



Surviving A Move

Hope for the one who recently moved, is considering a move or feels disconnected.

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Beacon

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Introduction

Hi friend! I know you're one of my people already! This is for the one who wants to survive a move, is considering moving or still feels out of sorts and disconnected after their last move.

You aren't alone (even if it feels like it) and you aren't crazy!
Welcome!

In 2012 our family moved from Minnesota to Tennessee. After spending all of my life in one place, it was time to put down roots in a new place. I didn't have a clue. I met some helpful friends and learned some things along the way.

This is for you

This book is made up of the articles I wrote about surviving a move that have been the most helpful. You'll find all of these topics included:

- How can I make new friends?
- What's so great about being new?
- How technology can be your best ally or greatest enemy in getting settled in a new place
- When will this feel like home?

Every word was chosen with you in mind. I'm so grateful to offer encouragement to you during this season.

All my best,

Amy

p.s. You can email me at amy@amyfritzwrites.com

About The Author



Amy Fritz is wife to Nathan, mom to Ethan, Audrey & Isaac, and she writes in her spare time at amyfritzwrites.com. She's most excited about connecting women to God's Word and to each other. Her favorite people are those who are going through big life transitions. She and her family live near Nashville, TN



Our Story

Surviving A Move: Our Story

In January of 2012 our family moved from Minnesota to Tennessee. This is the story of how we got here.

For you to truly understand our story, I need to rewind back a few years before we moved. I'll start with 2008. In January of that year, after suffering for a couple of days with a headache, my mom passed away. To say we were shocked would be a huge understatement. Losing her was traumatic. So traumatic, that my body physically reacted and I ended up in the emergency room with SVT (my heart was racing so fast, it was hard to catch my breath). That was the beginning of a very hard season for our family.

Less than a year after my mom's death, we were expecting baby #3. It was a difficult pregnancy. I was so sick. It culminated with several weeks of bedrest to keep my preterm labor at bay. That was a long, lonely time. After the birth of a healthy baby boy (Isaac), I was ready to re-enter the things we had put aside for a bit including the things where we were connected at our church.

We went back to our church with our new baby and found that we were having a hard time connecting at all with anyone. We reached out several times to different people. We basically heard a message that said, "we don't have room in our lives for you." Coming out of this hard season, I was so hungry for friendship and we were not finding it. One more loss. And it was a big one. I couldn't believe that after attending a church for 10 years, I could feel so lonely there. Nathan and I talked and we decided it was time to move on.

If you're keeping track, that's three big life changing events in a very short period of time.

A month after we decided to leave our church, Nathan received a demotion at work. That started a season at Nathan's job that was really bizarre. Right before the job change, he was forced to hire someone who didn't really want the position and wasn't actually qualified for it. That ended up being a disaster. Through all the changes at Nathan's work, we knew it was time to look for a different position. He had been there for 10 years and we didn't take this change lightly.

Nathan interviewed for and was offered two different positions in 2010. One would have taken us to Colorado Springs. The other would have taken us to Nebraska. We didn't feel completely settled about either one. Mostly, we were worried about selling a house that we owed more on than it was worth to sell. So, we turned down both job offers and Nathan settled into a new routine at the place he had worked for years. He was no longer the director of his department and the transition went well. His new boss, Jeff, was encouraging and a good leader. Several months after the dust settled of several political things that Jeff had the privilege of handling, including terminating the employee that Nathan had been forced to hire, Nathan told Jeff the entire story of what had transpired before he arrived. Jeff was dumbfounded. I remember asking Nathan, "What did he say when you told him all of that?". Nathan said, "He asked me why in the world I stayed."

A few months later, we started talking again about making a job change. One day, I was reading about an employer and was impressed with how the team members seemed to be treated. I decided to see if the company had any openings that fit Nathan. They did. I read the job description to him and his eyes lit up. It was exactly what he wanted to do: web development. Then I told him the last detail I had held back. "It's in Tennessee."

Two days later, Nathan decided it wouldn't hurt to fill out the application and submit a code sample.

4 months later, we were moving to Tennessee.

This is what our "babies" looked like that year.

Isaac: 2 years old, Audrey: 5 years old, and Ethan: 6 years old.



There are about 5 million details I left out, but I included the important ones.

What is interesting to me is that it was a whole string of traumatic losses that really put us in a position of being willing to make a big change. That set the tone for our move. Not everyone moves with that kind of motivation. We were sad to say goodbye to friends and family, but, beyond that, we were very excited about a fresh start in a brand new place.



Your Story

Moving Always Brings Some Loss

Our move to Tennessee was precipitated by a series of life events that made us long for a fresh start. Death, a difficult pregnancy, a feeling of isolation, and job stress. Mixed together, it made us restless. I didn't worry much about leaving our present circumstance behind. In fact, I looked forward to it. I was more afraid of the status quo than I was of completely turning our lives upside down and starting over.

Your story may be different. You might have left the perfect neighborhood and job. Your church and your town were idyllic, and maybe you showed up in your new hometown with a great feeling of loss.



(image credit)

The Truth About Moving Is That It Always Comes With Some Sort Of Loss

In our situation, we faced some of those losses before we even moved. We had already started grieving for things that had died or were dying before we even packed a box. I thought, because we had buried some of those issues already, moving wouldn't be so traumatic. I was wrong. It was a different kind of trauma though.

All the stressful things kept me from seeing clearly all the blessings we had in the place we were leaving:

Friends, babysitters, family nearby, familiar routines, and being known

Going Through A Time Of Grieving Is Normal

In talking to a lot of women who have moved, the ones who have most easily transitioned were the ones who took the time to mourn what they left behind. The key was that they didn't stay stuck in a cycle of perpetual mourning. They viewed the sad times as an indicator of some wonderful things they left behind, and were willing to believe and put effort into creating a life they could love in their new home. ***They knew that grief was not a sign that they made a mistake in moving.***

If You're Tempted To Run Home

If you've moved and you're sad and miserable, can I just tell you something? It's so normal to be sad. I know it's not easy to start over. It takes time to build a life in a new place. If you decide you want a meaningful life in your new home, you can have one. I'm confident of this. It just takes time. That's the easy and hard answer all in one. Don't expect to have the same relationship with your new life that you've only known a few months or years that you had with the life you knew so well for decades.

I promise it will get better. It won't look like you expect, but it will be good.

The Gift Of Being New

I've said enough for now about some of the challenges that come with moving. How about we move on to discussing some positive things? Being new to an area is such a unique and quickly-fleeting thing that it can be easy to miss the gifts that being new has to offer.



(image credit)

You Get A Chance At Starting Fresh

This is a gift you don't get if you live in the same community your entire life. This is an opportunity to think about who you want to be and how you want your life to look. No one has any preconceived ideas about you. They don't know any of the stupid things decisions you made in the past. This is something that I was happy for and scared of all at the same time.

You Have White Space On Your Calendar

This is scary for people who feel like they need to be busy all the time and this may not be the case for everyone when they move. Some people have a lot of moving-related things that keep them busy. This may be the perfect time to really filter what goes back on your calendar.

You See Things In A Way No One Else Does

This is a gift you bring to others. Being new to an organization means you can see some things others take for granted. If a church wants to know how accessible they are to newcomers, you can answer that question for them.

If You've Been Overextended In Ministry, This Is Your Time To Rest

When you volunteer in the nursery, teach a Sunday School class, lead a Bible Study and help with the food pantry, it can be hard to get a break at your own church. For a short period of time (notice, I said "short"- haha!) this is your time to let other people do the heavy lifting. It's okay. In this season, taking a step back and working on all your own inner disciplines is just as important as all the external serving your could be doing.

Finding A Church

Finding a church was the single most important thing we did after moving. If your family is like ours, it's on your mind as you think about moving or if you've recently moved.

We arrived in Tennessee on a Sunday afternoon. It was too late to attend church that day, but it was high on our list of things to do as we started unpacking our boxes. I did what any curious, church-seeking person does these days. I stalked church websites and their social media accounts. These were the things we were looking for:

- Preaching that was true to God's Word and not just a nice story time.
- A congregation that felt like a place where we could fit in and find friends.
- Location close enough that the people we met would live near us.
- A place where we could easily serve in some capacity.



(image credit)

These were the things we knew were important to us, but as we actually started looking, a few more things became evident.

The way a church presents itself online, for better or worse, caused us to eliminate some options right away. It highlighted what we didn't want as much as what we wanted.

When Nathan and I were in Tennessee for our in-person interview, we planned to stay in town over the weekend. One reason was to attend church there. We knew no one. Getting a recommendation from a trusted friend was not an option. The other option was to research online. I found some places that were near some rentals we were considering and I browsed their websites. I also found some twitter accounts by their pastors.

After a little reading, the church we were first considering attending was crossed off the list. The location was great, but the way the pastor presented himself online gave me pause. Isn't that interesting? He came across in a way that was full of legalism. We never visited that church and I can't even tell you its name. **If I worked at a church in a position of helping assimilate new people, I would pay attention to what people are saying about our social media presence. It's a powerful tool and the true front door of the church.** People spend a lot of time thinking through the design of a church lobby and the flow of a new visitor in its physical church building, but if they fail to give equal importance to their presence online, they are misplacing their efforts.

When our family actually moved to Tennessee the following month, we didn't attend the church we had visited because we ended up living 20 minutes away from that church and its size was a bit overwhelming for us.

Do you know how we actually decided on our new church home? In a nutshell, this is how the process looked:

- Make a list of churches that seemed to fit us based on what we could see online.
- Visit church #1. It was nice, but we weren't sure it was the one for us.
- Sign up for a Bible Study at that church because I knew I wanted to be in a study, and I didn't know how long it would take to find a church.
- Visit church #2. Too noisy. No, not because the music was too modern and we're old. The building it met in was a warehouse and the noise echoed in a way that was physically painful for my husband.
- Hear about another Bible study through a FaceBook page and decide to join it.
- Visit church #3. Church was fine. There were some people there I had just met from one of my Bible studies. The pastor was out of town though. So, it was hard to get a feel for the church.
- Visit church #4. Decide to attend there because it was close, the preaching was fantastic, and it felt like a comfortable place for our family.

We expected finding a church to be a straightforward process. In reality, it was harder than we thought.

4 months after we thought we were settled into a church, we were still unable to get connected there. The way they set up their classes for new people and how they helped get people into small groups was dragging on and on. It felt like a set-back. I was so discouraged.

So, what did we do? Remember Bible study #2 that I mentioned? I had been attending it for 3 months. The women there were kind and inviting. They became my friends. As we were figuring out that we weren't fitting at the church we had spent the last months at, Nathan asked me, "Why don't we go where you have friends?"

That's how we ended up at our church where we have been for the last 4 years. I go into great detail about our journey with finding a church so you can benefit from what we learned.

Today, this is what I tell any new person looking for a church home:

- Get a headstart on the process by finding out whatever you can online before you move. You'll eliminate some immediately and save yourself some time.
- Decide what your non-negotiable things are. Differentiate between what you would like and what the deal breakers are.
- Expect it to take a while.
- Don't wait to be certain about a church to sign up for things at the churches you are visiting. One of the best things I did to find out what a church really was like was to sign up for multiple Bible studies at different churches.

In a nutshell, it boiled down to this formula:

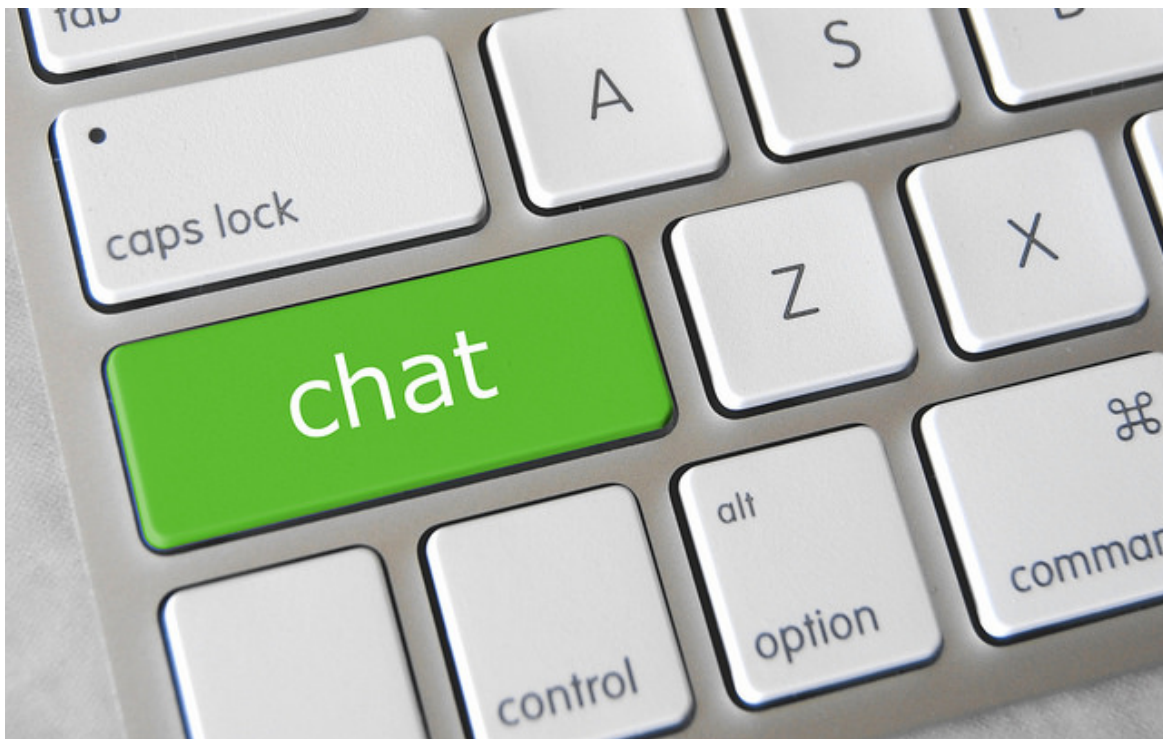
Non-negotiable stuff on our list + a community where we could comfortably plug in = our new church home.

Lonely After A Move? How Technology Keeps Us From Making New Friends

I've noticed something interesting in meeting people who have made a big move. Technology can be the biggest help and the worst hindrance when it comes to putting down roots in a new place.

We were so thankful for social media, skype, email and texting and how it helped our family with our move from Minnesota to Tennessee 4 years ago. We were able to find support structures, read about people who successfully relocated, connect with people who could help us and even scout out churches with the help of social media.

The down side to technology is that it can get in the way of making friends in your new hometown.



(image credit)

Sometimes A Crisis Reveals The Importance Of Local Connections

It's amazing that we can stay in contact with friends even when we live 15 hours away (or maybe even half a world away). We feel like we're connected because we're interacting with them online. When we're having a terrible day, it's never been easier to pull out our phones and text our BFF.

These are real and meaningful relationships.

However, if you've been continuing to pour most of your relational energy into your friends 900 miles away, there will come a point when you realize you are really missing the face-to-face, in-person friendships. You might not notice it until all the dust settles or an emergency comes up, but when you do it's a really lonely feeling.

About a year after we moved, my husband developed Bell's Palsy. His stroke-like symptoms were alarming. At 8:00 at night I needed to figure out how to get Nathan to the doctor while our 3 small children were in bed. All the connections to friends in MN were useless to us in that moment. We didn't know a lot of people, but we called the ones we knew. In a funny sequence of events, a local friend checked her messages, heard we needed help and ended up driving all over town checking every urgent care and ER she could think of until she found us.

If we hadn't spent time developing relationships locally, that story would have never happened.

You Need Local Friends

Who will you use on all the forms that ask for an emergency contact? What will you do when you need someone to watch your kids for 5 minutes while you run a quick errand? When you're sick and can't get out of bed and your husband has no PTO left, your far-away friends won't be able to help. When it's time to celebrate baptisms and births, don't you want someone physically sitting by you?

Someone In Your New Town Needs Your Friendship

What if you're content with Skyping your sister in Alaska and have the resources to fly back "home" when you're feeling alone? You might not be feeling lonely, but connecting locally isn't just about fulfilling your own friendship needs. Someone who lives in your neighborhood, goes to your church or whose child plays baseball with yours is lonely. She doesn't have a sister to call or the money to visit family this summer.

God didn't move me to Tennessee just for me to be content with only keeping my friends back in Minnesota. Part of creating a life here has meant saying, "Yes" to new friendships while still treasuring my long-time far-away friends.

But I Tried Reaching Out And No One Seems Interested

That hurts, doesn't it? I've hosted dinner parties that bombed. I've invested in friendships that didn't end up being as close as I hoped. I've waited days for texts to be acknowledged. It feels yucky. All the insecure junior high feeling come rushing back.

Maybe you've gone on too many "first dates" with friends that have gone badly and you're ready to wash your hands of this new place and declare it full of insincere and unfriendly people.

You could give up, but I hope you don't. Certain life stages and personalities make it harder to make friends. Harder doesn't mean impossible. I've found that some of my closest friendships developed in places I wasn't expecting.

It's tricky, but it's possible to juggle the old and new friendships, right? It's like the old song goes: "Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold."

What I Did To Make Friends

This is such a personal thing for people. I don't have a simple 3 step program for how to make friends. I can't guarantee perfect outcomes because everyone's individual situation is so different. I can tell you what I have done and hope that it is helpful to someone.

In a nutshell, it's this: I said, "yes" to lots and lots of things. More things than I even wanted to do.

I joined three different Bible studies at three different churches.

Is that a little odd? Maybe. Not one of them was at the church we attended when we first came to Tennessee. This gave me a lot of experience with a broad range of women.

If I knew of any acquaintance that was having a social function, I would attend it.

I went to everything. Pampered chef parties. Girls nights out. Lunch dates after Bible study.

When we were not finding a way to get connected at our church, we decided to go to a different one.

This was, by far, the most important thing we did to make friends here. It was important to me that I have close friends where I went to church. When that wasn't happening at the place we first attended, we made a change. It changed everything. We found a church full of people who had room in their hearts and their lives for friendships. I have no idea if that is uncommon.

When You're Looking For Peace

If I just get past this one thing, life will be good. I will feel settled, calm, content. It's just this one thing that's tripping me up.



(image credit)

That's what I've been telling myself. If I'm honest, I've been telling myself that for a long time. Only, the "one thing" keeps changing. It's kind of crazy thing to think because it assumes that my circumstances are going to change my heart.

There is nothing more unpredictable than external circumstances. I don't know why I keep living like I'll finally have peace if all the things around me just calm down. If my last 40 years are any indicator, things aren't going to "calm down" anytime soon.

It's the same thing when it comes to moving. If you are looking for a change in your physical location to bring you peace, you're going to be disappointed.

I have been reminded of this recently as we've been going through some really hard things. When your hope is wrapped up in anything other than Jesus, you're going to have your heart broken. On Sunday, one of our pastors said this:

"Jesus is the only one strong enough to hold your heart without breaking it."

In other words, . . .

*"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness:
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand." (Edward Mote)*

figured out. Honestly, I still have times where I feel lonely, but I'm learning

Some Things We Got Wrong

I read recently that you learn a lot more from failure than you do from success. That was true for our move from MN to TN. These are some things I wish we had done differently.

We Should Have Taken At Least One Vacation Day Between Jobs

Nathan worked his job in Minnesota until the end of the day on Friday. He started his new job in Tennessee on Monday. Sure, we had the weekend, but that was travel time. We were exhausted and stressed out. We should have given ourselves a little more breathing room.

We Should Have Asked For More Help Earlier

We were drowning in daily stuff plus house projects we had put off that now needed to be finished. We outsourced some stuff, but not all of it. She should have hired out all of the house projects. In the end, that's what we had to do anyway because we ran out of time and we ran into some unexpected issues with inspections. It was a disaster.

We Should Have Prioritized Time With Friends

Because of the mistake we made with taking on too much stuff ourselves, we didn't have extra time to connect with our friends before leaving. It seems like an obvious thing that one would get right. When the clock is ticking and you only have a limited time. Social things feel frivolous. We regretted not prioritizing that when we looked back.

Going Home Again

One of the strangest phenomenon about moving happens when we go "back home".

First of all, we get all confused and emotional about the word "home".

We don't know how to use it anymore. We refer to the place we used to live as "home" and tell people, we're going "back home." But then you catch yourself calling a whole new place, "home".

It feels like all kinds of contradictory things at the same time. Feeling at home in a new place is the whole point. It feels good and comfortable. It's also sad because you can't fully embrace a new place without letting go, at least a bit, of your former home. There is no way to be fully invested in more than one home.

I love Tennessee. This is home for us, but it still feels bittersweet sometimes. I feel like it's a betrayal to all the good things we had in Minnesota. There were and are dear friends and family and so many wonderful milestones there. I don't foresee us moving back to Minnesota because we love it here. Why does that make me sad?

Can you go home again?

Sure, you can go home again, but life didn't stop while you were gone. It can be so good to be back in a familiar place. It can also be disappointing if you're not careful. You're not the same person. The people you love in your former hometown have changed too. That's the nature of life. It's healthy and natural. It can also be really difficult if you aren't expecting it.

Give yourself time to fall in love/like with your new home before comparing it to what you loved about your previous one.

Getting Settled Into Your Home

One of the biggest obstacles you'll need to overcome when you move to a new place is the feeling of it being "temporary". It's hard to actually grasp that you're not passing through or on vacation.

A "temporary" mindset can be a huge obstacle.



(image credit)

That's one of the drawbacks of renting. If you choose to rent (or are forced to do so), it can compound this problem. The renting mindset tells you that you'll get serious about this place "later".

Myquillin Smith- The Nester, author of [The Nesting Place](#) has this encouragement for you:

"Life doesn't start when you buy a house."

She also said this:

"I've realized something about myself and maybe you do it, too. I seem to always put the burden on my next house. Because the current house never seems to be ready. It never seems to be quite good enough. It doesn't seem to have the potential that I'm sure my next house will have."

Another author I love, Lisa-Jo Baker says this:

"I am not defined by my house. Neither the one that I don't have nor the one that I don't want. Home is the mess and the people who make that mess living inside. So this current house and I? We're on much better terms lately. Our relationship is going on three years now and we aren't quite as shy about having guests over. I still can't quite get up the desire to invest paint and elbow grease into this cramped place that may not look the better for it, but I do love how its smallness has been so full of big lessons."

That place you live right now? That's your house. It's your house even if it's temporary. Sometimes the things we think are temporary end up not being so temporary. This is your life right now. This season is what you have now. Make the most of it. Own it-- even if you're renting.

When Will This Feel Like Home?

When will your new home feel like "home"? When will you feel comfortable? When will you be confident you made the right choice when you moved? Here are a few tips that I've learned.

It will start to feel like home when you decide that "good enough" is ok.

Moving makes us idealistic. We have a chance to choose the perfect house, neighborhood, job, friends. At least we thought we did. Some of those things, we find out, are impossible to find for one reason or another. The problem with that approach is that while we're looking for "perfect", we miss so much "good enough".

The friendship you dismissed because she was not the age you imagined when you pictured the friends you would make.

The church that was great except for the bad coffee.

The job that made you wait longer than you wanted for lots of vacation time.

The neighborhood that only had 3 of the 4 things you wanted.

If you dismiss the "good enough" things in search of the perfect thing, you often end up with nothing at all.

've found the more I extend grace to people and places to be what they are right now and not something I wish they were, the more I appreciate them and the more grace I receive.

It will start to feel like home when you are at home with who you are.

We often picture hospitality as a house that is ready at any time to accept guests. Clean, sparkling bathrooms, Amazing meals. But that's not truly what hospitality is. Hospitality is a way of living that says, "I have room for you in my life." It says, "This is a safe place and I enjoy you." It's a way of living and relating.

Hospitable people are less worried about their own messes than they are concerned with extending invitations of friendship to others.

How does this relate to feeling at home in a new place? There is so much insecurity in getting planted in a new place. It puts our focus on ourselves. It's normal, but it's not a healthy place to stay. When you can take a deep breath, relax and be okay with people knowing you for who you are, including your imperfections and insecurities in this new place, that's when you'll begin to feel settled.

When you feel comfortable in your own skin, you can feel at home anywhere.

It will start to feel like home when you take it off probation.

When someone is on probation, there is a constant scrutiny. It's not a scrutiny that is looking for the best in the person, it's a scrutiny that is watching for any slip-up. Three strikes and you're out, and so forth.

Quit making your new home prove itself to you. If you're looking for the imperfections, you'll find them.

Let your new home off the hook. Look for the charm. Watch for things that are good.

Are you struggling with feeling at home? Maybe taking a step to let yourself or your new home off probation would be a good first step. Perhaps being okay with something imperfect will, in the end, bring you more joy than you could have imagined.

What Frodo and Gandalf Have To Do With Moving

I love the good that can happen from a big transition.

It's not so much about moving. It could be any big life change. Whatever it is that takes you from a place of being settled to a journey that is mostly unknown, that's what I'm excited about. I'm worked up about it because it puts us in a place where we need God more than ever and we need people.

A crisis is a key to a compelling story.

I love an epic story.

When Frodo arrives with the ring at Mordor, I hold my breath until the mission is complete. I cheer when the momentum of the battle changes and his Fellowship of friends realize they are going to win. All of this happened to a boy who thought what he wanted most in life was to stay in his comfortable Shire and eat potatoes. And breakfast. And second breakfast. And luncheon. And. . . you get the picture.

That was before Gandalf showed up with a mission: take this ring and get it to Mordor, at all costs.

Frodo was a hobbit. Hobbits aren't known for liking change, but even the person who most claims to hate change craves it at some point. Like me, and maybe you, we want our lives to tell a good story. It's the conflict that hero overcomes in the story that makes it compelling.

The problem with a story that's worth telling is that it requires something from us. It's the conflict the hero overcomes in the story that makes it compelling.

There aren't many things more conflict-inducing than moving.

A crisis identifies the need for a Fellowship.



(image obviously not mine- this one is from The Fellowship Of the Ring)

When you say yes to a life change like moving or anything that is similarly difficult, you're more likely to look for people who are headed the same way. You find room for friends you didn't have before. Some are taller, shorter or older than you first pictured. :-) Some join your adventure before you even knew you wanted them to.

I've seen it happen time and again. Great friendships develop in times of crisis.

A crisis makes us hungry for a Savior.

We aren't good enough, smart enough, or strong enough to live a compelling story well. Moving reminds me that this is God's story and I get to be a part of it if I'm willing to say, "yes". It never was about what I had to offer. Keep fighting and watch for Him to show up.

Thank you!

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