

Light
for the
Journey

Light *for the* Journey

75 Devotional Reflections from Cross-Cultural Experiences

Rosella M. Kameo



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For my husband, Daniel, and son, Peter,
with gratitude and love

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Introduction



AS A TWENTY-YEAR-OLD ready to begin my senior year in college, I flew to New York City for a job interview that would change the course of my life.

“What brings you to New York?” an airport cabbie asked as he drove me to our church headquarters on 42nd Street. When I told him I had come to apply for a job with the Lutherans to teach in India, he shook his head despondently. “You know, you’re making a big mistake!” he exclaimed. “You ought to be making the most of your life while you’re young, not heading off across the world to India.”

I smile now when I recall that conversation. What could be more worthwhile, inspirational, and exciting than to serve the church overseas and experience other cultures, languages, and traditions? As I was sent on assignments to Asia and the Middle East, I began to see the world with different eyes. I learned to expect the unexpected and to appreciate the richness of life which had come to me by the grace of God. Marriage to an Indonesian brought a wealth of new cross-cultural experiences as well and

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a chance to deepen my understanding of our differences and similarities. The stories kept growing.

“You ought to write a book!” friends and supporting congregations would say as I eventually neared retirement. True, but what kind of a book? How could I meaningfully share my cross-cultural experiences with others in a useful way? It was then that I decided to write a book of meditations based on personal experiences. Arranged by theme, each would include a Bible verse, questions for reflection, and a prayer. *Light for the Journey* was born.

Whether you use this book individually or in a group, I hope that you too will be blessed by the cross-cultural experiences that have enriched my life. Now, if only I could share them with that cabbie!

—**Rosella M. Kameo**

Chapter 1

Faith and Trust

Faith is not belief without proof but
trust without reservation.¹

—Elton Trueblood

The Stubborn Bulls



The Lord says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.”

—Psalm 32:8-9

THE OLD MISSIONARY chuckled as she sat down beside me and began reminiscing over her lifelong career as a Bible Woman in Andhra Pradesh, South India.

“You know,” she said, “I began my career right here where you are now, studying Telugu at Schade School in Rajahmundry. When I had become fluent enough, I was sent to work in Bhimavarum.”

Pausing to wipe her glasses, she continued, “A funny thing happened



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when it came time for me to move to Bhimavarum. All of my belongings were loaded onto a bullock cart for the overnight journey, and I climbed up into the back along with them. As the animals plodded along, I was lulled to sleep. The driver sitting in the front must have fallen asleep too.”

“What happened then?” I asked.

“Well, the next morning when we woke up,” she continued, “the bullock cart was standing still. There we were, right back here at Schade School where we had started out the day before! During the night, those Brahma bulls had taken matters into their own hands, turned around, and gone back home the way they had come.”

As I laughed at her story, I thought of how often we must seem like those Brahma bulls to God. Submission does not come easy for most of us. We say we trust God. We ask God for guidance. Yet deep down we still think we know best and refuse to give up the controls.

When we insist on doing things our own way, though, are we being as useful to God as we should be? Are we leaving enough room for God to work through us? Like those Brahma bulls, even though we do not always know where our owner is taking us, we have to trust that He knows best.

For Reflection

1. Why do we so often forget to involve God in our planning and decision-making?
2. Why is it easier for most of us to set off on our own instead of following God’s lead?
3. In what areas of life do you find it most difficult to turn your independence and self-reliance over to God’s control?

Help us to recognize our need for you, oh Lord. Give us the courage to follow you even when we do not know where you are leading us.

The Road of Life



Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

—Proverbs 3:6

“HOW DO I get myself into these things?” I asked Ruth, my teaching colleague at Lutheran Middle School in Kowloon, Hong Kong, as we tried to keep up with the forty-eight Chinese students ahead of us. The school day had ended, and my ninth



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graders, still wearing their white school uniforms, had prepared an after-school birthday surprise for me.

“Where on earth are they taking us?” I asked as we tromped through the lobby of the Kwong Wah Hospital and out the back door to Dundas Street. On we walked, up Fa Yeun Street, over to Tung Choi, and through a maze of lanes. My students were not lost, but I certainly was. My students knew exactly where we were going, but I didn’t have a clue.

Suddenly, as we turned a corner, they opened a door and shouted, “We’re here!”

Where? Why, McDonalds, of course! I was flabbergasted. To celebrate my birthday, they had arranged a kiddie party for the whole class, complete with hats, balloons, and noise-makers.

That’s the way life is. Even though we have been promised an eventual heavenly feast, the future remains a mystery. Sometimes we don’t know which path our lives will take and we struggle to make sense of it all. Will we wind up marrying the person we are dating? Will we be accepted at the college of our choice? Will we ever find another job if we leave the current one? Along the road of life so often we feel confused and uncertain.

Despite our confusion, though, there is no need to panic. We may not recognize which street we are on or just where we are headed at the moment, but we can certainly trust the hand that is leading us there.

For Reflection

1. What are you feeling confused about right now in your journey of life?
2. What are the attributes of trust? How can we acquire them?

3. How can we best help others who are feeling lost? Offer three suggestions.

When we cannot see what lies ahead, give us the faith to trust you and the courage to follow you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.