Almighty God, may the words of my mouth continually be a blessing, and the thoughts of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, Amen.

Anyone who’s made the move from one residence to another knows transition can be difficult. There are logistics to consider and things like finding a new support system, grocery store, hairstylist and gym. Those of us in the military are pros at this, but still, it’s a challenge at best.

I recently went to Norfolk to search for a place to live during my next tour. The first place I wanted was gone by the time I called the agent. I was on my way to USAA to sign the paperwork on the 2nd place when the owner decided he didn’t want to wait four weeks for a rental check. Then, an unfortunate event took place on what I thought was the final property when the current tenant passed away. The owner and I agreed, without a doubt, that it was the right thing to do to forego my lease and let the young Navy wife stay put. And so, while I have a great agent and a few good leads, only God knows where I’ll be living when I get there. All the while, internal questions foremost on my mind are, "Where am I going to live?" and "Where is my home?"

In a world where anything goes, except for politically incorrect things of God-especially grace, people of faith are asking the same questions. If the Bible teaches us to be content with who we are and what we have, why do we often feel like strangers in a foreign land? Because we are.

Today's scripture lesson from 2 Corinthians 5 reiterates what the apostle Paul said on behalf of all believers who are earnestly walking with God: “We would prefer to be...at home with The Lord.” As with many things in life, it is not only possible, it is essential for us to recognize the perceived dichotomy of these two statements. We find contentment in Jesus, but recognize that until we are at home with him, we will never be 100% content. Given the fact that this world is not our home, where is our home? Let's take a look at John 14:1-6.

Jesus tells us in John's gospel that there are many rooms in his Father's house. Let us hear the words again: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” (John 14:1) Let’s stop there. This word “troubled” here is the same word that is used in each of the previous three chapters. When Jesus went to his good friend, Martha, following the death of her brother, “he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.” (John 11:33) Anticipating his crucifixion, Jesus prayed to God the Father, “…My soul is troubled.” (John 12:27) On the night before his crucifixion as he was celebrating the Passover with his disciples, “Jesus was troubled in spirit…” when he said “one of you will betray me.” (John 13:21)

When we consider these circumstances - the loss of a dear friend, impending painful death, and betrayal by one who is close - we know, without a doubt, that we have a savior who can identify and relate to the incredible pain we sometimes have in our lives. And he says, “In the world, you will have trouble, but take heart (be encouraged), I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) He says, “Listen, I know you’re going to experience loss and pain in this life, but better days are ahead.” (Chaplain Siemer version.)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me….” (John 14:1-3)

In this particular passage, Jesus was referring to a well-known concept in the culture of his day. A family’s residence was made up of various rooms which surrounded a type of courtyard where all the extended family could gather and live life together. The kids would run around playing “Hide and Seek.”
The women exchanged recipes and worked together to prepare the meals. The men chatted together about the latest camel racing stats or which type of fertilizer worked best to grow their crops. They lived life together.

When a young man found a woman he wanted to marry, he would talk with her family, the arrangements would be made and the preparations would begin. A primary piece of this preparation was the young man’s building a room onto his family’s existing residence where the bride and groom would live following their marriage. This was done under the supervision of the groom’s father.

The son who was to be married never knew when the actual day would arrive. He just kept preparing the place for his bride. As the day got closer, he might eagerly ask his father, “Is today the day?” His father would say, “No, not today, but soon.” Until the day actually arrived and the father would say, “Today’s the day; go and get your bride.” The son would take all of his friends and go to his bride’s village - all this time, she was preparing for the big day as well – and there would be a big celebration because they would finally be together in the place that was prepared for them.

This is the context of the scripture passage as recorded in John 14. “My Father’s house has many rooms…I go and prepare a place for you….” This is the place that has been prepared for those who have gone before us where they are now finally enjoying the presence of Jesus, our Lord. And this is the place that is being prepared for those of us who believe and accept Jesus, God the Son’s proposal.

See, God wants to make a part of his family. Just like any other relationship, if we don’t respond, there is no relationship. In order for us to enjoy all that God has for us, we have to say yes to his proposal. Let me put this another way: God is perfect and holy. We are not. The penalty for our rebellion which expresses itself through sin separates us from God. But God loves us so much that he paid the price required for us to be rescued from our fate: eternal spiritual death. Last time I checked, eternity is a long time. Responding to his proposal is individual decision. It cannot be made for you by anyone else. He wants you to be a part of his family.

Are you ready to say yes? Don’t wait to get your act together. Don’t wait for a better offer because there isn’t one. If you are ready to say yes, please pray with me:

Almighty God, you are holy. I recognize that I deserve death for not doing things your way. I turn away from those things that grieve you. I gratefully receive your forgiveness and accept your love. I want to be in relationship with you, to be part of your family. Heavenly Father, I accept your proposal to be my Lord and Savior all of my days. Amen.

Those of us who prayed that prayer, either today or at some other time, will enjoy his presence and our family for eternity. In a place where there is no more cancer, no more mental illness, there are no more break ups, no more rejection, no more tears or sorrow, and no more goodbyes. Just sweet fellowship with our Savior and one another, in our eternal home.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.