lost and always knew when we would reach our destination...but we didn't know HOW we would be getting there.

You see, we had to follow step-by-step. We couldn't do things our own way. We had to carefully listen to every command and follow directions to the detail as best we could because we didn't have the entire route laid out before us. We only had the opportunity to trust and to have confidence that somewhere up above we had a satellite that knew exactly where we were at every moment, knew when we made a mistake, and knew how to guide us through those mistakes. There was such a burden lifted from our shoulders as we began to realize we didn't have to worry about maps, route names, turns, and roundabouts, in addition to driving on the left side of the road.

As we drove through the gorgeous, rolling, green hills of Scotland watching the thousands of peacefully grazing, contented sheep in the fields, we were once again reminded and challenged of God's perfect guidance in our lives. "He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil - for Thou art with me..." -Psalm 23.

What a joy it is to know that we have the faithful eyes of our Heavenly Father watching from above, guiding our steps, directing our lives. As we follow Him step-by-step, He will never fail us. And, if we make a wrong turn, will guide us back. The only thing we have to do is take into consideration which side of the road we're driving on...





## Austria

Another time we visited Halstatt, Austria, as we toured throughout the heart of the Austrian Alps. It is a most lovely place with green, sloping hills dotted with Alpine cottages; local Austrian men cutting hay with a scythe and raking the fallen grass into little mounds; and cows grazing in the pastures among the wildflowers. Beyond the sloping hills you can see mightier, snow-covered mountain peaks that add such a touch to the scene it quite takes your breath away and makes you wish you could park your bags in the midst of it all for a great, long while to drink in all of the loveliness.

Halstatt is a tiny, little Austrian village sandwiched between a steep mountain and a lovely, aqua-green lake. We walked through the entire town in a pleasant, ten-minute walk. The particular memory we want to share with you took place by this lake a little distance from Halstatt. We happened upon this neighboring village just as the sun was beginning to set and a storm was pushing its way over the surrounding mountains.

As we began to drive down the little main street, we came upon a shepherd leading his flock of sheep through town. He was calling to them, and they were following. It was quite a sight to see the excited sheep listening to their beloved shepherd's voice and following him.

What was most captivating, however, was the little black-and-white Border Collie sheep dog in action. Full of energy and vitality, he was hard at work zipping here and zipping there to keep the sheep tightly bunched together so not one could stray and wander away.

All of a sudden, we saw the shepherd turn and call out directions to the dog as our car approached from behind the flock. Instantly obedient, the collie dropped to the ground only a few yards in front of our car. With his ears cocked, sharply listening for his next assignment, he stayed there - placing his own life obediently between the unknowing, preoccupied sheep and danger. He stayed there for a few minutes until the shepherd called again. He then darted off to a little road connecting from the right and blocked it, again, with his little black-and-white body.

The flock had moved on a little ways before his tilted head caught his master's voice once more. Running as fast as he could, he moved up once again closer behind the flock, giving our car some space to move forward, and dropped obediently to the ground once more with nothing between himself and the danger of our oncoming vehicle.

God had directed our steps to this little village on this tiny lake in the heart of Austria, I am fully convinced, because He wanted to impress upon our hearts a lesson from the life of this little, obedient sheep dog and his master.

A shepherd's sheep dog is like his right hand. The two work together and are inseparable - not only in their dealings with the sheep, but also because they become the best of friends. They are bound together in a mutual love and trust. Flowing out of that relationship of love and trust is the collie's instant obedience to his master.

The love of this Austrian shepherd for his sheep asked his beloved collie to lay his life down to protect his sheep. If anything had happened to his dog, how devastating it would have been to him and to the workings of his farm. Yet, he asked it for the good of his sheep; and, with all of the love and trust he had for his master, the little dog obeyed.

Just as the shepherd had clear and concise directions for his dog to follow, so God has laid forth clear, understandable, and specific directions for us to follow in His Word. As the collie responded to his master, we also have a responsibility to learn to respond, based in love and trust, to God's Word in obedience.

Philip Keller, a shepherd who wrote a little book about his own sheep dog, penned these words, "Ultimately, our love for God is demonstrated not by sentimental emotion, but rather in implicit obedience to His will, expressed in our loving co-operation with His commands. I know of no more exalted joy than this harmonious partnership."

Are we learning to lay down our own lives, desires, and futures in obedience to what we know God has asked us to do? As we love and trust our Good Shepherd, we will obey Him. As a result, much good will be brought to the sheep and to the pasture where God has called us to labor with Him.