From The City ...
... To The Country

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Sharing a few points of what I learned in moving from the city to the country may be of help to others who are faced with a like move. Linda and I moved with our four children from Maryland and arrived in Missouri June 8, 1982.

The first forty years of my life were spent in the city of Washington D.C., or the suburbs: mainly Bladensburg (18 years), Bowie (10 years), and Frederick County (4 years), Maryland. Except for visits to the highlands of the Allegheny Mountains, there was no significant contact with the country. A youngster going away to summer camp in a rural area would have had more contact with the country than myself. During this forty years, I was never around farm animals or crops of any kind. Not one bale of hay was ever lifted because there was no reason and no opportunity. As close as I ever got to the farm or rural life was driving past a farm. Rural life was totally foreign to me. So to move to Missouri into a true rural and farm setting was a total change from my prior experiences. Of course, what is true of myself is also true of my wife and children. We were at that time true city folk. So our move to Missouri was a big cultural change as well as environmental. By the grace of God it happened, but in retrospect, there are few things that come to mind that may be wise steps for you to take.

This story, then, is one of a city boy going to the country. It is told for the express purpose of helping others who may have to move to a new environment that is totally different by all measures. Israel has always been a people on the move. Remember Abraham, the settlement of western Europe, the other Israelite nations of the world, and America. America was populated by Israelites on the move. From the eastern shore across the Appalachians, the great plains, to the west coast, the trail of Israel is marked. Today, many in Israel may feel the urge to move. Many have responded to the urge to move. For those who have recently moved and for those who are struggling with this decision, these thoughts come to mind to share with you. Please remember that I am not the answer man. These thoughts may not help you. But having already walked this road, my sharing the experience with you may save you a stumbling block or two which could prevent success. If a failure can be turned into a success, then this is why the story is written. Twelve years later, these thoughts come to me and are offered as my counsel to you (Proverbs 18:13).

Scout and Investigate First

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" *(Hosea 4:6).*

Abraham did not scout and investigate first because God spoke directly to him. Today, we need to "try the spirits" to see if the prompting of the heart is of God (I John 4:1). We need to count the cost (Luke 14:28). To count the cost requires a visit to the potential new locale. In the summer of 1981, when Linda and I made the decision to move to Missouri, we felt that it would be wise to revisit seeing everything from a move perspective. In October, Linda, Nathan, and I drove to Missouri to the Church for this purpose. Our only previous visit was Pentecost 1980 when we camped on the hilltop and were literally eaten alive by mosquitos. Then we had purposed that we would never live in Missouri. We soon felt, however, that Yahweh was directing us to focus upon higher values than fleeting unpleasantries of physical discomforts. Our visit confirmed God's will for the move. This set in motion major decisions from which there has been no turning back.

Affirm That Your Move Is The Will of God

"Thy will be done." ***(Matt 26:42).***

After prayer, seeking counsel, and a personal visit, you have affirmed God's direction, then work to fulfill the vision. After affirming God's will by this process, we put our house in the hands of a realtor and set in motion the preparation for the move. Understanding God's will here is utmost. Reason: the vision will be tested.

The Vision

It is important to Yahweh that your decision is one of conviction and not preference. At the time we put the house on the market, there was a significant decline in the housing market. The value of the house had plunged 20% from its value the prior year. Normally a house in our local area would sell in a month or two, but not in this case. Keeping the vision in sight, however, we prayed for a creative alternative. Yahweh provided one: sell at no interest. Advertising this way attracted a wonderful buyer. We found many challenges to the move over the years, including significant and unexpected loss of transition income. Challenges or trials should be expected. But do not lose the vision. Tests come. Trials come. When you do not lose the vision, the tests and trials become opportunities to climb the spiritual ladder of life. These give Yahweh a chance to make Himself powerful on your behalf. Nothing is more important than identifying God's will and not losing the vision.

Church As the Centerpoint of Life

To be successful, a move of this nature requires the willingness to focus life around the Church. This means not only worship, but friends and activities. Between family life and Church life, there basically is no other life. Even business life is couched in terms of the Church or Biblical calendar. You need to be ready for this. It takes a certain amount of growing into, at least this was true for us, but having the spirit to want it to happen is necessary from the beginning. Being without a church for a number of years primed us to do the best that we could to be Churchmen.

Think Future

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" *(Phil 3:13).*

We found it difficult to divorce ourselves from the decades of history in our own lives of being Marylanders and becoming Missourians. We are Missourians now, but it seems that there is a period of adjustment needed for the mind to make the trip that the body has made. What helped more than anything is to not lose the vision that the future was here, not in Maryland. Certainly, it is difficult to leave family, lifetime friends, and familiar circumstances. But knowing you are in God's will and not losing the vision will make the transition the best that it can be. This mental transition that the new place is home must be made, and the sooner the better. Again, your vision cannot be lost. We might remember that a turning point in Pizarro's conquest of Peru was the line he drew in the sand symbolizing no turning back, or Cortez burning the ships in the harbor upon landing in Mexico.

Purchase Land

The better way to establish roots and begin the road to permanency is to purchase your land and dwelling or build instead of renting. To rent is to provide an escape. Renting makes it too easy to compromise the vision and return to your origin. Renting may be a necessary, temporary measure, but it is frowned upon beyond a transition period leading to permanency of housing. We purchased land within about one month of moving, and a house was started within six weeks. I am convinced that the quicker these two steps are done, the more permanent the vision becomes. Putting one's money where his vision is helps to curtail double mindedness. It is an act of confidence and permanency.

Expect Financial Challenges

Please be advised that not only ourselves but many have been challenged financially upon leaving the comforts of the city with its good paying jobs. Over the early years of transition and settling in, we found our capital base eroded away. This means that the ability to replace big ticket items was gone. For example when a couple of tires were needed, used were purchased instead of new. When they wore out, more used tires were purchased. A person should be prepared to buy used mowers, and used this and that. Become very handy at repairing. Learn to do without. This, I find, is common for many. Expect this trial. It was an unexpected trial for us, but a just and merciful God carried us through upon His outstretched wings. Being grounded in financial freedom principles will go a long way to making a move to the country successful. During such trials, keep the faith and remember your vision.

Presume Imperfections

Realize that a church body is a group of imperfect people seeking God. They will not arrive to the ideal this side of the Kingdom. Linda and I knew that we were sinners walking in grace. We should not expect from others what we could not deliver ourselves. I believe that it is vital to view a church body with real expectations, not ideal expectations. You will need to come to grips quickly with the fact that all expectations are to come from God. You will need to admit that there is no utopia upon earth, and the fountain of youth does not exist.

Be a Team Player

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do" is my advice. There are different cultures. There are different habits. The ways of the new area will probably be different from your prior experiences. My advice is to learn to blend in to the new ways. Try not to make waves. The new boy on the block has a certain obligation to catch the flow of the community. Be positive. Be grateful. Be a learner. Try the new ways. They may be better. They may also be as they are because of necessity rather than prefer-