



PREPARING TO STAND

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“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

BEING A CONSUMER OR A PRODUCER and Implications for the Country Living Lifestyle

by Jim Buller

America used to be incredibly productive. To literally ‘carve a nation out of the wilderness,’ its people had to be. First in the colonies along the East coast, and then throughout the Western expansion, generations of pioneers on frontier homesteads all across the continent literally produced just about everything they needed. They had to. There wasn’t a shopping center just around the corner. Civilization was *miles* away.

One example of this productivity is found in Eric Sloan’s book, *Diary of an Early American Boy*. Here he relates how on long winter evenings, rather than just sitting around, the family would make nails from iron rods heated in the fireplace. Another example comes from the World War II era. It has been said, that one of the reasons America was able to win the war, was because they could build ships, fill them with supplies, and sail them across the Atlantic faster than the Nazi U-boats could sink them.

But nowadays things are different. Since World War II, rather than continuing to be a nation of producers, Americans have become consumer. It has simply been easier to buy things rather than make them. What’s more, Americans, and Western culture in general, buy much more than they need —so much so, that the true necessities have almost been lost sight of. This shift in the mind-set and corresponding lifestyle of society has been the root of many of the economic problems now facing the world. But that’s not the subject of this article. Our purpose here is to consider the end-time implications of being a consumer or a producer, especially as it relates to the country living message.

Before we go on, let’s define what we mean by ‘consumer’ and ‘producer.’ Since all of us must consume things in order to stay alive, to a certain extent we are all ‘consumers.’ So the real issue here is: Do we *just* consume? Or, do we also produce *as well as* consume? Which raises a couple more questions: *How much* do we produce in proportion to what we consume? and, *What kind of things* do we produce? So, for our purposes here, a ‘producer’ will be someone who produces *more* than they consume, and especially someone who produces a large portion of the things they need —rather than being dependant on someone else to produce these necessities for

them. On the other hand, a 'consumer' is someone who either just consumes, or produces less much than they consume. Please note that being a 'producer' does not necessarily mean that one is producing *cash*. This may or may not be the case. However, even if the production of necessities does not 'produce' any cash, it should minimize the *need* for cash.

Probably the most important consideration of this subject is: Does God care whether we are producers or consumers? We find the answer to this question back in the Garden of Eden. The Creator didn't make a shopping mall for Adam and Eve just outside the garden, there was just a vast world filled with nature. So although He abundantly provided for them through the things of nature, like many of the native people around the world, they had to gather and make literally everything they needed. Notice also the following quotation from *Steps to Christ*, page 123.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught His disciples precious lessons in regard to the necessity of trusting in God. These lessons were designed to encourage the children of God through all ages, and they have come down to our time full of instruction and comfort. 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. The Saviour asks, "Are ye not much better than they?" Matthew 6:26. 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 gather the grains He has scattered for them. They must prepare the material for their little nests. They must feed their young.

God still provides for the bird, the animals, and humans. But notice that He does not drop food into any of our mouths. We must gather and make the things we need. To make the matter even more clear, notice John 15:1-8.

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Here Jesus says that as a result of being connected with Him we would "bear," or produce, "*much* fruit." It is especially worth noting that the production of fruit provides no direct benefit to the plant that bears it! Therefore, "fruit" is something plants produce

for the benefit of *others*! And although this may not make sense from a selfish point of view, as we look around in nature, we find that everything in the whole universe has been created to “bear” some kind of “fruit” —everything exists to benefit others. It is only demons and selfish humans who do not follow this plan. In these verses Jesus is seeking to illustrate His desire for us to live lives of unselfish productive service —and that we should be able to bless others in practical ways with the things we have produced. Note also that we are not able, or expected to produce without first having a connection to Him, the Source of all blessings.

These verses also point out that those who do not produce fruit are “taken away.” This idea is expanded in the parable about the barren fig tree in Luke 13:6-9, where the landowner says, “Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?” And we have another illustration in the story in Matthew 21:18-19 about the fig tree which withered away and died after Jesus cursed it because it bore no fruit. Remember also the Parable of the Talents. The servants who traded with their talents were commended for their productivity, whereas the servant who buried his talent was rejected and cast out because *he didn't produce anything*. Thus we see that a consumer mind-set is inherently selfish, and that both creation and redemption point to God's intention that we should be producers, not just selfish consumers. As noted earlier, most people nowadays are primarily consumers. The world is indeed ripe for destruction.

Unfortunately the general public knows very little about producing, especially producing necessities. To a large degree this knowledge has been lost as the last few generations have grown up as consumers. For example ask just about any child where his or her family gets the things they need, and he or she will probably answer, “From the store.” It would be rare indeed to find one who would reply that someone in their family makes these things.

This consumer mind-set also manifests itself in both of the typical responses to The-End-Of-Life-As-We-Know-It. Because this mind-set is so prevalent, most people probably don't even realize that being a consumer is an issue, and thus both of these reactions are probably made without people even realizing what they are doing.

On one hand, there are those who seek to stock up food and supplies. Subconsciously their reasoning probably goes something like: “Since I won't be able to buy what I need in the future, I'd better store up enough now while I *can* get it.” The other response is an interpretation of the end-time prophecies, that ends up presumptuously claiming God's promises. Typical of this approach is the statement, “We don't need to worry about preparing, as God has promised to take care of us. All we need to do is just ‘trust’ in Him.” Although this statement may sound full of faith, it frequently springs from the unspoken assumption that all we have to do is consume what God provides as He essentially drops the food into our mouths.

The problem with both of these responses is that they don't *consider producing* the things we need since all we know how to do is consume! Rarely do we find anyone who says, “Oh, since I won't be able to buy the things I need at the store anymore, I'd better get set up so I can produce them.” Yet this is exactly what God has planned for us to do! Notice the following from *Country Living*, pages 9-10 (*Letter 5*, 1904).

Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own

provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies.

Like the pioneers on the frontier homestead, we are to get set up in the country where we can raise our own provisions! Instead continuing to be consumers, God wants us to become producers again.

Another consideration that figures into this picture is that if we try to approach country living from a consumer mind-set it will be very expensive. It simply takes a lot of money to get set up in the country with all the comforts and conveniences of the city and to stock up a big stash of supplies —much more money than the average person has! However, the country living message is for *all* of God's people, the poor, as well as those who may have the means to purchase a spacious well equipped home in the country. Following God's counsel needs to be do-able even for those who don't have this financial ability.

Therefore answer *can not* be 'more money.' Besides, we are heading for a time when we will not be able to buy or sell, (see Revelation 13:17.) Neither are we to just sit back and "wait for God to open the way." Although the details will be different for each situation, the answer lies in: (1) Scaling back our expectations —remember Jesus was essentially homeless and unemployed as He carried out His ministry, and also He has told us that a servant is not greater than his master, (see Luke 9:58, John 15:20); and (2) Becoming a *producer* rather than remaining a consumer. Together this means not only developing the skills, and obtaining the necessary tools to be able to produce the things we need from raw materials, or at least make as many of them as possible, but also to be content with what we are able to produce. This may include growing and eating our own food; making and wearing our own shoes and clothing; building and living in a home which is furnished largely with items we have crafted; developing a supply of water for drinking, washing and agriculture; and cutting our own wood for heating and cooking.

Also keep in mind that in the present state of society, we are surrounded by high tech solutions to these everyday needs. So although it may be quite tempting to look to technology for solutions, technology is not necessarily the answer either —nor will it be wise to depend on it. In an End-Of-Life-As-We-Know-It / no buy—no sell situation, it simply may not be possible to maintain most high tech solutions. For example, if something were to break, or be damaged, or stolen, replacing parts would not be an option, much less having to replace an entire unit —and then where would that leave things? Instead, we should learn another lesson from the early American frontiers people. We have already noted that their producer lifestyle is exemplary, but technologically, they were able to repair or replace just about everything they had with a few simple tools and what was readily available from nature.

God always has multiple reasons for doing what He does, therefore it is very likely that one of the reasons He wants us out in the country at this point in Earth's history is to train us to be producers as a part of our preparation for the heavenly

lifestyle. It is really too bad that some well meaning people, in an attempt to make heaven appealing, have heavily “tweaked” the typical ideas of what we will be doing when we get there toward a selfish consumerism. But notice the following quotation from *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, page 99, “Those slothful servants who look forward to a heaven of inaction, have false ideas of what constitutes heaven.”

Ellen White has given us an interesting example of what it means to be productive. Notice the following quotation from *Manuscript Releases Vol. 10*, page 71.

We go into some houses and we see our sisters sitting with their little crochet needles, crocheting, and spending their time in this way. Well, I am not idle either when I am on the cars going from one place to another. I have my knitting, but what am I knitting for? Why I am knitting stockings for this one and for that one and the other. I am not using the crochet needle, but am knitting for those who are in need around me. There are many of our ministers who go with their feet thinly clad and I can give these to them and they do not come amiss, and I advise you to do the same. —Ms. 3, 1888, pp. 8-9.

Notice that this statement is not speaking against crocheting, as some have interpreted it. Instead, she is speaking *for* productivity. The “little crochet needles” referred to here were being used to make lace and doilies —unnecessary, frilly decorations. Whereas she was knitting socks, producing a necessity.

Another example, this time from history, is Gandhi. He recognized that India’s poverty was largely the result of colonial policy which had encouraged the people to be consumers, and that they could never rise above their poverty unless they became producers. As a leader of his people he was no doubt extremely busy. Yet to be an example to the people and support a national movement encouraging productivity he spent some time each day spinning yarn on a simple, low-tech spinning wheel. What’s more, even as a statesman, he always dressed in simple clothing which encouraged his people to scale back their expectations and be content with what they were able to produce.

Please note that the activities involved in producing many of our necessities, such as these examples of spinning yarn and knitting socks, can be done just about anywhere —city or country. So it is not necessary to live in the country in order to be a producer. Therefore, we do not *have to wait*, nor *should we wait* until we have a place in the country to develop the mind-set, skills, and habits of being a producer.

Having the tools and skills so as to be able to make one’s necessities, together with a productive mind-set and habits is also probably more important than actually making the things one needs. God may have directed you to be heavily involved in service activities such as being a pastor, teacher, accountant, or medical person rather than earning your living by producing necessities. Therefore you may still be a producer, as long as you are not wasting the time you are not at work with non-productive consumer mind-set activities such as entertainment. Even so, as the end-time prophecies unfold, it will still be important for you to have obtained and developed

the basic tools and skills that will enable you to produce as many of your own necessities as possible.

Also keep in mind that although there *is* a certain amount of wisdom in stocking up some food and supplies, it is important to recognize the ultimate fragility of this plan. For example these supplies could be lost in a disaster, a raid, or the sudden need to relocate with only what could be carried on one's back. What's more, given the indefinite length of the end-times, even if these supplies were not lost or left behind, sooner or later they would likely all be used up —and then what? The answer still lies in being able to produce the things we need.

If God were to provide us with a piece of country property while we still have a consumer mind-set wouldn't that just strengthen our tendency to continue to expect Him to 'drop the food into our mouths?' He is much too wise for that! In the same way that the birds must use their God-given abilities to gather and fashion the food and materials that meet their needs, we too must be willing to do our part. Thus instead of burying our talents by wasting our time with nonproductive activities, let's begin now to live a producer lifestyle —even if we are still living in a high-rise city apartment.

Christ's Object Lessons, page 303

Many there are against whose names will be found written in the books of heaven, Not producers, but consumers. By many who bear Christ's name, His glory is obscured, His beauty veiled, His honor withheld.

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