

The 4K House

After moving from California, I worked for Cleveland City School District. I thought I could be a positive role model for my students. Love and forgiveness were taught along with reading and math. Spreading a message of hope, I had a secret mission. Two years later, I felt as if my strength, hope, and love had been depleted. I was a drained battery.

For my own good, I could tell that I needed a change of scenery. I craved a more positive work and living environment. We lived in a big apartment complex. Outwardly, it was a nice place to live, but neighbors were increasingly disrespectful. Our family needed a calmer neighborhood. We were expecting our second child. Brent and I talked about it. He agreed. We didn't know where we would land, but we started looking for different options.

Instead of looking for a different job, we started looking for cheap housing solutions. Convinced that if we could find a house that we could afford in a more peaceful place, we would be able to find an income to sustain us. We looked all over. Focused on Sheriff Sales in rural settings near our extended families, we did research to ensure the offer accepted by the Sheriff would be the total amount due. We did not want any surprises from any old liens or mortgages. We found a house appraised at \$6,000. According to the rules, the house could sell for \$4,000 if nobody bid against us.

We made it a priority to investigate the property in person as soon as possible. We were told by the Sheriff's Department that there was no key to the house. A "little bird" told us that we could get in if we climbed through a window. The house had been vacant for a long time. I was "very pregnant" and there was no climbing in a window for me. Brent easily opened a window and went inside. He unlocked the door for me.

Built over 100 years ago, we noticed a firm foundation, solid hardwood framing and floors to match. Beautiful trim left me wondering about how it would have

been treasured years ago. Electrical wiring had been updated within the past 25 years. The core of the house was meant to last.

Unfortunately, it now had battle wounds from years of harsh and neglectful living, leaving the home in an undesirable condition. We were told the house was nasty inside. It was. Do you think a house that cheap is going to be free from flaws? No way! There was a ton of garbage inside. The level of filth to describe it would take too many words and is not the focus of my story. We were looking for a way out of our situation... free from renting. With our hard work, improvements were imagined.

You had to look past the muck. It was the muck of the “stuff,” however, that made the house appraised so low. Nobody with \$4,000 cash wanted to do the work themselves. They would hire someone else to clean, increasing their investment. People who would have wanted the home, either didn’t know about it or didn’t have \$4,000. At the time, we were paying \$685 per month in rent. Even if the house sold for \$8,000, it would be cheaper than one year’s housing costs in Akron. We needed to be humble. To most people, our modern apartment was much more desirable.

Would it require sacrifice? Yes. Selling his prized camera, Brent sold his Canon A2E for \$1500. A place to relax and a symbol of freedom, he also let go of his motorcycle. Ouch! His GFS Suzuki Bandit 650 sold for \$2500. We still had some income coming, but we were hopeful that we would be able to use that money for updates and repairs. With those two things gone, we had the exact amount for which the house could sell.

The sale was upon us. There was one other bidder. Advanced in years and a shrewd businessman, he owned many properties. We were warned that this house was “not the kind of place you would want to raise a family.” It was a good investment property. With four bedrooms, isn’t it somewhat logical to think that

a family would be renting the “investment property?” The property investor bid against us several times. After our bid of \$4800, he said, “Aw, let the kids have it.”

At less than 30 years old, Brent and I were blessed as new owners of our first home. No loan payments, mortgage or rent. Brent’s mom chipped in the other \$800 so we could still have money for repairs and moving expenses. God provided for our family’s needs so I could replenish my drained spirit. Our family of three had a new home. It was almost time to meet the fourth member of our growing family!

Thinking back, I see how a house compares to a person. Some are beautiful on the outside but lack quality on the inside. They may come with a heavy price. Some are a bit broken outwardly but have great potential. Sometimes, with years of neglect or rough living, someone may appear to be less valuable. They may need a lot of help. People, like houses, in good condition and not needing extra attention are easy to enjoy. Human nature teaches us to distance ourselves from challenging individuals. They require extra work and attention. Our own emotions and time investments are at risk. God says that we can’t just love the easy ones. In God’s eyes, we are equals. Our challenge is to love all. God help us!