



CREATIVE PARENTING

The Christian perspective for a happier, healthier home life

Moving to a New Home Part I

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Our grandson is moving. With his parents and sister, of course. This will be Alex's fifth move, and he's just five years old. However, with all the other moves he was young enough that he doesn't remember. His mom told me that right now he is quite attached to his bed, and he doesn't want to share his bed with anyone—not with Mom, not with Dad, nor with his sister! It isn't because he's being selfish. He's wondering how long his bed will be his! Alex asks his mom if he can take his bed, his dresser, and his toys when they move this summer. His mom decided to do a smart thing (I think) and take him to a nearby house where a family has moved out recently so she can show him what stays in a house and what goes with a family. That way, hopefully, he will better understand what his family can take.

I was reminded of a friend of mine who remembers moving many times as part of a military family. His memory is that he would come home after school on a given day, the van would have packed up the family's belongings, and they would get in the family car and drive away to another army base. He doesn't recall knowing he was moving or ever saying good-bye to his neighbors, teachers, and friends. It's hard to imagine that could be the truth, but it is his memory and his truth nonetheless. Once this man came to realize how these childhood experiences of moving still impact him, he is now doing better at saying his "hellos"

and his "good-byes." He's learning that he matters to people, and that they will not disappear from his life unannounced, as he experienced in his childhood. He has been learning better ways of helping his own children to anticipate and handle changes in their lives.

Moving is common in the United States. As I understand it, about sixteen percent of all American families move in any given year. That's well over ten million children on the move! This can be a major crisis for a child. Most children like to do the same things in the same way day after day. They like to know exactly when and where something will take place. They feel a sense of control over their own lives when life is consistently consistent. A move invariably takes away some of a child's sense of security and personal power.

If a move is in your family's plans, here are some ideas to consider. If your child has questions, before answering in a simple and thoughtful way, pay attention to your own attitude about the move. Children are like magnets of their parents' attitudes and moods.

While showing optimism for the future, it is important to be honest with our children. Why you are moving may be difficult to answer, and you must decide how much you want to say. Whatever you say, be honest. For example, if you are moving because a relationship is ending, don't say you are moving because of a better job. What if that job isn't *actually* better when you get there? Where does that leave your child in understanding why only one adult is moving? In our attempts to shield our children from difficult things, we often set up even more difficult situations for children. Even very young children can handle honesty. At any age, what they can't handle is mixed messages which they have to try to interpret. The truth told in gentleness and sensitivity to each child's needs and developmental stage is a gift of great value.

Next month we will consider problem behaviors some parents encounter in planning and adjusting to a move, and ideas to help children adjust in their new homes and neighborhoods.

