



HEAVEN'S FIRST LAW

Elder Larry Watts
American Union Vice President
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"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.... Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40.

"O rder is Heaven's first law."
—*Testimonies for the Church*,
vol. 6, p. 200. Days one and
two as well as the sixth day of the Bibli-
cal creation demonstrated and empha-
sized this truth. God's first interaction
with the earth at the beginning was to
bring order out of chaos. Everything
was enshrouded in an indistinguish-
able darkness when "the Spirit of God
moved upon the face of the waters.
And God said, Let there be light: and
there was light." Genesis 1:2, 3.

The first thing that He did was to put
things in order. "And God saw the
light, that it was good: and God divid-
ed [separated] the light from the dark-
ness. And God called the light Day, and
the darkness He called Night. And the
evening and the morning were the first
day." Genesis 1:4, 5.

On day two, the second ordering that
He did was to make "a firmament in the
midst of the waters... [to] divide the wa-
ters ... which were under the firmament



Model of a carbon atom

from the waters which were above the
firmament...." Genesis 1:6, 7. To put
things in order, one first needs to be
able to see clearly the various things
that need to be organized—the issues,
the objects, and the purpose of the
thing(s) to be corrected, ordered, or
cleansed. Light (wisdom) is necessary if
one is going to achieve any measure of
success. It has been said that "Knowl-
edge is power, but it is a power for
good only when united with true piety.
It must be vitalized by the Spirit of God
in order to serve the noblest purpos-
es." —*Mind, Character and Personality*,
vol. 2, p. 743.

The ordering that God carried out in
the first two days of the creation were
echoed in what He did on the sixth day:
"And the Lord God formed man of the
dust of the ground...." Genesis 2:7.
When He made man, God did not just
take a lump of clay, throw it against a
tree, and breathe life into it. If human
beings had been made like that, they
might look like amoebas. No, the Cre-
ator formed man, or molded him, as
a potter forms a pot for a special pur-
pose. God's purpose was to make man
in His "own image," to make a shadow
or carbon copy of Himself.

Interestingly, all life on earth is based on
the "peculiar characteristics" of the car-
bon atom. "'Someone has monkeyed
with the carbon atom,' is a phrase used
to describe the seemingly fine-tuned
properties of the carbon atom, sug-
gesting that its unique characteristics,
crucial for life as we know it, are so pre-
cise that it appears almost as if a high-
er intelligence deliberately designed
them, rather than occurring by chance
through natural processes; [the above
statement has been] often attributed
to physicist Fred Hoyle, who used this

analogy to express the remarkable na-
ture of carbon's formation in the uni-
verse." —*BioLogs*, November 20, 2023.



Pine cones carry the Fibonacci sequence

Another marvel is that throughout na-
ture there is seen something called the
Fibonacci sequence. It is seen in the
spiral patterns of plant structures, such
as pine cones, sunflowers, and the spi-
rals that are seen in the crosscut view
of seashells. The sequence is related



Seashells also contain the Fibonacci sequence

to the artistic rule of two thirds—the
main point of interest in a work of art
being one-third of the way into it. The
hash mark #, or tic tac toe grid, has
been used as a simplified model of the
Fibonacci sequence, in which each suc-
cessive spiral is related to the previous



The shells of land snails have the Fibonacci sequence as well

one according to a Fibonacci number. The sequence is the most efficient way to pack seeds or petals into the smallest possible space.

But look at this: Man was created according to the Fibonacci sequence as well. For example, the distance from the tip of your fingers to the wrist is approximately two-thirds of the distance from your wrist to the back of your el-



The number of spirals on the head of Romanesco broccoli is a Fibonacci number

bow. And the length of your forearm is approximately two-thirds of the distance from the bottom of your elbow to the top of your shoulder. If you look at a face, you will see that the relationships of its elements are also relatable to the sequence; the more closely they match the sequence, the more beautiful that face is perceived to be.

The Fibonacci number has been called the "God number." His fingerprints are on virtually everything—at least everything that has not been corrupted in some way.

Man was "made" (formed with the "noblest properties") in the image of God for a purpose—to be a physical image of his invisible Maker, whose fingerprints can be seen everywhere in the human body when one's eyes and mind are trained to see them.

Furthermore, there is a related principle in God's revelations through His created works—"repeat and enlarge," or "progressive amplification." Just

like each spiral in a seashell, each cycle is larger than the previous one by a prescribed amount (the Fibonacci sequence). That is how the revelations of the Bible are given by grace upon grace. This principle is in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Genesis 1:11, 12 present an example. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, [and] the herb yielding seed,... And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed...." That is "repeat and enlarge" in action. God said what He was going to do, and then He brought it into existence—spoke it into existence. That reminds us of Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets."

Another example of the same thing is in Genesis 1. Days 4, 5, and 6 relate directly to what was done on days 1, 2, and 3: On the fourth day, the sun and moon were created to rule the light and the darkness that were created on the first day. On the fifth day, the fish and birds were created to fill and inhabit the sea and the sky, which were created on day two. And on the sixth day, the animals and man were created to enjoy, tend, and be sustained by what was created on day three.

"Repeat and enlarge" is also seen in the relationship of Genesis 1 to the events presented in chapter 2. There, again, God expanded, enlarged, and explained what He had done in chapter 1; He established man's relationship to God, to the woman, and to the earth. He amplified what He had done in chapter 1. These and other examples of the principle of "repeat and enlarge" reveal that God is a God of order.

It should not be surprising, then, that the first principle of the first of the Ten Commandments is also that of order: "I am the Lord thy God,..." Exodus 20:2.

Putting God first centers, prioritizes, and simplifies the lives of all who do that. Beginning with its very first words, that is what the Bible does: "In the beginning God...." That is the definition of order. God is the great Originator, Organizer, Systematizer, and Arranger of life.

The same can be said for the first part of the Lord's prayer: "Our Father which art in Heaven,..." Matthew 6:9. A father somewhere is the originator and progenitor of every living person on earth. No one ever came into existence by his or her own will. The great gift of life deserves to be deeply respected. Life is sacred. "Hallowed be Thy name" is



Many flowers display petal counts that align with Fibonacci numbers

not a hollow phrase. The word "Selah" in the Psalms means, "Think about that; remember that!" Live in the light and respect of that. He who forgets that deserves to be forgotten. Disrespecting one's origin means not deserving to be born.

When God spoke and wrote the Ten Commandments, He defined who He is: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Exodus 20:2. With these words He presented Himself as Israel's Deliverer—"Saviour." In Hebrew, His name, Yehoshua, is made up of two parts—"Yeho-" and "-shua." "Yeho-" is a prefix that refers to the name of God (YHWH), and "-shua" means "salvation." Thus, Yehoshua is translated "Joshua" in the Old Testament and "Jesus" in the New Testament; and it tells us that Jesus is our salvation.

In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 310, Sister Ellen G. White wrote about "the far-reaching principles of God's ten precepts...." "Before man was created, the heavenly intelligences were governed by the principles of the law of God. When man was created, God gave to Adam and Eve a knowledge of His ten precepts." —*Signs of the Times*, October 8, 1894.

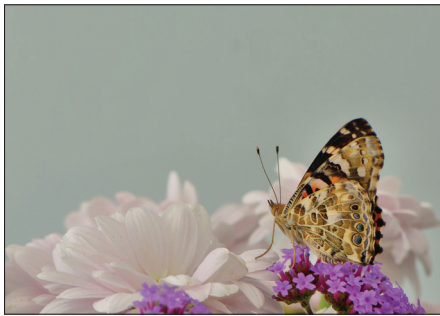
And the first of those ten precepts and principles is order. "The law of



All living things are a revelation of God, who made them both functional and beautiful

Ten Commandments has been lightly regarded by man, but the Lord would not come to punish the transgressors of that law without first sending them a message of warning. The third angel proclaims that message. Had men ever been obedient to the law of Ten Commandments, carrying out in their lives the principles of those precepts, the curse of disease now flooding the world would not be." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 161.

"The rabbis, the priests and rulers, had ceased to look beneath the symbol for the truth that was signified by their outward ceremonies.... The moral truth that they presented, which was so significant to the Jewish nation, to a large degree lost its sacredness in their eyes. As they lost sight of spiritual doctrine, they multiplied ceremonies." *—Review and Herald*, May 23, 1899.



God's order encompasses not only physical beauty but also beauty of thoughts and ideas

Human laws, rules, and policies multiply and change; but a principle is that basic truth or law which is unchangeable and universally applicable. Judicial and ceremonial laws may have exceptions, but moral laws do not.

"Order is heaven's first law, and every school should in this respect be a model of heaven." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 200.

"System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God's people on the earth....

"Those who have the unction from on high will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and union of action, and then the angels of God can cooperate with them. But never, never will these heavenly messengers place their endorsement upon irregularity, disorganization, and disorder. All these evils are the result of Satan's efforts to weaken our forces, to destroy courage, and prevent successful action.

"Satan well knows that success can only attend order and harmonious action." *—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 28.

The United States of America's First President, George Washington, "was enabled to perform a great amount of business because he was thorough in preserving order and regularity. Every paper had its date and its place, and no time was lost in looking up what had been mislaid. Men of God must be diligent in study, earnest in the acquirement of knowledge, never wasting an hour." *—Evangelism*, p. 650.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." Psalm 19:7.

"Nothing is so successful as success. Let this be secured by persevering effort, and the work will move forward. New fields will be opened. Many souls will be brought to a knowledge of the truth. What is needed is increased faith in God." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 24.

Because of sin and the rejection of God's order and principles, the world is

heading into chaos. Amid human devising and the multiplication of man's laws to try to solve the problems caused by disobedience there will be a united group of people who will witness for God by living His principles. They will be a people of the Book, a people of order. That order is created in them by God Himself, and He will produce it in all who yield their wills to His will. I pray that it is so for you and for me.

EVENTS

AMERICAN UNION CONFERENCE

Thursday, December 19,
to Sabbath, December 21, 2024
Norman Park, Georgia

AMERICAN UNION DELEGATES' MEETINGS

Sunday, December 22,
to Monday, December 23, 2024
Norman Park, Georgia



Cities and Laborers

"Soon we shall have to leave the cities. For years we have been instructed that our people, and especially families with children, should plan to leave the cities as soon as the way opens before them to do so. But until it is possible for

them to leave, they should be most active in doing missionary work, however limited their sphere of influence may be. As they yield their talents and their all to God to be used as He may direct; as they live out their consecration by engaging in practical missionary work wherever opportunity affords, God will bless them with wisdom and discretion, and in His own way and time He will make it possible for them to place themselves where they will not be surrounded constantly with the contaminating influences of modern city life.

"Oh, how much we need genuine missionaries! How much we need men and women who will labor under the supervision of the Almighty, in the power of His Spirit! How much we need those who know that God has called them to His service! It is when the work goes hard, that living missionaries reveal by their courage and fortitude and their trust in God that they are led and taught by the Holy Spirit. These are the laborers whom God can bless, to the salvation of many precious souls. It is the privilege of every Christian, and especially of those before whom the way has not opened to leave the cities, to be successful laborers together with God." *—Manuscript 107, 1906.*



Gretchen Schendel
Church Secretary
Sacramento, California

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:3, 4.

It was a beautiful, sunny day on Sabbath, October 19, 2024. What had been planned as just a small gathering to witness the symbolic burial and resurrection of the Nelson twins—Jonathan Jaden and Jeremiah Lee Nelson—turned out to be a mini-conference. About seventy people came to mark the occasion. Sister Sandy Elias, of the Huntington Park Church, said, "We can't miss the baptism of our twins!"

It was truly a joyous occasion, with believers from Riverside, Huntington Park,

San Jose, and, of course, Sacramento in attendance. Jonathan and Jeremiah wanted to be baptized in a river, but which river and what part of it? Unfortunately, Sacramento rivers are not as well cared for as they once were, due in part to homeless encampments. Therefore, their dad, Brother Christian Nelson, contacted some good friends of theirs, who live only a short distance from Small Cloud Christian School and who have frontage on the Cosumnes River. This wonderful Christian couple gave their permission for the baptism to take place on their property, warmly welcoming everyone and even attending the baptism themselves. (The owner even used his backhoe to make the river a little deeper for this special occasion!)

So there, on October 19, just one week before the twins' fifteenth physical birthday, Jonathan and Jeremiah had their spiritual birthday. Elder Henry Dering, who had given the boys

Bible studies, now had the privilege of baptizing them. Over several years, Sister Sandy Nelson (their mom) had been taking the boys to a conservative Seventh-day Adventist science camp, where altar calls were repeatedly made for those who wanted to give their hearts to Christ. Several times Jonathan and Jeremiah had responded to these calls; but now they at last had the opportunity to make a public confession of their faith, announcing to the world their decision to stand on Christ's side.

Satan will undoubtedly tempt them to abandon their Saviour and break their baptismal vows. The pull of the world is strong for all of us, but especially for the youth. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:31, 32.

May God give Brothers Jonathan and Jeremiah the courage and faith they will need to stand faithfully for Him forever. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6. Please pray for these new babes in Christ!

While speaking with the property owners after the baptism, the wife exclaimed, "You people are right! The seventh day is the Sabbath according to the Bible!" Please pray that we will have further opportunities to witness to Lonnie and Sandy Stoval and that they will both accept the truth that God has entrusted to us and wants us to share.



Brother Jonathan Nelson was baptized by Elder Henry Dering



Brother Jeremiah Nelson was also baptized by Elder Dering



*Emil Bainhardt
Western Field Health Leader
Novato, California*

First and foremost, the most important part of planning and preparation for the last days is being spiritually ready. How do we do that as Seventh-day Adventist Reformers? By praying, studying the holy word, and sharing our testimonies. We see ourselves as beloved children of our heavenly Father, redeemed by the blood of His Son, Jesus. This is our very identity and the foundation of our walk with the Saviour. And it is all by grace!

Biblical spirituality means to be born of God (John 1:12, 13; 3:5-8; 4:7), to be changed by the grace of Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2), to surrender and be obedient to the Spirit, living according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4-11) and drawing others to find life in the word of God.

How did Jesus set the example? How was He able to live a sinless life while being tempted in all the ways that we are? He trusted in the Father's love for Him. Luke revealed Jesus as a Man of prayer. The disciples noticed this, because they asked Him to teach them how to pray. He often rose up early in the morning and sought solitude, where He prayed—sometimes all night, sometimes with weeping and groaning, and sometimes for His disciples by name. In Gethsemane, He prayed even for us as those who would one day follow Him. During His formative years, He studied the word of God and spent 30 years preparing for His ministry of love and mercy. If we follow His

example, we will be more spiritually prepared than if we study only charts and timelines.

Let me clarify what this article is and what it is not. It is an introduction to the process of planning for leaving the large cities and moving to a rural place and an overview of the preparation and requirements for successful homesteading. It is not a detailed step-by-step instruction manual but only a small first step. Let us now turn to the practical aspects of preparation for leaving the cities for a life in the country.

Journalists strive to answer basic questions when they are chasing a news story—questions starting with “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why” and “how.” We are following the story of admonition given to God's people, those “who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. In this developing story, God's people have been advised, as far back as 150 years ago, to leave the big cities and move to the country. The questions starting with “who,” “what,” and “why” have been answered and expounded upon for decades.

It is the “where,” “when,” and “how” that are of most concern to Adventists today. We also want to examine the costs.

By itself, moving out of the cities will not be enough to fully protect one's physical, mental, and spiritual health. We live in a high-tech age of the world in which it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to extricate oneself from electronic devices. All manner of such devices are being developed to get people hooked more and more on social media and the

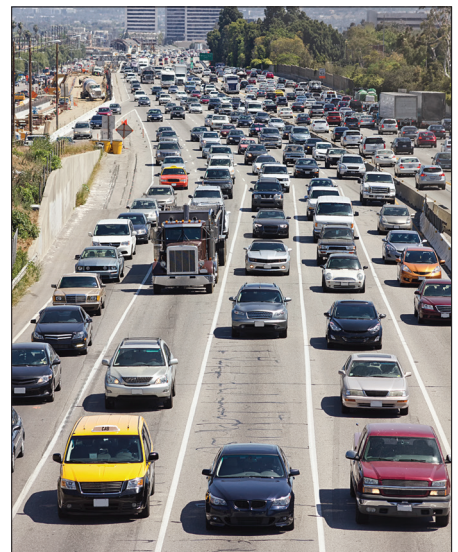
conveniences offered by cell phones, tablets, and computers. Some families have exerted great efforts to shield their young children from such devices by sending them to schools that support their commitment—no cell phones, tablets, computers, video games, or TVs. It is very interesting that those who are the most determined to protect their own children from these devices are the ones who invented and aggressively promoted them for the rest of the population to use!

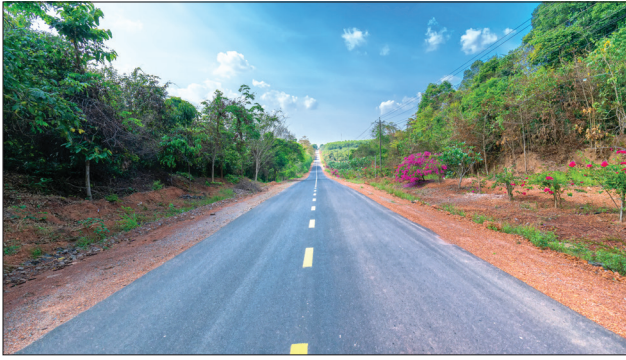
Where?

The questioning starts with “Where” should God's people go when they leave the big cities? “Well,” you may say, “they are going to the countryside.” Great! If they end up in rural areas outside of the cities, with their rapidly spreading urban sprawl, they will quickly end up being suburbanites! But if they move a significant distance away from a large urban area, they will have a long, expensive commute when it is time to purchase supplies. In addition, emergency services (ambulance, police, fire department) may not be available in a remote area.

From experience, I know that home care agencies do not offer services in remote areas, so one often seeks to find a location that is far enough away from the city to be safe, but not so far away that essential amenities are difficult to reach.

As one can read below, Sister Ellen G. White wrote that it is important to visit the cities “to warn them of what is coming upon the earth.” That will have to be done after feeding the animals, watering the plants, weeding the vegetable





garden, fixing dinner from scratch, selling eggs in the open-air market, teaching home school pre-algebra lessons, and completing other tasks associated with country living.

There is a lot to think about when selecting a piece of property. For example, in northern California, there are three towns that are well known as Adventist havens. One is Angwin, the home of Pacific Union College; the second is a small town called Paradise; and the third is a conference retreat called Leoni Meadows. All three are in fairly remote locations, in beautiful idyllic settings, nestled in the hills. In recent years, however, they turned out to be firetraps, as there is just one road to reach each area. All three were devastated by some of the worst fires in California history. The safety factors of an area are just part of what to keep in mind when considering a potential location. What did Sister White counsel regarding the importance of moving away from the cities?

"Time now to move from the cities. Take your families away from the cities is my message. The time has come when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities. The children should be taken into the country. The parents should get as suitable a place as their means will allow. Though the dwelling may be small, yet there should be land in connection with it that may be cultivated." –*The Adventist Home*, p. 139.

"Parents can secure small homes in the country, with land for cultivation where they can have orchards and where they can raise vegetables and small fruits to take the place of flesh-meat, which is so corrupting to the lifeblood coursing through the veins. On such places the children will not be surrounded with the corrupting influences of city life. God will help His people to find such homes outside of the cities." –*Medical Ministry*, p. 210.

When considering a property, one should become informed about what

makes a place suitable for growing fruit trees and vegetables. Bare land is more affordable than buying a house; but installing a well, building a home, and planting trees and crops all take money, effort, and time. Fruit trees take a few years before they start to yield fruit. If you are

looking for something in the hills, make sure to avoid a north-facing slope, because little can grow there. And a west-facing slope may turn out to be unbearably hot in the summer months. An advantage for vegetarians, and even more so for vegans, is that smaller properties are adequate if one does not have animals. Those who keep animals need space to grow food for the animals as well as themselves.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17. "As God's commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them...."

"As far as possible, our institutions should be located away from the cities.... It is not God's will that His people shall settle in the cities, where there is constant turmoil and confusion. Their children should be spared this; for the whole system is demoralized by the hurry and rush and noise. The Lord desires His people to move into the country, where they can settle on the land, and raise their own fruit and vegetables, and where their children can be brought in direct contact with the works of God in nature. Take your families away from the cities is my message.

"The truth must be spoken, whether men will hear, or whether men will forbear. The cities are filled with temptation. We should plan our work in such a way as to keep our young people as far as possible from this contamination.

"The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, 'Shall not the cities be warned? Yes; not by God's people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them

of what is coming upon the earth." –*Country Living*, pp. 30, 29.

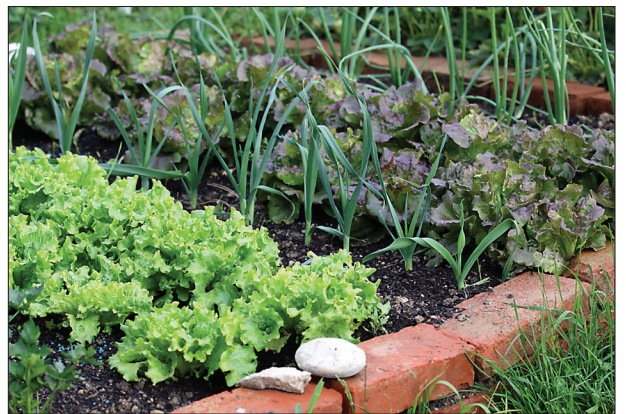
"When iniquity abounds in a nation, there is always to be heard some voice giving warning and instruction, as the voice of Lot was heard in Sodom. Yet Lot could have preserved his family from many evils had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city. Enoch walked with God, and yet he did not live in the midst of any city polluted with every kind of violence and wickedness, as did Lot in Sodom." –*Evangelism*, p. 78.

"He [Enoch] did not make his abode with the wicked. He placed himself and his family where the atmosphere would be as pure as possible. Then at times he went forth to the inhabitants of the world with his God-given message. After proclaiming his message, he always took back with him to his place of retirement some who had received the warning." –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 1087, 1088.

When?

Now let us consider the question of "when" God's people should move out of the big cities. When Sister White wrote on this subject, her tone was one of great urgency. She wrote: "The time has come, when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities." –*Country Living*, p. 24. Note that she did not say that, at some point in the future, the time will come. No, she wrote that the time has come; it is already here. This was written well over a hundred years ago. The longer one waits to purchase a property, the more expensive it can become and the fewer choices there are.

Seventh-day Adventists are not the only ones seeking a way out of the big cit-



ies; many different groups have similar goals. They are also looking for a place in the country on which to establish a home.

A few years back, I spoke with a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who was well versed in eschatology—the study of the end times. He stated that when the Sunday law is announced, that would be the time to move to the country. However, once that law goes into effect, one will no longer be able to buy or sell without receiving the mark of the beast. Hence, God’s people need to be self-sufficient already, having food, water, and shelter; living in the country is the only way to fulfill those requirements. We are told that Sunday law enforcement will be mild at first but will intensify as time progresses.

“The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon. It is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 452.

“As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some will be offered positions of influence, and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith. But their steadfast answer is: ‘Show us from the word of God our error’—the same plea that was made by Luther under similar circumstances.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 607.

How?

And now, let us address the journalist’s last question, “How?” How does one make the transition from living in the city to living in the country? The short answer is: With prayer, planning, and preparation. There is a lot to learn—not just book learning, but also developing many new skills, becoming debt free, and saving for the future. Even if one plans to make the move in 10 or 15 years, it is never too soon to begin preparing today. Below are just a few of the essential skills that are needed for successful country living, in no particular order:

- Growing a food garden (vegetables and fruit trees)
- Land preparation and maintenance
- Preserving food (canning and dehydrating)
- Cooking and baking from scratch
- Beekeeping
- Use of natural remedies
- Administering first aid (to people and animals)
- Animal husbandry
- Sewing and mending clothing
- Basic carpentry and home repair
- Basic mechanics and auto repair
- Chopping wood and starting a fire
- Maintaining a well, irrigation, and septic tank
- Making a living from the land
- Home schooling
- Living simply
- Being frugal and economizing
- Being on the alert for dangers from wild animals and humans

In preparation for moving to the country, now is the time to practice these things, for some of the above skills will be indispensable. It is never too early to learn them. There is one more question to ask: How much might it cost to make this move?

Costs

Jesus spoke of this crucial principle in Luke 14:28, 29, saying, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.”

According to a trusted source, at the end of 2024, even in the cheaper areas of the continental U.S., it would be difficult to find a reasonably adequate property for less than \$250,000. Remember, you will be purchasing some acreage, hopefully with a house on it, and perhaps a barn and outbuildings. If you are planning to purchase an empty lot, do you have the funds, knowledge, time, and workforce to build what is necessary? Remember, also, that after the construction is finished, the vegetable garden is flourishing, and the fruit trees are producing, there are still maintenance costs to keep everything operating—labor, materials, and supplies. Between selling one’s home in

a big city and having a fully functioning property, a year or two may go by. Therefore, one can never start too soon to save funds and resources to carry out this important change.

History

Let us look at the historical perspective. Up until about 200 years ago, when the Industrial Revolution began, the majority of the world’s population existed as an agricultural society. People had large families and extended families nearby who shared and cooperated as a work force. Currently in the United States, the Amish are one of the few groups that have developed the ability to live off of the land. When a barn needs to be built among the Amish, the whole community works together until the job is done. Not surprisingly, when city dwellers move into the country, they are frequently overwhelmed and frustrated by the sheer amount of work that needs to be done day after day. The ones who do well have learned how to make relational rather than transactional connections. They have



built strong relationships and friendships in the community. The scriptures show this to be foundational.

“That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” John 17:21. There is strength in numbers. I hope and pray that we as brothers and sisters will likewise help one another as we look for the Lord’s appearing. That is the primary reason for the church family, the community of believers.

Before closing this article, I would like to mention a few things about the resources that I used in putting this information together. I was interested in gathering information from individuals who made the move from a city to the

country. My main source of information was a close friend. About 15 years ago, he moved from Sacramento to a small town in southeastern Oregon. His wife joined him a few years later when she retired. The most important part of their endeavor was that, before they made the move, they spent several years taking advantage of classes at community colleges, university extensions, and private seminars. The subject matter included gardening, food preservation, and animal husbandry, to name a few skills that they felt they needed.



My other source was a book entitled *You Can Survive*, by Jere Franklin, a Seventh-day Adventist mathematics and science teacher in British Columbia. I contacted the associated website and inquired if there are any reports of actual experiences made by homesteaders. When I receive that information, I will share it in another article.

On the Internet, there seems to be a dearth of information about a vegetarian or vegan homesteading lifestyle. When vegans and vegetarians do present videos about homesteading, they emphasize growing vegetables and diet restrictions, almost to the point of excluding a large variety of important and indispensable skills required for a life in the country. So, for the time being, we can learn a lot by watching YouTube videos about living in the country while skipping those segments that do not apply to us as S.D.A. Reformers.

It is difficult to provide generalized information about leaving the cities and moving to the country in an area as large and varied as the North American continent. Geography, weather conditions, risks of natural disasters, cultural differences, and costs of living can all be strikingly different from one region to another.

Lastly, my experience as a home care physical therapist in remote rural areas in Marin and Sonoma Counties of the North Bay area of California provided

me with a view of life in the country. The vast majority of our home care clients were elderly and disabled. Life was difficult for them in their declining years, even when they lived with family members who could help them 24/7. Without family support, hired help was difficult to find and very expensive, whether it was for personal care or property maintenance. Ambulance rides to the nearest hospitals often took an hour or more. Some people had to move to the cities so they could have help and medical care. These are real issues that need to be considered when planning a move to the country.

We may wonder why the Bible and Sister White did not provide more detailed instructions. Since the human being values security, we would like to be sure that we are doing God's will. If we seek God's will with a sincere heart, we will usually receive the light to understand it. But not always. Even if we do everything we can to determine God's will in a situation through prayer, reflection, and spiritual guidance, we will not always get a clear answer, or at least not right away.

There are two reasons for this: first, God treats us as adults; and in many situations He wants us to decide for ourselves. He has created us with the ability to think, and He wants us to use the gifts that we were given. The second reason is purification. If we were always sure that we were doing God's will and walking in the truth, we would be in danger of presumption and at the risk of spiritual pride. Not always being absolutely sure that we are doing God's will is humbling and painful, but it protects us. It helps us to exercise dependence on Him as we seek for His guidance and keeps us from a false security that hinders our surrender to Him.

Let us take comfort in the protection and grace that God will bestow upon His elect in the last days. We can think of grace as a burst of inestimable generosity and mercy, a never-ending, inexhaustible love.

In conclusion, here are three takeaways that can be done now:

- With prayer and study of the word, let us draw closer to God and strengthen our relationship with Him.
- Let us be enthusiastic about learning and practicing the skills of simple country living—wherever we are.
- If there ever was a time for the believers to unite and help one another to prepare for the end time, it is now.



References

Various writings of Ellen G. White
Jere Franklin, *You Can Survive*
YouTube:

Country Living Experience
More Than Farmers
Joel Salatin
Living Traditions
Justin Rhodes

Disclaimer: This article is intended to provide some practical, useful information on the subject of preparing to move from the big cities to a simpler life in the country. The aim was to apply the advice presented by Sister Ellen G. White in the last quarter of the 19th century to particular issues of the first quarter of the 21st century. The reader is encouraged to study and gather applicable knowledge available in his or her local community colleges, university extensions, churches, and other sources of learning, as well as to share useful information on this subject with other believers. The author and publisher specifically disclaim all responsibility for any loss or risk, personal or otherwise, that is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and application of any of the contents of this article.



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