

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

May God Stir
Our Hearts to
Reach the Poor

BY DOUG BEACHAM

Are Refugees
Welcome in
Your Heart?

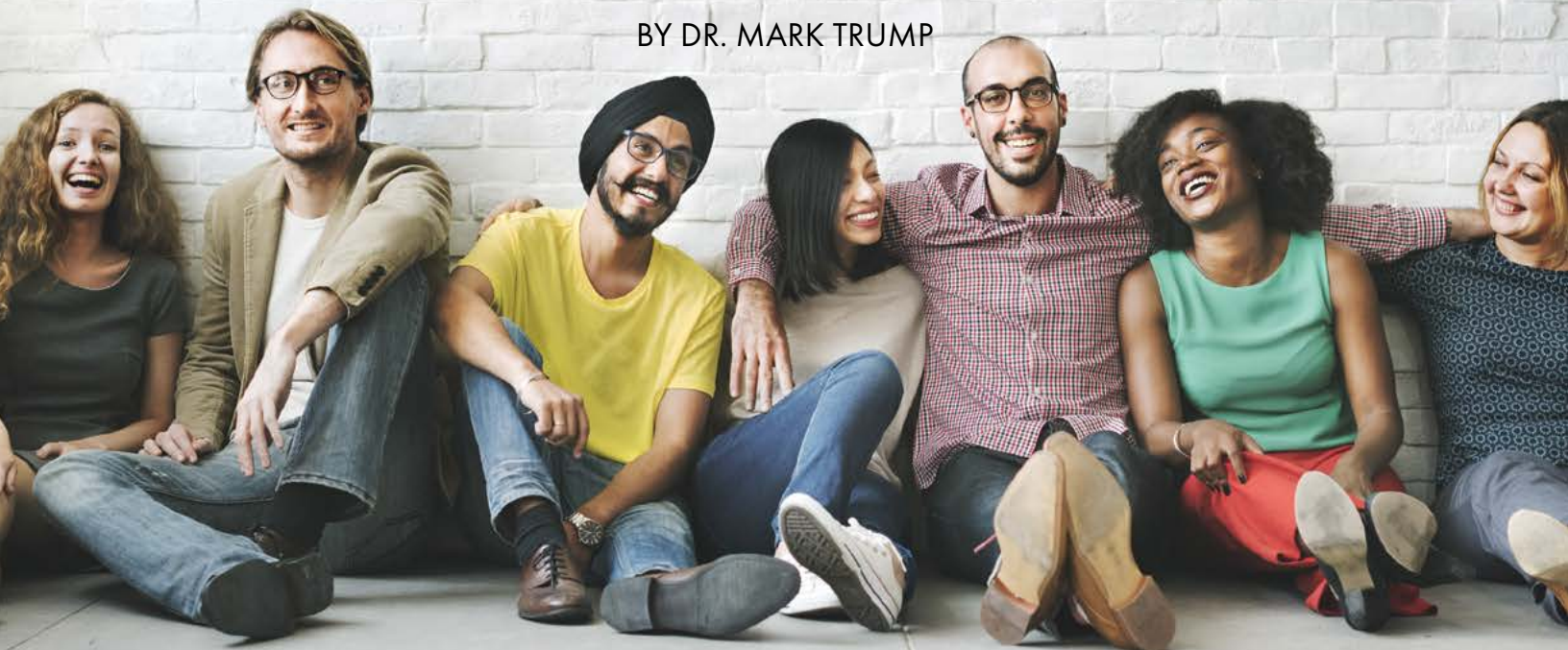
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May God Stir Our Hearts to Reach the Poor



We won't fulfill our mission on this earth if we don't care for those on the margins of life.



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter @ [DougBeacham](#).

In the early 1990s I read the late Henri Nouwen's book, *The Road to Daybreak*, his account of leaving the prestige and comfort of Harvard University to join L'Arche Daybreak, a ministry serving severely mentally challenged adults in Toronto, Canada. This new ministry was part of a network of L'Arche homes begun by Jean Vanier in 1965 in Trosly-Breuil, France.

L'Arche, in French, means "the ark," and the image is of Noah's boat of safety and salvation. As I read about L'Arche and Jean Vanier, my heart was opened to ministry "to the least of these." Now, for the second time, I'm reading Vanier's book, *From Brokenness to Community*.

Nouwen's faith journey in *The Road to Daybreak* is a book to which I return periodically. It moved me so deeply when I first read it that I ordered copies for my then teenage children.

Nouwen died in 1996. Vanier died on May 7, 2019. But the impact of both continues through their ministries and writings.

I think of these faith heroes as I ponder the IPHC's core value of justice. Nouwen and Vanier had a keen understanding of "the poor" that arose from their ministry with mentally challenged men and women.

From Brokenness to Community is a book taken from Vanier's 1988 lectures at Harvard Divinity School. It describes aspects of Christian community that challenge my sometimes-idealistic views.

Vanier wrote: "Jesus calls his friends into community with others who have been chosen for the same path. This is when all the problems begin! We see the disciples squabbling among themselves, wondering who is the greatest,

the most important among them! Community is a wonderful place, it is life-giving; but it is also a place of pain because it is a place of truth and of growth – the revelation of our pride, our fear, and our brokenness.”

In his Harvard lectures, Vanier described his call to ministry in 1964, when he took two mentally disabled men, Raphael and Philip, from an asylum and provided a real home and constant care for them. He described what he learned: “When I had begun living with them, I soon started to discover the immense pain in their hearts. When we talk of the poor, or of announcing the good news to the poor, we should never idealize the poor. Poor people are hurt; they are in pain. They can be very angry, in revolt or in depression.”

Vanier gave almost his entire adult life to those living in the margins of life. In fact, we usually find ways to put such people totally out of sight—even farther away than the margins! But Vanier found them hidden in institutional shadows and brought them into the margins where they could be loved and served. He saw that these people could become instruments of Christ’s grace. In the last years of his life, Nouwen took the same path to the margins.

There are different kinds of poverty. Besides those who are poor due to disabilities, there are those Jesus called “the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3). There are also the poor who lack food and other provisions.

The law of Moses instructed those with much to insure the

poor could gather grain and other food supplies around the edges of fields (see Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 19:10; 23:22). Their efforts to gather for themselves was a way of providing the dignity of work.

There are also the poor who are homeless and live on the streets (see Luke 14:21; 16:20). There are those who are oppressed and persecuted, and become poor refugees (see Psalm 12:5; 109:16;

Proverbs 14:31).

And yes, there are those who become poor through their foolishness (see Proverbs 10:4; 21:17).

In the gospels, Jesus made numerous references to the poor. The songs of praise at Jesus’ birth expressed hope and deliverance for the poor and lowly (Luke 1:52, 53).

Though Jesus was not destitute and had resources from several sources, He accepted the “poverty” of our fallen humanity when He stepped into this earth in the Incarnation. And, the Bible says, “though He was rich, yet for

your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christian communities are to be places where social status, wealth and prestige are not used to differentiate people by worldly categories of worth or importance (see James 2:1-9). The members of the church at Laodicea believed themselves to be rich, wealthy and in need of nothing, yet they were actually “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).

Care for the poor is never easy,

“Christian communities are to be places where social status, wealth and prestige are not used to differentiate people by worldly categories of worth or importance.”

Encourage

A place of hope. A people of promise.

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whether the poor lack the basic needs of this life—shelter, food, clothing and protection—or they are the proud, self-sufficient people who don’t realize how desperately poor they really are. As Vanier understood, disillusionment, disappointment, anger, resentment and a host of other responses quickly eliminate the not so subtle self-congratulations of our efforts to help.

As followers of Jesus seeking to be messengers of reconciliation, we must not be naïve or discouraged when we work with the poor. We must persevere, ever recognizing that our often-loving efforts of generosity and compassion are often rejected, ridiculed and even squandered.

May God raise up new “kingdom outposts” of faithful servants in the IPHC who will move among those living in the margins. May our presence in this world bring grace, patience and lovingkindness. □



If We Were Aliens, How Should We Treat Immigrants?

God told ancient Israel to care for foreigners.
His mandate applies to us today.



BY MARK
TRUMP

Originally from Pennsylvania, **MARK TRUMP** is a professor of Christian Ministries at the IPHC's Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs, Georgia. He completed his Ph.D. at Marquette University and he has served as a youth pastor and lead pastor in Kentucky, Michigan and Wisconsin. He came to Emmanuel after teaching two years at Asbury Seminary. He and his wife, Alison have two children. Mark enjoys sports, reading and especially trout fishing in the mountain streams of north Georgia.

Throughout the Old Testament, God reminds His people of who they were. He often told them: "You were slaves (or aliens) in Egypt" (see Lev 23:22; Deut. 5:15; 10:17-22; 24:17-29). And while the word for slave (*'ebed*) and alien (*gér*) are different, they were often interchangeable.

If you were a *gér*, you were often an *'ebed* as well, or at least you held a similar social status. God told Abraham that his descendants would be "aliens" in a land, and as such would end up being enslaved and oppressed. While you could simply be an alien living in a foreign land, to an Israelite recounting their past, both terms would remind them of their time in Egypt.

This particular moniker, "slaves in Egypt," served a rhetorical and ethical function for God. God wanted his people, in the process of understanding who they were, not to forget who they had been. These two identities were inseparable.

Remembering that they were aliens and slaves in Egypt served a two-fold purpose. It should make them appreciative of what God had done for them so that they would respond appropriately to His grace. God had delivered them while they were slaves.

Secondly, it also served an ethical role. In reminding them of who they were, God reminds them that they themselves were immigrants, migrants and slaves. They were the outsiders, the very people that they might find themselves looking down upon, taking advantage of, thinking less of or even abusing as "the other."

And often, within the context of reminding them of this, God used this as the basis for an ethical command: “Do not deprive the foreigner (alien) or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of a widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this” (see Deut. 24:17-18; Ex. 23:9).

As they considered God’s instructions for how to treat the most vulnerable in their society and those that “did not belong,” they should remember how God treated them when they were in the same situation.

Slaves and outcasts, orphans, widows and foreigners no one wanted to be. Those people arrived at that status as the result of war, defeat, poverty, famine and death. They were the most vulnerable and the least valuable.

God was challenging His people to consider who He was and to remember who they were: “I am the God who brought you up out of Egypt.” He insisted that He is the God who rescues these types of people. God was also making the point that how you act toward them should not be a reflection of the values expressed around you or even what you think about those “others;” they ought to be a reflection of the type of God that you serve and what that God has done for you.

It is as if God were saying: “I am the God who rescues these types of people, and as my people you must be the type of people who rescues them as well.” The one they served and who claimed them as His own, called them to represent (or even better *enact*) His salvation and love to these types of people.

WE MUST ALSO LOVE THE ALIEN

Lessons like this are forged in the school of humility, trust and sacrifice, and we tend to avoid those classes. That school calls God’s people to think and act differently, because it starts with remembering who they were and what God had done for them in a way that compelled them to reach out to the types of people whom they often overlooked.

Thinking of themselves as the foreigner (alien) became the basis for commands as to how they should plan their income. They were to set aside income (before the tithe) to care for the poor and the stranger (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 24:17-22). This is what Boaz did for Ruth (see Ruth 2:14-16).

The tithe was to be offered to care for the Levites and the aliens, orphans and widows who lived among them (Deut. 14:29). God even pronounced curses on those who cheated people out of land, took advantage of the blind and distorted justice for the alien (Deut. 27:17), and He insists that He will testify against them (Mal. 3:5).

Even Job, in defending his righteousness, maintains that no alien was forced to stay in the streets because Job opened his house to them and took care of them (Job 31:32). Foreigners were to be treated as natives, and they were to be loved, because the Israelites were in the same situation (Lev. 19:34).

The aliens living among the Israelites were even to receive an inheritance of land in the reconfigured Promised Land (Ezek. 47:22). God cares for the alien by supplying them with food and clothing, therefore His people ought to show their love for the alien in the same way (Deut. 10:17-22). Ultimately, the Israelites were to understand that as recipients

“God even pronounced curses on those who cheated people out of land ... and distorted justice for the alien.”

of the Promised Land, they were still foreigners, because everything that they had ultimately belonged to God (Lev. 25:23).

Objections could be raised about the contemporary application of these texts. However, New Testament authors insist that Christians should view the Israelite story as their story (Rom. 4; 1 Cor. 10; Gal 3; Heb. 4, 11; James 2). And while the term “foreigner” (*xenos* or *paroikos*) in the New Testament typically has spiritual residency connotations, other texts can quickly be recalled.

Jesus challenged His hearers that if they want to be like their Father, they will bless those they would rather despise (Matt 5:43-48; Luke 6:31-36), because that is what their Father is like. We can also recall the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), James’ description of pleasing religion (James 1:27), or Jesus’ description of his sheep who showed kindness to the stranger (*xenos*) in Matthew 25:35.

What about the immigrants and refugees all around us today? We often refuse to treat them in light of who we were and who our God is. God is still the God who rescued *us* out of Egypt, who delivered *us* from bondage, and who calls us to treat our enemies and those who are the most vulnerable in our society as He does: as persons in God’s image who are deserving of our gifts, love, and mercy as we represent God to them.

When we refuse to care for the 3.4 billion human beings who find themselves in these situations, we de-personize them and misrepresent our Father who rescued us. I fear that our problem is that our foreign mission trips inoculate us. Too many of our popular Christian heroes tend to live in lavish homes in gated communities rather than in a hovel in Mumbai or in tents on the borders of Myanmar or Bangladesh.

The Bible calls us to change our attitude. We must love the immigrant. Richard Stearns says we must repair what he calls “the hole in our gospel.” He wrote:

*Christ has no body on earth but yours,
No hands but yours, no feet but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which
Christ’s compassion for the world is to look out;
Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good;
And yours are the hands (and I change the quote here a bit)
Which represent God to foreigners and aliens
who are valued persons in God’s kingdom. □*

Are Refugees **WELCOME** in Your **HEART?**

There are more than 65 million
refugees in the world today.
They need our help.



BY LEILA
HADDAD

LEILA HADDAD has worked with several global missionary organizations, including the IPHC, to offer assistance to refugee communities and to disciple national workers. She has worked in the Middle East since 2006 and among Syrian refugees since 2013—offering them physical, emotional and spiritual support. She has a special concern for children and the most vulnerable victims of civil war. We changed her identity to protect her and the people she has been helping.

In 1883, Emma Lazarus wrote a poem about the Statue of Liberty called “The New Colossus.” Today the words of that sonnet appear on the pedestal of the monument. The Statue of Liberty stands to welcome the world with this silent cry,

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Today the United States remains a beacon of hope and opportunity for many people around the world and serves as a frontrunner for refugee resettlement. Thousands of individuals stand at our borders, asking for an opportunity to come in. Millions more await rescue from a life in limbo, having fled their nations for reasons of safety.

A refugee is defined as “a person who has been forced to leave their home in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster.” Seeking sanctuary is not a matter of economic gain but of simple survival. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, there are currently 68.5 million refugees in the world. The majority of them are taking refuge in developing countries, where access to medical care, education and employment is limited.

I have lived and served in the Middle East for over 13 years, ministering to refugees from Palestine, Iraq and Syria. A handful of these millions have become some of my dearest friends.

I met Hasan and Sireen and their four children in 2014. They were newly arrived refugees from Syria. This family fled the civil war in their homeland and made the perilous journey to a neighboring country.

Their community had been destroyed by bombs. Schools were closed. Businesses had failed. Hospitals were overcrowded and running out of medicine. Friends and family had been killed or had died from the lack of medical care. Warring factions had infiltrated most of their city, making daily life potentially deadly.

After the dangerous journey to their new host country, they tried to start a new life, learn a new language and adapt to a new culture. They lived as foreigners in a strange land and were at the mercy of its people. A few of their neighbors reached out to them in kindness. Many ignored them completely, took advantage of them and wished them to be gone.

In the ensuing months, hundreds, thousands, and eventually millions of Syrians would make the same decision. Abandoning their crumbling nation to the forces of war, they looked to nations around them for refuge.

As refugees, they had no homes, no jobs and no schools for their children. Most of all, they had no rights to expect such things from government. They could merely survive.

Listening to their stories was like standing on the brink of hell. They told of murder, corruption, betrayal, death, fear and danger. Adults and children alike saw and experienced atrocities we can hardly imagine.

And while the healthy were able to flee, the sick and the elderly were left behind to endure the war. Many children today are being raised by parents with post-traumatic stress disorder, barely able to care for the physical needs of their families and completely unable to care for their emotional needs.

And yet there are some who seek to live each day with purpose and find ways to succeed. I was humbled by the generosity of refugees who barely had enough food for themselves but gladly hosted me and my family for meals and tea. I was inspired by children who helped their parents care for siblings and took advantage of every opportunity to learn—even if they couldn't go to school.

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

All of us are created in the image of God, designed to know Him and have a relationship with Him. All of us are fallen, sinful human beings, in need of a Savior. All of us are created with a longing for something more than this world offers us—something safe, unbroken, loving, peaceful. For the most part, all of us desire to care for our families, work jobs that are fulfilling, see

our children succeed and live in harmony within community.

When I partnered with a local organization in the Middle East to work with Syrian children, I had the joy of showing them God's love. I was reminded every day that our Lord wants them to know Him. I taught them worship songs and saw them come to life as they worshipped their Creator.

We are Christ's body here on Earth, and we are called to share the gospel of repentance and forgiveness. We must ask ourselves, "What do refugees have to do with us?"

When the lawyer in Luke 10 put Jesus to the test regarding what it would take to make it to heaven,

Jesus put the question right back in his court. The lawyer gave the right answer—"Love God with everything you are and everything you have and love your neighbor as much as you love yourself"—but Jesus challenged the lawyer to do exactly that.

Luke tells us that the lawyer sought to justify himself asking, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29, ESV).

Jesus then told the story of the Good Samaritan. A man falls prey to robbers and is left near death by his attackers. A priest and a Levite, God's chosen people to minister to the nation of Israel, saw the man—half dead—and walked away from him.

Then along comes a Samaritan who sees the man, has compassion and does everything he can to care for his needs. This true neighbor, the Samaritan with whom Jews wanted nothing to do, illustrates the mercy of God.

Jesus calls us to show mercy. It was Jesus' command to the lawyer who knew in his head what God commanded, but whose heart hadn't opened to the fullness of God's perfect love for the whole world. It is also Jesus' command to us.

To the Syrian and Afghani refugees fleeing civil war, we must show mercy. To the Central American refugee fleeing gang violence, we must show mercy. To the Sudanese refugee fleeing violence and war, we must show mercy.

When we see the hurting and the wounded, what should fill our hearts? Compassion. What should mark our actions? Mercy. If we harden our hearts, and convince ourselves that refugees aren't our problem, we miss out on the incredible privilege of showing God's mercy to precious human beings created in His image.

What the world sees as a global refugee crisis is one of the church's greatest opportunities to share the gospel with people groups that were once difficult to reach. People from Syria and Afghanistan may be more open to the gospel than ever before. Many of them are looking to make homes in nations where there is freedom to follow Christ.

The Lord can use the atrocities of war to birth churches among these people groups. Perhaps in generations to come, they will return and rebuild their countries upon the truth of the gospel.

When refugees come to us, let's not walk to the other side of the road and act as if caring for them isn't our problem. Let us look upon these broken communities with compassion. Let's do everything in our power to care for their needs. □

"When refugees come to us, let's not walk to the other side of the road and act as if caring for them isn't our problem."



Six Helps to Crossing a Bridge of **TRANSITION**

God is on the move, and sometimes He calls us to move, too.
But transition can be a scary task.



BY BECKY SHIREY

BECKY SHIREY is a frequent speaker at conferences and retreats and is passionate about encouraging others to relentlessly pursue the abundant life Jesus offers. Through solid biblical teaching, personal stories and practical illustrations she communicates hope and courage as she challenges audiences in their everyday walk of faith. She lives in Oklahoma City with her husband, Lou, who directs the IPHC's office of Clergy Development its World Intercession Network.

When I was growing up, my family vacationed in the Great Smoky Mountains. Near our vacation spot was a swinging bridge, just wide enough to walk across. That bridge terrified me!

My heart still beats faster when I remember that experience. Not only do I not like a bridge moving beneath my feet, I also don't like heights. In case you're not familiar with swinging bridges, check this image [online](#). But trust me, the bridge in this image is a modern feat of engineering, unlike that rickety thing I remember in Tennessee.

It occurred to me much later how a season of transition is a lot like a swinging bridge. Maybe you can relate. You're comfortable in your current place, but you sense God urging you to greater depths in Him, more profound usefulness and enlarged anointing.

Between you and God's plan is a bridge of transition shifting beneath your feet. Yet, seasons of transition are necessary. So how do you get across the swinging bridge of transition? Here are a few suggestions.

1. LIVE LIFE INSIDE OUT.

God works from the inside out, and we live from the inside out when we allow Him to shape our inner person, no matter how uncomfortable His methods. Jesus said: "Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst. The wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Matthew 9:17).

The person you are today can't hold the increase God plans for you. Increase

requires a new container that is flexible and changeable. Jesus is the change agent. He does the work of spiritual transformation, but the catalyst is your cooperation.

2. CONTINUE IN BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER.

You might need to increase your time in Bible study and prayer when you are in times of transition. Although God's methods of speaking to you are limitless, He speaks most often through prayer and His Word.

Don't just read the Bible. Allow the Bible to read you. God is truth, and our contact with truth changes us and readies us for a new season. Let down your guard before Him and allow Him to prepare you for your next place.

3. MOVE INTO UNCHARTERED TERRITORY.

You need a compass, not a map. God wants to move in your life in a new way. His methods might not resemble His work in others, so put aside the fear that is keeping you from charting new spiritual territory. Ask God for a greater measure of His love for you and your love for Him. Remember, God's love drives out fear (see 1 John 4:18).

4. SILENCE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS.

Use your authority in Christ to silence the voice telling you God can't use you. The enemy uses our first person voice to discourage us:

- *I've made too many mistakes.*
- *I'm too timid. I'm not smart enough.*
- *I'm too busy.*

Heed only the voice of the Holy Spirit. His voice always brings hope, and never condemnation. You are the vessel He has chosen for a place only you can fill. God's purpose for your life transcends any failures, and exceeds any deficiencies. Put your confidence in God, and not in yourself.

5. COMMIT TO FINISHING.

Endurance is the mark of the faithful. It takes us longer to change than we think. Take comfort in these words: He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

6. FOCUS ON JESUS.

Have courage, and remember that God has prepared your future. Although the bridge of transition seems unstable, God never leads you where he has not gone before. Don't trust your eyes, but trust Him instead. He transforms a swinging bridge into solid ground.

And remember what God told the prophet thousands of years ago, in Isaiah 43:19: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." □

MOVING WITH GOD

If you are in transition, consider these additional guidelines.

Transition can be a chore, but if you invite God into the process it becomes a thrilling adventure. When the Holy Spirit says go, He goes with you. When He calls you to leave the old and step into the new, He pushes you to a new spiritual level. Here are some helpful tips for a healthy transition:

1. Take courage. When Joshua was preparing to relocate the people of Israel to Canaan, God said three times: "Be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1:6,7,9). Moving requires a leap of faith, and doubters always get cold feet. Don't be surprised if the devil tries to make you fearful. Take a deep breath, resist fear and forge ahead.

2. Take one step at a time. Moving isn't just one decision, it's a tangled mess of many decisions that can overwhelm you. You don't have to figure out your relocation plan by yourself. You have a Shepherd, and He is good. He leads you "beside quiet waters" and He guides you "in paths of righteousness" (Ps. 23:2-3). Trust your Shepherd's leading.

3. Let go of the old.

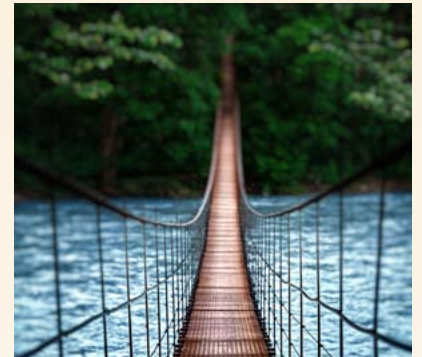
Sometimes when God calls us to a new place in the Spirit, we discover that we are hindered by soulish distractions. You must love Jesus more than you love your comfort zone. It's good to have roots in a place, but you must never let those roots become stronger than your willingness to follow God anywhere.

4. Cry if you need to. It's totally normal to feel sadness when we move. The best way to process your feelings is to let the tears flow.

5. Be open to God's detours. The Apostle Paul was heading to Rome to preach the gospel, but a shipwreck took him to the island of Malta—and thus he led a successful but unscheduled revival. Don't be so headstrong about your destination that God can't gently nudge you 15 degrees to the right, or take you on an unexpected path.

6. Expect miracles along the way. Before you begin the transition process, list your prayer requests. You may need to sell a house, buy a house, find an office, pay off a debt, connect with a new church or get a job. If God is leading you to move, He will provide.

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"Although the bridge of transition seems unstable, God never leads you where he has not gone before."