



PREPARING TO STAND

Number 35 — May, 2010

“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

So, Why Hasn't God Opened the Way for Us to Get out in the Country Yet?

by Jim Buller

This question has been on the hearts and minds of many of us who have received the country living message. For some of us, it has been years since we first felt convicted to move into the country. As we see world conditions deteriorating our sense of urgency increases, yet as the economy worsens it seems more than ever like an impossibility. We hear about others who have moved out, but we still find ourselves and our families in town. Although we keep claiming the promise, “God will help His people to find such homes outside the cities,” (*Country Living* page 24), we can't help but wonder why God has not helped *us* to get a place in the country.

There is a recurring pattern in many of the Bible's stories, (noted by Bill Gothard), that I believe sheds some light on this situation. Frequently, God will give someone a “vision” of something He wants them to do. But then circumstances arise which make it seem impossible that the vision will ever be accomplished, and to all appearances the vision “dies.” Later however—in God's timing—the vision is “realized.”

The story of Joseph is a classic example. God gave him dreams about his brothers bowing down to him. They are already jealous of him, and as he shares these dreams, their hatred grows. When they get the opportunity, they sell him into slavery. As a slave, and especially later when he is unjustly thrown in prison, this vision apparently dies. But in God's time he becomes the prime minister of Egypt, and due to the famine, his brothers *do* come and bow before him. (See Genesis chapters 37-45.)

Other examples of this principle can be seen in the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, and the disciples. Many of us, I believe, are experiencing this process as well. We have received the vision of living in the country, yet circumstances make it seem that this vision will have to die.

We need to recognize *why* God puts His people through this process, as important things need to be accomplished during this death-of-the-vision phase. One reason for the apparent death of the vision is to test our sincerity. The following quotation is referring primarily to our spirituality, (in the context of the Laodicean message), but the principle involved is the same. It also points out that even more than

accomplishing the vision, God's main goal is the development of our characters. Notice especially the last sentence.

Testimonies for the Church Vol. 1, pages 186-187

"God will prove His people. Jesus bears patiently with them, and does not spew them out of His mouth in a moment. Said the angel: "God is weighing His people." If the message had been of as short duration as many of us supposed, there would have been no time for them to develop character. Many moved from feeling, not from principle and faith, and this solemn, fearful message stirred them. It wrought upon their feelings, and excited their fears, but did not accomplish the work which God designed that it should. God reads the heart. Lest His people should be deceived in regard to themselves, He gives them time for the excitement to wear off, and then proves them to see if they will obey the counsel of the True Witness."

Notice also the following comments regarding the experience of Moses. During the apparent death-of-the-vision we are given the opportunity to learn important lessons that will help us do things God's way once the vision *is* realized.

The Ministry of Healing, pages 474-475

"Consider the experience of Moses. The education he received in Egypt as the king's grandson and the prospective heir to the throne was very thorough. Nothing was neglected that was calculated to make him a wise man, as the Egyptians understood wisdom. He received the highest civil and military training. He felt that he was fully prepared for the work of delivering Israel from bondage. But God judged otherwise. His providence appointed Moses forty years of training in the wilderness as a keeper of sheep."

Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 247-248

"Man would have dispensed with that long period of toil and obscurity, deeming it a great loss of time. But Infinite Wisdom called him who was to become the leader of his people to spend forty years in the humble work of a shepherd. The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, thus developed, would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel. No advantage that human training or culture could bestow, could be a substitute for this experience."

Frequently we get impatient, and want to "get on with things." Like Moses we feel we are ready for the realization of the vision. However, God sees that we need some important character training, and we need to learn to do things His way rather than trying to do it our own way. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8:9. During the death-of-the-vision phase God is working to train us. Therefore, rather than just sitting back and waiting, or getting frustrated and giving up, we should humbly and diligently be cooperating with what He is trying to teach us.

For example, when we first got a hold of the country living message, we made lots of plans. Essentially we were duplicating the city lifestyle out in the country, with the addition of gardens, orchards, and farm animals. But God didn't let our plans happen. Over time we have realized that this type of country living not only costs more to set up than a home in town, but it is considerably more expensive to maintain. *Therefore this cannot be the answer.* One of the reasons for country living is preparation for a time when we will not be able to buy or sell. Therefore, it doesn't make sense that we should set ourselves up in a situation that requires *even more* cash flow. We've learned that we need to focus on keeping things simple, and looking for solutions that can still be maintained even without *any* cash flow.

The following quotation brings out a couple more principles that we need to consider on this subject. (Emphasis supplied.)

Country Living, page 24-25

More and more, as time advances, our people will have to leave the cities. For years we have been instructed that our brethren and sisters, and especially families with children, should plan to leave the cities as the way opens before them to do so. *Many will have to labor earnestly to help open the way.* But until it is possible for them to leave, so long as they remain, they should be *most active in doing missionary work*, however limited their sphere of influence may be. —*Review and Herald*, Sept. 27, 1906.

Setting up a country home is *a lot of work*, that will take up *a lot of our time*. It can easily become all absorbing. Therefore, why should God provide us with a place in the country if we would just become all wrapped up with trying to provide ourselves with the comforts and conveniences of modern life, to the neglect of the missionary work He needs us to do? If we are not *already* in the habit of working for others, it would be extremely difficult to develop this character trait with a home that needs fixing up and several acres worth of chores staring us un the face.

Along this same line, it might also be possible that we would become so absorbed in our country property and the investment of our time and resources in it that we would have difficulty leaving it all behind when the time comes to "flee to the mountains?" Matthew 24:15-16. "Remember Lot's wife!" Luke 17:32. If God knows this might be a distinct possibility for us, He may delay opening the way, until our attitudes and values have had a chance to change. "When He was preparing Elijah for translation, God moved him from place to place, that the prophet might not settle down at ease, and thus fail of gaining spiritual power." *Gospel Workers* pages 269-270.

Again, the answer is simplicity. Keep in mind that during His ministry Jesus said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." He keep his own personal needs as simple as possible, so He would have as much time as possible to minister to others. His focus was not on trying to make things comfortable and convenient for Himself. There *is* only twenty-four hours in the day, and there just may not be enough time to set up and maintain a country home corresponding to the modern lifestyle *and* do meaningful missionary work.

The other principle brought out in the above quotation from *Country Living*, page 24-25, is that, “Many will have to labor earnestly to help open the way.” However, following the principle noted in the last three paragraphs, this must *not* mean just to work harder, to earn enough money so as to be able to purchase a piece of property in the country. I believe there is a deeper meaning.

Let’s keep in mind that it is *God* who has instructed us to move out of the cities into the country where we can raise our own provisions. (See *Country Living* pages 9-10). *He* has also promised to supply all our needs and to open the way for us. (See Philippians 4:19 and *Country Living* page 24). As an example of His concern for us, He points us to His care for the birds, and then states, “Are you not of more value than they?” Matthew 6:26. But unfortunately we frequently misinterpret *how* He provides for us. Notice the following quotation.

Review and Herald, 09-18-88

“The Saviour pointed his followers to the birds of the air, as they warbled their carols of praise, unencumbered with thoughts of care; for ‘they sow not, neither do they reap,’ and yet the great Father provides for their needs. He asks, ‘Are ye not much better than they?’ Those who profess to be the children of God dishonor their Heavenly Father when they manifest unbelief. The great Provider for man and beast opens his hand, and supplies all his creatures. The birds of the air are not beneath his notice. He does not drop the food into their bills, but he makes provision for their needs. They must exert themselves to gather the grains he has scattered for them. They must prepare the material for their little nests. They must feed their young. They go forth singing, to their labor; for ‘your Heavenly Father feedeth them.’ ‘Are ye not much better than they?’ Are not ye, as intelligent, spiritual worshipers, of more value than the fowls of the air? Will not the Author of man’s being, the Preserver of his life, the One who formed him in his own divine image, provide for his necessities, if he but trust in him?”

Whereas we must look to God to open the way for us to get a place in the country, we also need to be willing to “exert” ourselves, and “labor earnestly to help open the way.” As noted earlier this does not mean just working harder to earn more money so we can afford a country home. There are many other things we can do “to help open the way.” To begin with —and most importantly— we can work on our attitudes and values. We can cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s efforts to develop a concern for the physical and spiritual needs of others. We can also work with His efforts to develop a contentment with a simpler lifestyle that we may have the *time* to be able to help others. Beyond that, country living skills can be learned, key equipment items we can be collected, and non-necessary possessions can be disposed of.

Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5, page 152

“We ought now to be heeding the injunction of our Saviour: ‘Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.’ It is now that our brethren should be cutting down their possessions instead of increasing them. We are about to move to a better country, even a heavenly.

Then let us not be dwellers upon the earth, but be getting things into as compact a compass as possible.”

One final principle that is frequently overlooked in discussions on country living is alluded to in a quotation from *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 415. “The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.” Since God’s people have been given the responsibility of sharing the gospel, this final revelation of God’s love will no doubt be revealed *through them*. *The Ministry of Healing*, page 470 points out that, “The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.” This type of love *only* comes from a connection with God, as stated in 1 John 4:7-8. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” It is especially worth noting here, that this type of love *cannot be done by ourselves*—it can *only* be revealed and expressed *in relationships*. This is why we have been told to “love *one another*.”

In order to provide this final revelation of God’s character of love, it is quite likely that as we get closer to the end, “country living” will take the form of a *community* of believers. Our need to be able to raise our own provisions *and* carry out the greatest evangelistic thrust in history during the final months of probation will provide the setting where this type of love can be both developed, and be revealed.

It is therefore possible that God will lead you to be a part of a group on a piece of country property. As you join the group you would want to be an asset rather than a liability. The more skills you already know, the more of a blessing you would be to the group; and any key equipment items you had could also be beneficial. Working together, sharing property and equipment will also solve many of the other issues we have noted earlier, such as having enough time to do missionary work and get all the chores associated with the country lifestyle done.

Some form of portable housing that can be brought in and set up on the property would also be a definite asset. Especially if God were to provide you with a relatively undeveloped piece of property, portable housing would make it easier to follow the counsel given in Proverbs 24:27. “Prepare your outside work, make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house.” Ideally, any housing should be set up so you can heat and cook with wood, and *not* be dependant on electricity or fossil-fuels for heating and cooking, (as in most cases these must be paid for).

As you anticipate getting out of the city and moving to the country: “Go Forward!” “Do the work that lies nearest you...” Do all that you can to prepare for when God will open the way, and be involved in as much missionary work as possible in the mean time. Trust that, “God will reveal from point to point what to do next.” Prepare and “pray on in faith and await the time for decided action.” For, “Those who obey this warning *will find a refuge*.” Exodus 14:15; *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 8*, page 246; *Country Living* page 6; *Prophets and Kings*, page 133; *Country Living*, page 6 (emphasis supplied).

Books to Invest in:

The Good Life, by Helen & Scott Nearing. ISBN-10: 0805209700

This book was the classic on homesteading a couple decades ago. Fortunately it is still available. Although the authors, (now deceased) were not Adventists, much of what they present is according to scriptural principles.

Back to Basics, edited by Abigail Gehring. ISBN-10: 1602392331

A good all-around book on many different country living skills and techniques.

How to Grow More Vegetables, by John Jeavons. ISBN-10: 1580087965

An excellent book on gardening in the most efficient and space effective manner possible, using only hand tools.

Country Woodcraft, by Drew Langsner. ISBN-10: 0878572007

How to make many useful household items and farm equipment, using only hand woodworking tools.

Blacksmithing Basics for the Homestead, by Joe DeLaRonde. ISBN-10: 1586857061

How to set up a simple blacksmith shop and make many useful items.

The New Organic Grower, Eliot Coleman. ISBN-10: 093003175X

A good book on setting up and running a small farm.

Skills to Learn:

- gardening—even if you can only do it in pots or containers
- cooking simple basic foods “from scratch”—dutch oven cooking
- preserving: canning, drying, root cellar
- sewing: simple & basic clothing, home furnishings, bags
- construction: wood, cement, stone, alternate construction methods
- woodworking—especially with hand tools
- metalworking
- home remedies & medical skills
- camping skills
- wilderness survival

Equipment to Gather:

- gardening tools & non-hybrid seeds
- wheel barrow
- wood stove
- dutch oven
- grain grinder
- hand woodworking & carpentry tools
- tools needed to use wood as fuel: bow saw, (cross-cut saw), “¾ axe,” maul
- sharpening stones/files
- twine & rope—learn some practical knots
- “rugged” clothing & bedding
- treadle sewing machine
- buckets, wash tubs & wringer
- portable housing—heat and cook with wood