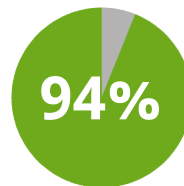


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Saying Goodbyes - Guest post by Emma Witmer



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We invited our children to create their own post to share with all of you. Yesterday, Emma (our youngest at 12 years old) took us up on the offer, and this is the post she has created. The subject may not seem very "seasonal," but it is something that is really on her heart right now as she faces some tough situations. Hopefully her writing will give you a glimpse into the life of an ex-pat kid. And thankfully, Emma is learning what we all need to remember – we have a Wonderful Savior, Emmanuel "God with us," to whom we will never have to say goodbye.

I am not going to lie to you. Saying goodbyes are hard for me. But saying hello is good too. You shouldn't be afraid to say hello just because you know they'll leave. In the States, goodbyes didn't happen very often. It was, 'See ya Sunday,' or, 'Wednesday, right?' and I would always answer yes. Even with your grandparents, you had an expectation to see them in a few months, or at Christmas, or Thanksgiving, or Easter. Here, it feels like I say goodbye every other day. And you never know when you might not see your friends again. What if they aren't allowed back in the country? What if they get kicked out? What if, what if.

In June, I am going to lose the first best friend I ever made here. She can't stay, and I have to. She had to flee her home country of Pakistan, and Thailand said she could only stay for a little while. Yes, it's hard for me, and no, I don't want her to leave. But there is a purpose for everything. And if there wasn't, would God still do it? I don't think so. She will make a more permanent home where she's going and I will try to keep in touch. At the moment, that's the best I can do. It will be hard, and it will hurt. I don't doubt that. "But, with family and friends, shouldn't I be okay?" you may ask. Yes, they will help, but, no it's not the same. If you have never lost someone you care very much about, you don't understand.

Hannah is coming in a few days. Yes, I will say hello, and yes, eventually I will say goodbye. But that thought shouldn't spoil the moments I have with her, good or bad. I need, and want, to spend as much time with her as I can. We will have good times, like when we meet her at the airport, but, we'll also have bad ones, like saying goodbye to her.

What do you do in those moments? You find someone who is close to you, and you share your favorite memories about the person you love. For other people, a hug is enough. Others go to their room and sit there thinking. For me, I want – I *need* – people in those times. And playing the song 'She's Gone Forever,' when my sister leaves is NOT going to help.

The point I am trying to make is, goodbyes are hard. Yes, they will hurt. Though it might not feel like it at the time, you will end up okay. I have said a lot of goodbyes since moving to Thailand. Every single time it feels like a part of me has died. But that part heals. You won't stay hurting, unless you feed that hurt. So my suggestion for saying goodbyes is to do it from the heart. Say your 'goodbye,' in whatever way you choose, just do it well.