



April 29, 2011

Mike (& Cindy) Gingerich

The old saying goes "You don't realize how much you have until you lose it." I suppose that's true of friends and family but maybe not so much for other things. During the past weeks I've come to see that "you don't realize how much you don't need what you have until you move it." It has been three weeks since we began our move into a new house. We had been living in the same adequate three bedroom rental place for the past 10 years. Now, in typical American style, as the kids are starting to leave the nest, we decided it was time to transfer to a bigger, more comfortable nest. Actually, the 5 bedroom rental we moved to just became available and is owned by a good friend of ours who gave us a special deal on a much nicer home...only 1500 yards from our old house.

I have always thought of myself as a simple person trying to live simply. But somewhere along the road to being old, apparently the simple-living process has bogged down. Little by little my stash of possessions has mysteriously multiplied and taken over many a spare brain cell along the way. Of course I haven't been totally unaware of what was taking place. I remember saying from time to time "I think I need: ... another book shelf ... or a bigger closet ... or more drawers ... or more counter space ... or another tool box." But somehow it never quite registered just how many nearly worthless, but still almost usable things I had accumulated until I started packing them up for the big move. Things like: 3 burned out computer power supplies (with working fan motors too good to throw away), a leaky Toyota radiator, a water distiller, a practically new pair of pants with a broken zipper, a multitude of pens and markers that used to write, 15 t-shirts to wear when I'm changing the oil, and the list goes on. Now those are things from my "obviously unneeded" pile. Our move has also uncovered a huge number of less-obvious items that I haven't touched in the last five years. These things are either part of a "collection" or just things that I have slipped into my "I need that" pile. For fear of deeper conviction, and possible follow-up by my "always willing to help" wife, I'll not list off any items in this category.

I'm reminded of a book by Richard Foster that I appropriately sold at a garage sale before we moved to the Philippines. It was called Freedom of Simplicity. It was a practical manual for simple living that I was determined to live my life by. Here's a list of Foster's "keys to simplicity."

Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status. (My teens could use this one.)

Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you. (I'm afraid it's too late. Production is complete and my addictions are firmly established.)

Develop a habit of giving things away. (Cindy is way better at me on this one.)

Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry. (I think I've become one of the custodians.)

Learn to enjoy things without owning them. (My new house!)

Develop a deeper appreciation for the creation. (My problem is I appreciate some of the things God made a little too much.)

Look with a healthy skepticism at all "buy now, pay later" schemes. (I'm good in the health skepticism department.)

Obey Jesus' instructions about plain, honest speech. (I'm doing fairly well on this one...except for that last comment.)

Reject anything that breeds the oppression of others.

Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God. (This one kinda sums it all up.)

I used to think this all looked easy. But a gradual drift over a long period of time can put a person a long way off course. Pray for me as I try to steer a little more back on the course of simplicity.

Thanks,
Mike



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