

Planning a Big Move? Trust God in the Transition

Americans sheltered in place and worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic but trend watchers say we are on the cusp of a huge moving boom over the next few years. Are we just restless after so many months in quarantine? There are actually many factors driving people to relocate:

- Because so many people began working remotely during the pandemic, workers now realize they can work from anywhere. Research by Upwork found that 36.2 million Americans plan to work from home by 2025—that's 87 percent more than before COVID struck. That means a huge segment of the workforce plans to relocate to places where they can get cheaper housing or live closer to family.
- Many Americans are moving from big cities to escape rising crime, high taxes or crowded roads. Studies show the biggest numbers of people are moving to Florida, Texas, Arizona and North Carolina; the states losing the most people are New York, California, Illinois and New Jersey.
- Many young families are looking for cheaper houses in more rural or Southern states where they hope to find better schools and an overall better quality of life.

I have many younger friends who began talking about relocation during the tumultuous pandemic era. Most of them feel trapped in cities that are overrun by crime, a rising cost of living and hostility to Christian values. I gave them the same advice I am sharing here:

Put your future in God's hands. Abraham, the father of our faith, began his spiritual odyssey when the Lord said, "Go from your country ... to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1b, MEV). Moses had to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

David had to move to Jerusalem. And Jesus' last words to His disciples were about moving to foreign countries.

It's comforting that the Bible is full of stories of people who were directed by God to move. But never make a decision to move unless you know the Lord is leading you. If He wants to take you from one place to another, He will confirm your decision, open doors and direct your steps. (And don't move just to get away from bad influences! God may want you to stay and shine the light of Jesus in a dark community.)

Be brave. When Joshua was preparing to relocate the people of Israel to Canaan, God said three times: "Be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1:6a, a7, 9b). Moving requires a leap of faith and doubters always get cold feet. Has God given you a big promise about the land you are about to possess? Take a deep breath, resist fear and forge ahead.

Take one step at a time. Counselors say relocation is one of the most stressful things in life—ranking right up there with the death of a loved one. It's a huge combination of stressors—selling a house, buying or renting a new house, hiring movers, leaving friends and stepping into the dark unknown. Not fun!

You don't have to handle everything at once. And you don't have to figure out your relocation plan by yourself. You have a Shepherd and He is good. He leads you "beside still waters" and He guides you "in paths of righteousness" (Ps. 23:2-3). Trust your Shepherd's leading. He will make your transition peaceful.

Let go of the old. When God wanted to bless Naomi, He told her to leave the forsaken land of Moab and move to Bethlehem. Her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth pledged to go with her but her other daughter-in-law, Orpah, couldn't tear herself away from her culture, even though God was doing good things for His people in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:14-16).

Sometimes when God calls us to a new place, we discover that we are hindered by many soulish distractions. You must love Jesus more than you love your comfort zone. It's good to have roots in a place but you must never let those roots become stronger than your willingness to follow God anywhere.

Be open to God's detours. One important lesson I learned in a recent transition is that we must never lock ourselves into "our" plan. You may sense the Lord leading you to leave where you are but when you begin moving to your new destination, God may redirect you. The apostle Paul was heading to Rome to preach the gospel but a shipwreck took him to Malta—where he led an unscheduled revival. Don't be so headstrong about your destination that God can't gently nudge you in a different direction.

Expect miracles. When I knew for sure God was calling my wife and I to move from Florida to Georgia five years ago, we asked our friends to pray with us. I shared seven specific prayer requests and the first item on the list was: "Quick sale of our house." Guess what? Our house sold in less than 24 hours—to the first people who walked in the door!

Moving can be a thrilling adventure when you invite God into the process. When the Holy Spirit says go, He goes with you. When He calls you to leave the old and step into the new, He propels you to a new spiritual level. {eo2}

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