**Home**

When I was growing up, I loved our old home place. My family lived in a small town of just over 9,000 in the hillbilly country of Southern Illinois. My two brothers and I slept upstairs in an old house that was built in the early 1900’s. Our sister had her own room downstairs. We had no air conditioning, but we didn’t miss it because we knew no better. For heat, we had only an open register in the floor. We could look down through that register into the kitchen downstairs. No heat pipes were connected to the upstairs. In summer we sweated and hoped for a breeze through the open windows. In winter we burrowed deep into the covers to try to get warm. If the door was left open at the bottom of our stairs, then we got a little more heat, but the furnace was in the basement, a long way from us. But again, we knew no better. We still loved our home.

One of my most painful memories comes from what happened to me in August of 1956. Due to the emotional pressures of my dad’s job as vice principal of the high school, we moved 300 miles north from Murphysboro to Ottawa IL. The principal of that school, I found out later, had kept in touch with my dad for many years, hoping to get him to come up to Ottawa to head up the English department at the high school. But I was devastated! I could not imagine being ripped away from the only home I’d ever known. When we left, I was filled with grief and nostalgia. I was being taken to an area near Chicago, where even the spoken language sounded different. My younger brother and I were both mocked for the way we spoke. I never felt at home in Ottawa. I always wanted to go back home to Murphysboro. I remember crying myself to sleep many nights during that first year.

Three years later, as soon as I graduated high school, I went back to what I thought was my home. I went to school at Southern Illinois University. It was in a town only seven miles from my home. So I spent almost all my free time in Murphysboro. I would hitchhike to Murphysboro, and try to get with my old friends. I stayed with friends there, and let my schooling move to the back burner. I cared only about spending time in my old home town.

But something was not right. I really wasn’t at home at all. My “home” was on the campus at SIU. I escaped it as often as I could. During that time I actually felt like a man without a home. I wanted to go home, but I could not.

If anyone can create the perfect home for me—or for you—it is God. Jesus said, “I am going to prepare a place for you.” God knows exactly what our home should be like. He will create for us the perfect place—a place of safety, a place of security and without fear. A place where we can feel at home. A place where we can rest. A place with our friends and family close. Jesus said, “Many will come from the east and from the west and sit at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” If those men will be there, then we will also meet all our believing relatives who have gone before us. We may even meet our future relatives who have not been born yet. Can you imagine what a homecoming that will be? Great joy will be ours!

God will make us the perfect home.