

# flying lessons

by Katie Kyle



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WE USUALLY ASSOCIATE 'flying the nest' with teenagers, not military wives heading for 40. And yet, despite having flown the nest before, I found myself doing it again recently. For me, home is not only a familiar place, containing the most important people in my life, it's a place where order and right angles prevail. People can't believe we have three children when they visit. I'm not proud of the OCD that is the hallmark of almost everything I touch - I know that my desire to control is something I need to work on. Scarily, towards the end of last year, it seemed God was in agreement, as he gently nudged me out of my usual comfort zones.

One of my favourite comfort blankets is a financial one. Last October, I was working as a solicitor, contributing to the family purse, but struggling to juggle it with family and military wife duties. At the AFCU autumn gathering, which focused on work-life balance, I wondered whether God was challenging me to give up my job. A huge part of me was desperate to do so. I was suffering from anxiety and hair loss - my body, if nothing else, was demanding a break. But to my shame, I didn't want to give up the safety net it provided. I realised I'd never, spiritually-speaking, put my money where my mouth was. Most people with a faith will ask God to help with this thing and bless that thing but how often do we launch ourselves into the unknown, stripped free of comfort blankets, trusting God will stay with us?

The speaker at the AFCU event taught

us about eagles that weekend. He described how a mother eagle, when the time comes to teach her young to fly, will start to make the nest uncomfortable with thorns and prickles, eventually pushing her eaglets out. As the eaglets plunge to almost certain death, the father eagle swoops in and carries them back to the nest as many times as it takes until they have learnt to fly. The speaker talked about Jesus being like an eagle, both the mother eagle who nudges us out of our safe haven and the father eagle who catches us on the way down.

My job certainly felt full of thorns. Many things suggested I was supposed to leap. Still indecisive, I sat down to pray with a supportive, slightly frustrated, Jack (his favourite military mantra is 'any decision is better than no decision' so being married to Mrs Can't-Ever-Make-Her-Mind Up can't be easy). Our Bible reading that day was: 'Your teachings are worth more to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver' (Psalm 119:72). Jack asked me if God needed to get a megaphone. I drafted a resignation email and Jack hit send to make it a tandem jump.

My boss offered me more money. I gritted my teeth against the nagging sense that I'd done a stupid thing. That first month without my salary, Jack got paid an additional amount equal to what we were missing. I was delighted-everything dovetailed. But the following month Jack's salary was reduced by that same amount. He'd been overpaid. The leap suddenly felt dangerous. If we'd been wrong about the source of that

money, maybe we were just wrong.

I briefly questioned whether my entire faith was a mistake and I started job hunting, wrestling back the control.

The day I began my job search, we started our advent readings. Jack and I read about Abraham being called to leave everything that was safe and familiar to go in search of a new home on God's promise to bless him and his family. I pictured my own family walking across a desert in the traditional clothes of that time. I stopped job hunting.

Two months later, Jack was offered a posting in the Middle East. Last summer we packed up and moved to the desert, which is now our home. I can't work as a lawyer here but I don't mind - I'd already said my goodbyes to law. And being an overseas tour, we're financially rewarded beyond what my job used to contribute.

Here I wear an abaya. I don't particularly like it but, bizarrely, it's a symbol that this is all part of a plan, God's plan. If I'd done things my way, I'd still be a worn-out lawyer. I have a friend whose daughter has just left for university. When we talked about her flying the nest, my friend said she prefers to say her daughter is learning to fly. It seems to me that's what God wants for all his children. He may let us experience free-fall, he may need to catch us at times, but ultimately, he's teaching us to fly.