



# A Move to the Country

BY JEFF REICH

W

e walked into a realtor's office in a nearby city. The lady at the desk, preparing to lick an envelope for a letter she had in her hands, looked up. "May I help you with something?" she asked as she saw my brother and me.

We began our spiel. "We are looking for 10 acres of property with a southern exposure, preferably with a stream running through it, with a nice stand of timber, way out in the country, and for around \$800 an acre." Everywhere else we had gone, real estate agents had scoffed and said, "You will never find property like that for that price."

But before I tell you more of this story, let me share a few things....

## NO REGRETS!

I never regret moving to the country back in 1981 and building my own home. Being here in the forest and away from the city has been a real blessing for my whole family. What a wonderful place to raise kids, to have a garden, and to live a more simple life with the slower pace of the

country. We love our little town and have built bonds of friendship here.

I'll admit we were a bit radical, and I have a number of practical talents that not every other guy possesses. We built our home, which is now our main office for the Ministry, with a chainsaw mill from trees right on our property. We dug the foundation by hand and mixed the cement in a wheelbarrow. We had no running water for 4 years, no indoor toilet for 6, and lived off the power grid for 9 years (no regular electricity). Like I said, what we did was a bit radical.

But anyone, with careful planning, can leave the city and move to the country. I am reminded in one of my favorite booklets: "There is not one family in a hundred who will be improved physically, mentally, or



spiritually by residing in the city”  
(*Country Living*, p. 13).

Benefits of country living include: the cost of living is lower in rural areas; the environment is better for raising children because they can play outside without the influences that are so detrimental in the cities; things such as clean air, a slower pace of life and more conservative values are all part of the blessing of country living.

In the city, there are higher crime rates, stronger immoral influences, and easy access to many temptations. But in the age of the internet, cell phones and other portable personal devices, one can certainly bring the city along despite a move to the country. So country living is not only a matter of relocating the family, but of moving one’s mind as well. A whole new way of thinking needs to accompany the move.

And there are other factors as well. We live in an unstable political

climate. If any number of serious events transpire — serious economic crash, national terrorist attack, or even war on our own soil — our cities will be unsafe jungles with looting, rioting and basic lawlessness. A home in the country, to a degree, would be sheltered from many of these things.

### CAREFUL PLANNING

Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, we were mentored by a couple who were strong believers in country living. We had already made the step toward country living by moving to a small rural area and were renting a farmhouse out in the country.

Our mentors, Jerry and Linda Wernick of *Tamarack Springs School*, were building their own home out in the wilderness near Glacier National Park in Montana. We helped them build, and they shared with us all they knew about country living. One day Jerry asked me, “Do you think God wants



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you to have your own place out in the country?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Then He will provide for you as you move forward and prepare to buy a place. If God said it, believe it, and that should settle it!"

But there was a problem. I was a 25-year-old guy, running my own auto restoration and collision repair business at the time. I was in debt. I owned around 10 classic cars, a custom-painted truck, and a VW bug! How to buy property when we hardly had enough money to pay the bills each month?

Here is what we had to do: economize and sacrifice. One by one I started selling off my old cars. I cried when I had to let go of my cherished 1936 Plymouth coupe. We did not spend money needlessly and focused on getting out of debt. Finally we did it. I had a 1937 Ford coupe left over, some cash in hand, and now owned an older 4x4 pickup truck that was paid for. Once we bought property, the sale of the 1937 Ford helped us to live as we got settled onto our land.

My point is — strive to get out of debt, even at the cost of your most cherished items (idols!) So few people know how to budget and control their spending. Credit is too easy. The Bible tells us: "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). My dad always said we should avoid debt like the plague.

We all have more material possessions than we really need, so selling things, having yard sales, etc., are ways of cutting back, simplifying and working off our debts. Nevertheless, getting into a reasonable debt to buy land and a home is better than tossing money out the window by renting. A person needs to use some common sense. There are a lot of books and seminars out there to help you.

Before I take you back to that realtor's office mentioned at the beginning of this article, let me also share some other things that must be considered. Employment is one. It is a fact that the job market in a rural area is more challenging than in the city. Some people can't make it in the country, so they end up moving to the city. But in this day and age, there are many possibilities if one is creative. Through use of the Internet, FedEx, UPS and the US Postal Service, many people in rural areas have started online businesses.

Before you move, seek out the area, check on the job market and match it to your skills and job training. With a garden and simple food preservation methods, one can live on a lot less money. When we first moved to Idaho, we lived in a camper (please, I am not suggesting you do this), and while building a simple home, we lived on \$65 a week. We had no electricity or water bills — in fact, other than property taxes, we did not have any bills except food, gas and liability insurance on our truck!

### BACK TO THE REALTOR!

Ok, so this lady in the realtor's office had an envelope — remember? When we told her what we were looking for, she said, "Well, I have been researching property just like what you are looking for. A guy back in New York wants to buy land to build a hunting cabin on. Here. Take this letter I was just going to send. It includes everything I've found. I have the information on the copy machine and will make up another letter."

We took the envelope out to my truck and opened it in eager anticipation. We saw a lot of 10 – 20 acre pieces of land just like what we were looking for. We drove an hour out into the sticks to this little town called St.

Maries, Idaho, and went to the realtor's office who had provided the listings.

Walking into a small office full of cigarette smoke, we showed the listings to the lady there. She looked at them and then scolded us, "If you think I am going to drive you all over the county, beating up my truck to show you these so I can make a measly \$100 commission, well, forget it! Come back next Monday and maybe the other realtor who works here will help you!"

We hung our heads and left. It was Friday. On Monday we came back — this time with our wives. The other realtor was very nice. He loaded us up in his truck and started showing us properties. We soon found out why so much of the land was cheap — north slopes on extremely steep mountainsides. We looked at piece after piece, and each was a disappointment.

The day came to an end, but the search hadn't. So the realtor put us up in a new, unrented trailer he owned, which was fully furnished, and said he would come and get us in the morning. Again we looked at land and found nothing to suit. The day was getting late, and we had exhausted all our listings — except one. "What about this one?" I asked. "Oh, yeah. I was putting that one off because it's way out on the other side of town," he explained.

We arrived after quite the ride, as the road was actually deep mud (it was early spring), and his 4 x 4 truck could barely make it the 2 miles out on the primitive road. And what did we find? A piece of land with a gentle southern slope. It had a creek flowing through the bottom corner, was heavily timbered — and the price was \$800 an acre! We decided to buy!

One thing I have learned over the years is that God often tests us. He sees if we are serious about doing His will. And when everything seems



*The original home built by Jeff Reich and his family (left section), is now Laymen Ministries' main office, with additions for bookstore, print room, and office space.*

like it is about to fail, He rewards our faithfulness and makes up the difference. We can trust Him, and He will lead us.

### FIRST STEPS

When first considering moving from the city to the country, study the areas to which you are planning to move. Pray about it. Study up on country living and process what you need to do to make a sensible move. Do not be presumptuous. Some people sell all their stuff and jump in a truck with a camper and just blindly head out, asking God to lead them. I have seen this approach fail many times over. And often these same people end up becoming a liability to others and recipients of welfare benefits. That's not God's plan.

Save your money, get out of debt, look into areas you might be interested in, scout the area for jobs and the kind of home/land you can afford. One idea is to look for homes that were owned by older people who passed away or who could no longer care for their place. There are places to be bought — one just needs to seek. Then ask God to bless your plan and move forward.

There will be challenges and difficulties. But remember, as you move forward to do what God has asked

you to do, He will make it happen. Be humble, taking whatever work you can find until you get to know the people in the community, and then a job will open up. Better yet, have a job lined up when you move to the new area.

I think we should be sensible, and I have reiterated that several times. I am not one to swallow every conspiracy theory or hold to fanatical ideas. But in all honesty, I believe that we live in serious times. If there ever was a time we should consider moving out of the large cities, it is now. Sooner than we might realize, things in this unstable world could come unraveled, and we will be so happy that we live in the country. If a crisis hits, cities will become like giant prisons where the police and/or military will control who comes and goes, all for the sake of maintaining "order" and "safety" for those who live there.

We can live relatively free lives in the country. But regardless of where we are, we can have hope, security, and peace in Christ.

NOTE: If you would like to know more about how we moved to the country and how *Laymen Ministries* was started, request from our office the DVD: *Spiritual Journeys Series, parts 1 - 3*.