

Moving On

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You need to get the scene right. I am sitting in my office in Exeter surrounded by piles of books, boxes and papers in preparation for our move later this month. After a year of being General Secretary we are about to move to Berkshire to be closer to the centre of the country, and to Baptist House in Didcot. Over the past year I have had 134 nights away from home and, as a family, we can't wait to bring that number down!

Moving is well known for its special stress-making qualities. However, it isn't all stressful by any means and I am grateful for many aspects of this move. It has been good to take a new and far more radical look at my papers and books. If humanity is divided between squirrels who love to hoard things and those who hate to keep anything they don't absolutely need - then I am firmly a member of the squirrel brigade! My library has grown enormously through the years and this is because I love books and if a book is on a subject that interests me then I have been happy to acquire it. This is all very well but a house also needs to allow a certain amount of room for oxygen! So in recent months I have started asking searching questions of my books . when did I last read it? Indeed, did I ever read it? Am I ever likely to read it? And if I did read it what causes me to think that I will ever need to read it again? etc. The result has been that thousands of books have found their way to friends, auctions, bookshops and charity shops . and I am hugely relieved.

Moving offers a powerful parable. Most of our time life looks so permanent - and moving comes along as a jolt to remind us that we don't really belong on this earth at all. We are citizens of heaven and are simply strangers and pilgrims passing through this life. To anyone who has made a big investment in this world then that is going to sound like very bad news. But to those who have worked out that only heaven itself could contain permanency and unclouded joy, this is all good news.

We live in a society which is absolutely convinced that this life is all that there is. Anything beyond is just a figment of people's imagination. That's incredibly sad, and needs to encourage us to redouble our efforts to live for Jesus and to show people that there is much more to life than this temporary life on earth. Over the past month I've seen many wonderful illustrations of people getting deeply stuck into the life of their communities to share the love of Jesus in action and word. I have been inspired by the way in which people have poured themselves into playgroups, kids' and youth clubs, counselling services, meals for the elderly, after-school clubs and a myriad other activities. Through these activities and our regular worship activities we are pointing people beyond this brief life to the good news that Jesus offers eternal life with him.

And now I really must get back to the packing!