

your home



HIS EMBASSY

Barbara Rainey and Janel Breitenstein

An embassy is a tiny
version—a taste—of its
home country in a
foreign land.

Why Your Home Matters

EMBASSIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES FEEL LIKE THEIR HOME COUNTRIES: FRAMED IMAGES OF its national heroes adorn the walls; furnishings and food look and taste like home; the flag soars proudly over its headquarters. Even national holidays are celebrated on schedule within its walls. And the embassy represents its country to the foreign country in which it is placed. No matter where it is located, the soil on which it rests belongs to the home country—and its laws reign supreme.

Most of all, that country's citizens find help and hope for their difficulties: a refuge and an advocate.

In this way, our homes, too, are "embassies" of the Kingdom of God.

Pastor Tim Keller suggests three roles Christians can assume as we live here on earth: tourists, immigrants, or ambassadors.¹

Tourists can sometimes appear a bit obnoxious to residents in other countries. They may unintentionally misuse the native language, soak up the best the country has to offer, load their smart phones with photos, then settle into their seats on a flight home, unattached and aloof.

Immigrants, on the other hand, usually come to stay. The most purposeful immerse themselves in the new culture, adopt the customs, assimilate into their new environment, and work diligently to speak the language. Some take the significant leap to become citizens, diligently studying its history to pass a naturalization test. Their roots tunnel deeply into their new soil. Some immigrants never return to their nations of origin.

But **an ambassador is not an immigrant or a tourist**. Her loyalty never wavers from her true home, seeking to serve honorably in the country of residence. As long as the ambassador dwells in the foreign land—even for life—her homeland tugs and beckons.

Which will you be?

Paul describes this fascinating role for us as believers in Christ:

God . . . through Christ reconciled us to himself
and gave us the ministry of reconciliation . . .
Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, God
making his appeal through us. We implore you
on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
(2 Corinthians 5:18, 20, emphasis added)

We clearly know this is not our home because Hebrews likens this world to a tent! It mentions that the faithful who've gone before us,

acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on
the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear
that they are seeking a homeland.

. . . But as it is, they desire a better country,

that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:13, 16)

Being about the mission of our homeland—about the business of our King—means our chief goal is to represent Him fully, accurately, and passionately. We don't isolate, alienating ourselves and refraining from relationships as tourists would. We don't assimilate or sink our roots in this world as immigrants would.

In the book of Romans, Paul hinted at this when he commanded those to whom he was writing, “**Do not be conformed to this world.**” In other words, live in this foreign land but don't become so like this world that you cease being Christ's ambassadors.

Because we have been redeemed by Christ we respect the nation to which we are sent: We learn the language and customs thoroughly so our communication with foreigners on behalf of our own Home country is clearly understood—not muddled by anything that is not of our King. We demonstrate value for the culture of our host country's people, which doesn't contradict our country's values, **in order to represent Him well.**

In our homes, others taste an atmosphere they can't find anywhere else. No matter what your profession, career, or age, every believer in Jesus is His representative where He has planted you to live and work. As a good friend of ours says, “Make a dent where you are sent!”

As an ambassador for Christ, you are His representative. May you be inspired to make your home an embassy of our true King as you journey toward our eternal home.

God . . . through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere . . .

For we are . . . commissioned by God.

2 Corinthians 2:14, 17



How to Make Your Home His Embassy

Three Ideas for Family Conversations

USE THESE STORIES AND CONTENT TO TEACH YOUR FAMILY THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING YOUR HOME a welcoming, available place where Jesus shines brightly for anyone who enters. The format for discussion is flexible.

- Try having one discussion a week around the dinner table.
- Make an intentional week out of it and do all four discussions in a week, one per night.
- Try taking it along in the car on the way to and from school for purposeful travel time. Do whatever works best for your family and your routine.



Conversation 1: Embassy of the True King

A Wonderful Little Role Model

BEGIN BY WATCHING THIS SHORT VIDEO TOGETHER. IT IS SUITABLE FOR ALL AGES. (4 MINUTES, 55 SECONDS in length): [https://deidox.org/film/woman-lives-at-embassy-of-kingdom-of-heaven./](https://deidox.org/film/woman-lives-at-embassy-of-kingdom-of-heaven/)

Talk about the video together.

- What did you like most about the story?
- What did you feel watching this grandmother talk about her home?
- Would you want to visit her? Why?

Read together:

The video shows a home in one of the most atheistic countries in Europe. The home is small and simple, but pleasant, proudly bearing a small, bronze plaque that reads: *Embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven*.

Does your home tell everyone who your King is?

An embassy is like one country's headquarters in another country. If you're an American citizen traveling in, say, Italy, and you need help, you'd often go right to the American Embassy. If Italian people need to get a passport to America, they'd go to the American Embassy, too.

This homeowner explains how her house is like an embassy for God, saying,

My home is an extension of Christ's Kingdom. It's a place where people can come and find help if they're in trouble, or have a need. The Bible says the Kingdom of Heaven is joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. That is the atmosphere I want here at the embassy . . .

It's an honor to be an instrument of God's love and His wisdom.

. . . All believers are called to be representatives of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are all ambassadors. The Lord Jesus didn't choose to do it any other way. He simply entrusted us.

She welcomes people into her home whether they call first or just show up. The surprise guests are best—because the Holy Spirit is there, just telling her what to do and how to love that person. This homeowner is a true ambassador for God's Kingdom.

What's an ambassador, anyway?

An **ambassador** is an honored representative of one country to another. That person is chosen carefully; you don't want your representative embarrassing your country. You want him to make your country proud.

Maybe you've gone on a field trip before with your school—or even gone somewhere with your family. **Did your teacher or parents ever tell you to use good manners and behave well?** When you go somewhere, you represent your school or your family. An ambassador does that for his country as the official representative of his own government.

Usually, an ambassador and the people who work with him, including a small contingent of military personnel, live near the capital city of the foreign country. That's because he might need to meet with the president or other leaders, to speak up for his country's interests. For example, after talking to the U.S. government, the United States' ambassador in China might visit the Chinese government when they're making an important decision. The ambassador might say, "This is what the United States government would like you to do, and here's why. Can we talk about this?"

*Being an ambassador is a big
and important job!*

Did you know you are an ambassador?

Your home can be a lot like an embassy—and you and your family are ambassadors of a real kingdom. Can you guess whose kingdom that would be?!

Paul, one of the greatest missionaries ever, said, "So we are Christ's official messengers. It is as if God were making his appeal through us. Here is what Christ wants us to beg you to do. Come back to God!" (2 Corinthians 5:20 NIRV).

Jesus chose us. We who know Jesus, are His official messengers. He wants us to help people find God, too. He also wants our homes to be warm places that welcome those who need Jesus and His love. "All this is from God. He brought us back to himself through Christ's death on the cross. And He has given us the task of bringing others back to Him through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Paul even says that we're like a letter to people from Jesus! Like an ambassador, God has chosen you to show people what He's like, and to give them His message.

*And you show that you are a letter from Christ
delivered by us, written not with ink but with the
Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but
on tablets of human hearts.*

2 Corinthians 3:3

Talk together as a family.

1. What did you learn in this story that explains why our home is to be a little embassy? Why does God want our home to be an embassy?
2. Can you think of ways our home is already an embassy?
3. What are three ways we could make our home an even better embassy, where people can find help and get God's message that He loves them and longs for them to come back to Him?

4. Talk about how each family member is an ambassador, representing Jesus at school, at work, and in our neighborhood. Tell stories about conversations you've had with those who don't know Jesus.
5. What's one thing you personally could do to be an ambassador for God's "message"?

Conversation 2: Calling the "Embassy"

The Day the Embassy Came to the Rescue

THE BACKSTORY. READ OUT LOUD IF YOU DESIRE OR READ AND THEN EXPLAIN THE CONTENT TO YOUR CHILDREN. *Though justice in the Western world is far from perfect, a jaunt around the globe—or even back a single century in history—reminds us how rarefied our security is in light of the billions who walked this planet without it. The more we interact with the wrongs of this world and those who suffer beneath them, the more we see the need for a safe place to find shelter.*

For many missionaries, foreign aid workers, students, or even travelers, the embassies of their home countries can be a refuge in nations with frightening, confusing, or deliberately partial justice systems. Thankfully we also have a place of eternal and spiritual refuge found in Jesus.

This true story beautifully illuminates the safe haven an embassy can be—though merely a taste of the protection of the True King.

Written by a missionary in Uganda, a country in East Africa, this mom has been to the American Embassy in Uganda’s capital city of Kampala. Entering the embassy from the dusty, crowded streets and the warm African sun, visitors are instantly greeted with nicely tended gardens, then air-conditioning and carpet. Her husband calls it “a little slice of America!” Listen as she tells about the help her friend received from the American Embassy.

Read together:

It was Friday night, and friends and I were tearing into slices of pizza as our children yelped and shrieked over on the restaurant’s bouncy castle. As it occasionally does within a group of foreigners living in Uganda, the conversation turned to culturally confusing, even frightening moments. I normally feel quite safe here; I love raising my children in Africa. But my friend spoke softly of her encounter with the police a few years back.

Her teenaged son had been driving along a main thoroughfare when, as is quite typical here, a political official’s convoy careened down the middle of the road. When this happens, non-official vehicles are expected to clear the road—like they would for emergency vehicles in many countries.

The problem lies in seeing and hearing the motorcade before you are quite literally run off the road, or even into pedestrians or motorcyclists.

My friend’s unknowing son did not yield quickly enough. He was promptly pulled over by an angry officer—who accused him of being a spy. The policeman explained: “He interrupted a convoy of his Excellency, the President of Uganda, and his secretary.”

Imagine the feelings as my friend received the call from her son, then dialed her husband immediately: “They’re going to put our son in jail! And the government is impounding our family’s only vehicle.”

My friend met her son at the local police headquarters: a concrete room with a tin roof, a cramped filing room piled with massive, tilting stacks of paper; and a bare concrete cell with a heavy metal door. She watched as her son was

told to undress down to his trousers, which I now know to be the mark of a suspected criminal.

Now, imagine the anguish if this were you: you are bewildered, frightened, and nearly naked. You are led into an African prison cell, the door clanging shut. Your dad squats on the other side of the metal to hold your hand, both of your parents seeking to calm you when their own hearts want to sob and scream. Imagine the authorities speaking of even kicking you out of the country within the week. Imagine the powerlessness, the anger. The fear in the midst of men with power, but not necessarily justice.

Somehow, my friend's husband remembered a number that he'd entered into his phone a few weeks prior while filing paperwork at the U.S. Embassy—the Embassy's emergency number.

From there, the story gave us the breath of relief that we were hoping for. My friend's husband described the change in atmosphere simply by speaking with the embassy official on the phone: the major's skillful banter defused the situation as smoothly as a bomb squad professional. "Where in the States are y'all from?" the major asked.

"Last eight years in Austin, Texas."

"You a Longhorn?"

"Yes sir!" In fact, my friend's husband was sporting a burnt orange Texas Longhorn shirt.

"Consider all of this an act of grace," he intoned. "I'm a graduate of Texas A&M."

The major gave them clear instructions. And within the evening, the family walked—together—from the headquarters, teary, but free, and deeply relieved.

After hearing this story and feeling their relief, what did I do? I set down my pizza slice and blurted out, "*I want that number!*" Every face around that table was lit with the glow of our cell phones as we loaded those golden digits for a day we hope will never arrive.

And then I thought: What's better than having the embassy in your cell phone?

Citizenship to a greater city—with an even more powerful "passport" than my remarkable little navy one.

What's better than a knowledgeable, savvy, comforting major from your home state visiting you in your dark, terrifying little cell? Full access to the creator of the Universe who

didn't even spare His own Son for me. And He promises me He withholds no truly good thing from me and my family.

The major at the embassy had informed my friend that he wouldn't have been able to do much if my friend's son had done something wrong. But my true Major, King Jesus, opened my "prison cell" despite very deserved charges, despite my open offenses against Him. He has set me free!

Here's to having the true Embassy on speed dial.

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? . . . As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Romans 10:13–15

*"And who is a rock, except our God?
This God is my strong refuge."*

2 Samuel 22:32–33

Talk together as a family.

1. How do you think you would feel if you were the parents in this story? How would you feel if you were the son?
2. What does this story tell us about what God is like?
3. How is having God as our King even better than calling an embassy in a foreign country?
4. Read Romans 8:31–32 together. Thank God together for His fierce, loving protection of you and your family, even when you are walking through the "valley of the shadow" (Psalm 23:4).

Conversation 3: No Place Like "Home"

Living in Two Worlds

THE BACKSTORY. READ OUT LOUD IF YOU DESIRE OR READ AND THEN EXPLAIN THE CONTENT TO YOUR CHILDREN. *It seems our souls were designed for heaven; for a home that is so much more than this place. Throughout our lives, we sense that innate longing; that restlessness for an embrace where we can finally rest, body and soul.*

C.S. Lewis speaks of finally meeting God in this way:

The promise of glory . . . becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory meant good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last.²

This discussion explores where we find our concepts of home, and what they tell us about our true and lasting rest.



This is also written by the missionary from Uganda. Some of her children have lived in Africa longer than their home country. What would that be like?

Read together:

Where do you feel most at home? If you were away from your current “home,” is there something—or someone—that would instantly make you feel more at home?

I’m riveted by this concept. My current home is in this place with so little family; so little that’s familiar. But when I return to my United States home, it no longer completely feels like home anymore. The landscapes are so very different from the developing-world urban sprawl my kids view from their barred windows.

Have you ever made a collage? A collage is often made of pieces of paper or even torn pieces of art glued to another paper or board with lace, baubles, textured elements, and paint added to create a new work of art.

Home, for us, has evolved into this multi-cultural, multi-textural collage of places where we feel embraced and understood (but, of course, not always), and with people we love (who are, of course, never all in the same place). My

mind trips over words referring to “home” in an e-mail or conversation.

If anything, living in Africa has cemented the rich promise that my true home is yet to come. What, or perhaps where, in the world is home?

Can you guess where my true home is? Where is your true home?

One day I saw this quote painted on a wall near where I live:

*The deepest meaning of hospitality is this:
to offer each other rest on the road to
our eternal home. —Romano Guardini*

I had many thoughts as I went on my way. I’m a mom, so I think of how a warm, comfortable, pleasant home with tasty food is sort of like a hug: It doesn’t just comfort my body; it comforts my heart. It makes me feel loved; somehow it strengthens both inside and outside.

Remember how Jesus talked about “preparing a place” for us in His mansion in heaven? Your parents “prepare a place” for you here on earth like that when they make you

a delicious lunch, or clean the house, or create something special just for you, like a birthday cake. Those physical acts powerfully strengthen us inside.

But we don't have to be in a home to offer people hospitality. **We “embrace” people even when we give a waiter a kind glance and a generous tip; when we sit with a friend on a triumphant day or one where she can't stop crying. We communicate a taste of God's tenderness and warmth and purposeful, well-planned love for us.** We show them what the home we're running toward is like.

My new awareness of being His ambassador, of this place where I live not being my true home, makes me want to extend that part of God to others: to offer them that kind of place, physical or otherwise, where they feel responded to, acknowledged, welcomed; where their souls can find a moment of rest on this long stretch of (rust-colored mud, or smoothly paved) path until we finally reach . . .

Home.

“There will no longer be any curse . . . ”
(Revelation 22:3, NASB)

“There will no longer be any night . . . ”
(Revelation 22:5, NASB)

*“Blessed are those who wash their robes,
that they may have the right to the tree of life,
and may enter the gates into the city.”*
(Revelation 22:14, NASB).

*“He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes;
and there shall no longer be any death;
there shall be no longer be any mourning,
or crying, or pain;”*
(Revelation 21:4, NASB).

Talk together as a family.

1. If you were away from your home country, what's one thing you would miss?
2. What is one item or feeling that you associate with home?
3. Who is one person that you can instantly feel at home with and "be yourself"?

4. Get creative. What's one thing you would love to see in heaven? (For example, a tree that grows bacon year-round, a waterslide that ends in a vat of marshmallow cream, puppies that always stay puppies, 24-hour soccer matches—you get the idea.)
5. What is one way you—both as individuals and as a family—could help people to feel embraced and "at home" in your home, His embassy? Be as specific as possible.



Conversation 4:
Living for
Another Kingdom

Outside Your Walls

FOR ADULTS: *Author and blogger Kristen Welch, in her book *Raising Grateful Kids in an Entitled World*, writes,*

For many years, our family lived a good, often intentional life inside our four walls. We focused on ourselves—what we needed, what we loved, what we wanted. We spent time together, reading the Bible, playing games, focusing on our little family. I think taking care of your family, dreaming a little, splurging at times is great, but when that’s all we do, we are creating a self-awareness void. The best way to fill that empty place is by serving others.

It is strikingly easy to live very good, very intentional lives that don’t actively seek to pour ourselves out for those outside our families. Rather than our

homes functioning as thriving little biomes, fairly self-contained, this discussion sets a vision for our homes acting as aircraft carriers—which launch intentional missions to the outside world. And that is what making your home an embassy is all about: living beyond ourselves, living for others, living for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Read together:

In many parts of the world, places like Cuba, Haiti, Kenya, and the war torn countries of the middle east, people who know anything about America long to go there one day.

For these and others living in very poor countries, wealthy countries like the United States or Canada or the countries of Western Europe sound a little like the Book of Revelation does for us: beyond belief.

One African child with grandparents in Great Britain couldn't wait to tell his friends about the "magic box" in his grandparents' kitchen: You put dirty dishes in the box, close the door, push the button, and the dishes come out *clean*! Some citizens of poorer nations wonder—can any place really be that fantastic, with healthcare and

education and smooth roads and supermarkets piled high with food?

Looking at the world around them, many have decided their home countries don't offer what they need. Around the world every day, hopeful faces wait outside embassies. They're people who aren't citizens of that embassy's country at all. They simply long to visit there—or even more, to become citizens. **They long for more, and they bank their hopes on a future, on the promise of a better life.**

Americans may remember these words from the poem etched upon the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, "The New Colossus." Don't these sound a little like words Jesus might say?

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

But those of us who live in wealthier countries know that life is still far from perfect. And although a trustworthy

justice system, access to education, and help from poverty make a significant difference in the quality of someone's life, this broken world filled with death and pain and loss and sin is not our home.

*We are citizens of a place that is far from here,
with much greater promises than wealth or the
chance to make a good life for ourselves.*

As Christ's ambassadors, we can help others find citizenship in heaven.

How do we bring people to the King?

First, like real ambassadors today, you must know as much as you can about your true home and your King so you can accurately represent Him to anyone who asks or who comes to you or your home embassy for help. That means studying the Bible, which is God's message to us and to all people of all nations.

Second, ask your King every day what He has for you to do for Him. Real ambassadors get messages from their home country with requests to meet with certain officials or to tour local cities to get to know the people. They are

always on mission. God has the same kind of instructions for you, too. But we have to ask, listen carefully for Him to answer, and then we must follow.

The Bible tells us God's Holy Spirit will be our instructor as ambassadors. He will tell us what to say (Luke 21:13–15), lead or show us who to talk to (Acts 8:27–29), help us to remember all Jesus said (John 14:26), and He will guide us (John 16:13).

Third, welcome people into your home. In Hebrews 13:2, we are all encouraged to be hospitable to strangers because sometimes they are angels! Verse 13 reminds us to remember prisoners and to visit them. Being an ambassador sometimes means going to others, not just having them in your own home.

Fourth, make your home embassy about your King. Remember the homeowner in the video saying that she wanted her home to reflect her King? On the walls of her home were a cross and some other pictures about Jesus. Just as the American Embassy in every country of the world has images of our president and our country, think about what your home says about who you belong to. Might you even want to make your room say something

about Jesus so your friends from school notice what matters most to you? (For more ideas on making your home reflect Jesus, go to EverThineHome.com.)

Remember, an embassy doesn't exist to have a great group of ambassadors so the embassy can lock its doors and enjoy everyone all in one place. No. Their mission is like a nerve center for both relating to the foreign nation around them, for inviting new citizens, and for assisting its own citizens with the difficulties in living away from home.

Another analogy might be to think of your embassy as a hospital, a place where people of their own nation or race as well as people of a foreign nation can find assistance and help.

In Genesis 12, God promised Abram, the father of the Jewish people and the father of faith, "I will bless you and make your name great, *so that you will be a blessing*" (emphasis added). God said He would bless Abram so in turn he and his family would bless others.

Is that the kind of family your household wants to be? A residence of ambassadors of all ages can use all God has poured into us—our education, our finances, our home, our talents, our time—to love other people as He would.

Don't miss this: Helping other people reminds us that *we are the rescued ones*. That without Jesus helping us, we wouldn't be citizens at all. We deserve hell. Like the Bible says, "Isn't everything you have and everything you are sheer gifts from God?" (1 Corinthians 4:7, MSG). God reminds us, "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

**May our home be a place where we pour
generously into the world around us, because
God so generously pours into us.**

**May we serve others to honor our King—so they
can know him, and so they, too, can become citizens
of the country that lasts forever.**

*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has
come upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . . to
the end of the earth."* Acts 1:8, emphasis added

Talk together as a family.

1. Is your home country “enough” for all you long for, or do you long to make your home elsewhere? Explain your answer.
2. Continue talking about ways God has blessed you and your family. If you’d like, begin making a poster together of all the things you’re thankful for. As you brainstorm about your blessings, think about how you might be able to use those to love other people outside of your “embassy.”
3. Talk about three specific ways you could use your family’s strengths—such as to playing sports, having a fun game room, being hospitable, having dinner together every night—and turn them outward, showing people what God’s Kingdom is like.

4. Read Matthew 28:19–20 together. As you talk about what you’ve learned in these discussions, begin to craft a family mission statement to guide your embassy outward. Familieswithapurpose.com suggests following this three-pronged format to help you:

- To . . . (Do something)
- In such a way that . . . (How and in which manner)
- So that . . . (We gain these results or benefits)

For more ideas, check out

<http://theartofsimple.net/back-to-the-basics-create-a-family-mission-statement/>.

Notes

1. Keller, T. J. (2013). *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*.
New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
2. Sermon, “The Weight of Glory” (1942).

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