The Woman of Christ Faces Daily Living

The Distant Move of a Loved One – Homesickness

Ruth 1:16&17; Ephesians 5:22-31; Psalm 45:10-11; 1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Samuel 23:15; Psalm 137:1-6; Nehemiah 1:1-2:6; Acts 7:1-16; Acts 20:17-19; 20:36-38; 21:4-6

Lesson #7

God's people were migrant people. Much of the narratives of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jesus, and Paul, along with more New Testament preachers was about travel -- going from one place to another. The phrases “up from Egypt,” “down to Egypt,” “sailed to,” “set sail,” “put out to sea,” “returned to,” “departed,” “passing through,” “arrived at,” “traveling through,” “journeyed on,” “came down from the mountain,” “crossed over.” etc. were generously sprinkled throughout the Bible.

Following God's directive to go to a land which He would show them, Abraham and Sarah began a long-distance move unlike any that we would take today (Genesis 12:1-10).

A distant move is one of life's events which can be a major stressor. Naomi was known as pleasant. Her daughter-in-law Ruth loved her. Events and changes brought on by a distant move had unsettled Naomi, but the text reveals that she recovered her contentment (Ruth 4:14-15). Some individuals cope better with relocating than others. The Census Bureau reports that up to 40,000,000 people move each year in the United States.

Moving day presents a wide array of potential problems. The way the Christian confronts separation from her loved ones is often meaningful in her relationship with them. The change may not be of residence. The parting might be brought about by a child leaving for college, military service, marriage or other.

We’ll reflect on some of life’s happenings in which we women may find ourselves, whether we’ve moved or loved ones have moved from us.

We Need to Move – Those Untimely Promotions!

Many hardworking men have rejected excellent job opportunities in distant cities because their wives refuse to move. Understandably, men and women should rethink any move that would jeopardize the spiritual and physical welfare of their family. This lesson, however, is addressed to those incidences in which the woman just simply does not want to go along with her husband.

Ladies, we must show understanding and admiration of our husbands when they accept responsibility to provide for the family. Society rarely criticizes women who quit their jobs and opt to stay home, but that graciousness is not usually extended to men. Early in a young man’s life, he becomes aware of what lies ahead of him in terms of preparing himself and of accepting

that, undeniably, he must stand up to life's challenges and work diligently to ensure his family's needs. There's never a vacation from that reality, so from the time a young man begins his work life (often in hot summer fields or similar workplaces), he is keenly aware that he has begun society's expectation of him. He must be responsible not only for himself but also for his wife and family. A Christian understands the significance of this duty (1 Timothy 5:8).

How much better it is for a man whose wife and children recognize the burden that he has lovingly assumed for them. Dad's leadership requires the family's consideration of his needs. Often the rejected promotion is for a more attractive position: less pressure; less physical exertion; and increased salary and benefits (Ephesians 5:33).

A young woman was overheard stating, "My husband's work required him to move. I told him I was staying right here since my horse could not be moved too!" The husband moved with his job. She remained with her horse.

I Don't Want to Change Schools

When Dad's career opportunity is presented to children, occasionally trouble arises. The children might argue with various reasons for not leaving the school they've attended for several years. No alma mater will ever be more meaningful to a young person than the presence of father and mother, together in the home – and for father, especially one who can be content, in meeting his responsibilities. This presents a judgmental matter, and parents must be wise to ensure God's will be respected in the decision.

The senior year can well be a topic for consideration, *i.e*. consider that in only one year, the child could be in a college dorm, so maybe he or she is mature enough to live with a trusted adult friend or family member and finish school where started. Perhaps the young person has been designated as class president, valedictorian or salutatorian. Can Dad's promotional move and the child's consideration both be accomplished without negatively impacting Mom and Dad's marriage? (Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21).

Did I Hear You Correctly? Do You Want Me to Leave Mama?

A desire to stay near parents is occasionally offered as an objection to a move. The woman who won't leave her parents to follow her husband is in conflict with the scriptures (Genesis 2:22-25; Matthew 19:6, 8-9; Ephesians 5:31). Certainly, there are times when aging parents have physical needs which must be met. That can require some separation of husband and wife while one of them is attending to the parents' needs in a distant place. This lesson isn't addressing that challenge. We are directing our attention to the problem of spouses who refuse to cut the apron strings.

But I Can’t Leave My Job!

A woman may resist a distant move because of her career. That’s troublesome, especially when the move would support her husband’s advancement. Her concern should be considered thoughtfully and respectfully, but it must also be viewed according to God’s order for the home. Christians must not be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2). If husband and wife cannot reach an agreement that gives preference to her wishes, she must remember that her husband is her head (Ephesians 5:23).

There Can Be Spiritual Benefits

Our moves can be instrumental in God's plans. Let’s remember Bible accounts of the patriarchs’ moves and wherever Jesus and the apostles walked, their footprints left the message of God. As new members in a congregation of the Lord's people, those who have moved from distant cities may become rocks of spiritual strength (Acts 18:18-26). Our “moves” may result from vacation trips that require several days “on the road.” These journeys offer opportunities to worship as we travel and locate congregations of God’s people who meet along our route. For those of us who have worked with small congregations in far-flung places, we know the encouragement that comes from traveling children of God who take the time to worship with us, and the return blessing they receive from having visited. Acts 15:3 records Paul and Barnabas giving great encouragement to the churches on their route as they “passed through” the various cities.

Brothers and Sisters Who Have Moved

The Apostle Paul mentioned his concern for the continued faithfulness of other Christians from whom he was separated. In our transit world, Christians often leave those who are beneficial to them in their spiritual growth. Perhaps we can provide the members who are leaving with introductions to God's people in their new home city. We can stay in touch and encourage them if spiritual lows come their way (1 Peter 5:9). Paul's example of interest and prayers for such people should be imitated in our lives (Colossians 2:5).

Our Lonely Neighbors

In our communities, there may be people who are going through difficulties trying to adapt to a new city. They may be doubting if they’ll ever be able to make a contented life in the new area. Do you have new neighbors? They may have left all their family in a distant place. We should practice “the golden rule” toward these people. The Law of Moses gave clear instructions to the Jewish people (Leviticus 19:33 & 34). There’s a principle here for our use. Getting to know new neighbors is such a good opportunity to tell them about Jesus (1 Peter 3:15).

That awful ache

Homesickness is troublesome. Whether our hearts are drawn to loved ones from whom we have moved or to those who have moved, the ache is awful. It comes at strange times when we are just

lonesome for the sights of home, country roads, bridges, mountains, and even the sight of an old city bus bouncing along crowded streets can remind us of our beloved hometown. Such an incomprehensible occurrence can cause our eyes to flood with tears and to set off a terrible longing for home and loved ones. 2 Samuel 23:15 tells of David's longing for just a drink of water from his home. Nehemiah. 1:1-4 and Nehemiah 2:3 relate Nehemiah's heartache over the destruction of his beloved Jerusalem and the temple. Psalm 137:1-6 gives a poignant picture of the homesickness of the children of Israel during their captivity in Babylon.

Are we homesick for heaven and longing for God? Abraham was! (Hebrews 11:8-13)

--Martha Black Sutherland trilbyreach@gmail.com