

Tests of Faith in Housing

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Through my life as a believer, one of the areas I struggle with is trusting in the Almighty for our provision and needs (as opposed to trusting in my own ability, the government, etc). Because of this, it should come as no surprise that this is an area where He has tested or challenged me several times to show that He is worthy of this trust and that I should have no fear.

Tenting in Oklahoma

One of the greatest tests I have had, and something I can now look back to for a reminder of His love and care, is a trip we had to the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) several years ago. We typically go tent camping for the week and had planned to do so this year as well. We were living in Ohio at the time, but were being led to go to Oklahoma to visit a feast site there. The challenge I received in prayer was to not take a tent.

Because we do go camping, we had invested in a nice 4 room tent and some camping accessories. Now I was being asked to travel hundreds of miles from home to go camping for a week and to not take a tent ... the primary shelter that is used in camping. I struggled with this in my head numerous times as we prepared to go. The most common temptation being to take just a small tent that barely had room for us to sleep in case of emergency. When I packed the car, I was strong enough to not include any tent.

When we arrived at the feast site, we found it to be very busy and crowded. They actually were using three campgrounds; a primary campground, a quiet campground, and a campground for those with animals. We had chosen the quiet campground. We registered and were sent over and found that it was overbooked. We were being given a small piece of sloping land on the outskirts of the campground which is far from ideal. Mentally, I was at a loss as to what to do. My wife made the simple and effective suggestion of pray. I did so and received that we should just go on with our activities at the feast for the day.

The evening speaker was to end at 9:00 but ran over until almost 10:00 pm. After this, we all left to go back to our camp sites ... ours still without a tent. I was thinking we may have to sleep in the car. When we arrived at the campground, the campground hosts noticed us and did not recognize us yet as we had just registered that day. They asked some questions and I finally admitted that we did not have a tent. Their reaction was to go see what could be done and within a couple minutes they returned with news that another couple had an extra tent that we could use (we later learned this couple had it along just for such a purpose).

We were now led into the center of the campground, where we had several neighbors and they were all pitching the tent up together for us. Late at night we suddenly realized that we went from a sloping piece of lonely land to having fellowship in the midst of the camp through the provision Father had prepared through this other couple. Friendships made at that camp site continue to this day.

I was challenged not to take a tent and to trust in His provision. This is a test that I passed and the blessing came with not only a tent when we needed it, but with fellowship as

well.

Apartment to House

When my wife and I were having our first child, we realized that we might want something bigger than the small one bedroom apartment that we currently lived in. What complicated the matter is that by this time I had quite my regular job to start a small home based ministry and I did not have a regular income.

The beginning of this lesson came one day as I was running errands. The Almighty led me to a different end of town where there was housing and had me stop in front of a house that was for sale. It was an older house that was a long rectangle and with two stories. It was quite sizable. This made my wife and I start thinking about how we could manage getting such a house. The Almighty had me go through the motions of going to a realtor and checking what could be done. It was not until later I realized He was letting me see what can be done in the physical by my means rather than through His provision. Because I did not have a regular income, the best I could do was a loan of about \$50,000 which for this part of the country would only leave a person purchasing in a bad neighborhood. Things did not seem to be working out well.

It was some time later that I was again driving errands and I kept noticing houses and buildings for rent. Many things started clicking in my head on the concept of renting instead of buying a house. It fit in well with what we were learning in that the Almighty did not want us to be too settled down, but instead wanted us to remain mobile. Renting could allow that.

That very evening, we were going to visit a couple that we had known for about a year. They were believers in one of the fellowships we attended. The husband had been downsized out of his job a few months ago. They announced that he had received a job offer in Florida and were taking it somewhat seriously. One problem was that he would have to move down and start immediately and they did not know what to do with the house. Their house happened to be an older house that was a long rectangle and with two stories. I suddenly realized that there might be provision for both of us happening right there. I wanted to pray about it first, but for the evening visit I suggested that instead of selling the house (which takes so much time) perhaps they could rent it out. This idea got their attention.

By next morning, much discussion and prayer had happened in each home. When we talked together on the phone, we were in agreement that this was the plan of the Almighty. We would have a house and they could immediately go to a new job. Even more, for our rent they only asked the same amount as their mortgage payment rather than trying to make a profit off of us. A very generous offer to a small home based ministry.

My wife and I were desiring something more than the apartment we were in. By waiting on the Almighty's timing, we suddenly found ourselves in a big house (more than we would have dreamed of). We knew that by our own means we would have ended up with much less. And we realized it was by His planning that this had happened.

Camping Trailer Lifestyle

Strangely enough, one of the lessons we learned in having a big house with some lawn space was the incredible burden it comes with for maintenance and upkeep. In both time and resources we found it draining. We also realized that we do not need that much space. Though we managed to put each room to use, we were separated, physically, from each other when we did our various activities. It was a great house, but it was too much. When it came time to leave, we were glad to do so as we had learned many lessons.

During the summer months, two years ago, I was led through prayer to get a trailer hitch put onto our car. This seemed strange since we did not have anything to pull. I kept assuming we would be getting a trailer and that some type of hauling would be coming up in our lives. It is a bad idea to assume things when the Almighty is involved. I was stuck. It was through my wife that the realization came that maybe we should be getting a camping trailer. Thus I found myself at an RV sales place buying a small pop-up camper that could be towed by a Dodge Stratus (and we were probably stretching those limits). We went camping in it and it seemed like luxury next to tent camping.

Shortly thereafter, I was getting in prayer that it was time to change cars. The instructions were to go to a dealer and ask for a leased vehicle rather than purchasing one. I did not fully understand what this meant, but the most important thing I was to learn is that the dealership only leases new vehicles. After I had described our situation, I was stunned to see a Ford Explorer come out for me to look at. This was a huge car. I thought it had far too many extras for my liking. But after prayerful consideration, I knew this is what I should take.

At this point, I now have an SUV car and a camping trailer. It looked like we would be doing some traveling. Over the coming weeks, we realized that we were going to be leaving the house behind and go into full time living in our trailer. It would take us close to three months to clean house, prepare for the trip (both physical and mental), and be ready to go. Even then, what we had was head knowledge of living on the road and not actual experience. However, the Almighty knows our needs, when we need encouragement, and delivers it at just the right time. There are times to minister to others ... and a time to be ministered to.

Although our journey was westward that year, we were led to go eastward for our first stop to spend time with brethren who had been encouraging in the past. It turns out that the Almighty had planned for us to meet three other families that have been doing traveling ministries for many years. We suddenly had access to their insight and first hand experience into what happens on such a journey. Their testimony of leaving behind their own lives to go do the will of the Almighty was and is of great encouragement to us. They helped prepare us in both the physical and the spiritual for what was ahead. Their stories remind us that the One Most High is faithful and will lead us and care for us wherever we go and in whatever circumstances we are in.

Trailer life has been a great blessing to us. It is a small area and it has brought us closer together as a family (unlike the big house). We have been very mobile, able to go where the Almighty leads us whether it is to learn a new lesson or to help another. All those little extras that came with the trailer and car I soon learned were not extras. When that is our home, every bit of it gets utilized in some way. The Almighty had provided exactly what we needed for this part of our lives.

Summary

Through each of these events, and others, I have continually seen the Almighty's provision taking care of our needs ... not just to live, but to grow in our relationship with Him. I could not see the final outcome of what He had us start, but it always ended with blessing when we were obedient. What does the future hold? I do not know, but I can look forward to it and I should not be afraid!