

What Are the Statistics on That?

Brent and I had been living in California while I taught for two years. The original plan had been for me to gain teaching experience for one year. I had done that. Brent had only originally agreed to relocate for a year, but when he saw how much I really liked teaching and living in California, he agreed to another year. Now, after two years, he was firm. He wanted to move back... to be as close to our extended family as possible.

We remembered how expensive it was to move our belongings to California. We did not want to spend another thousand dollars simply renting a vehicle to move our belongings again. Our stuff really wasn't worth that much. To buy everything new again would be expensive, but we would never do that. We would find things we needed at thrift stores once we found our new home. Plus, we still had some of our stuff in a storage unit in Ohio that we had been storing for two years. (In retrospect, that stuff wasn't worth the storage fees either.) The expense of moving everything seemed to hinge on our emotional attachment to our belongings.

We were never the ones to do things the "normal" way. We thought that if we could buy an RV (a camper that you can drive) to haul our stuff back to Ohio, we would have an RV to stay in until we got settled in our new home. That sounds logical, right....? Well, we had a limited budget and were happy to find an RV for \$650. Now you're starting to get worried about me, aren't you? It made sense at the time. If memory serves me correctly, this story takes place in 1998. Yes, in 1998, \$650 was still a cheap price for an RV. We invested about another \$150 in maintenance and updating its visual appeal. Have you thought about the weight factor? You're right. We shouldn't load it down too much because that would be hard on a vehicle... especially with the deserts and mountains when traveling across the country. That is a good point.

We considered these factors. We had a big yard sale, sold a couple of bigger items, and gave away things to which we had no sentimental attachment. We kept most of Roman's toys, small things that we used frequently and memorabilia. Brent made the interior much more pleasant and did mechanical maintenance to make sure that the RV was in the best possible condition.

We had a tight schedule. I was planning to attend a job fair in South Carolina. Two days after that, I had an interview scheduled in Cleveland. I had a week until the job fair. When we had moved west, we took five days to make the journey from Ohio to California. Now returning to the east coast, we planned on stopping to drop off the RV at my parents' house before driving our car south to the job fair. We budgeted five days. From Ohio, we had two days to drive and to be ready for unknown potential interviews.

Our plan was for the three of us to ride in the RV together, hauling the car behind us. I had never driven long distances before. We liked spending time together and I was certainly not an experienced city driver. There were several big cities that were on our route. (Remember, this was in the days when we didn't have cell phones or GPS. We had maps made on big pieces of paper that could be folded to fit into a glove compartment.) Back in the old days, arriving at a destination required good teamwork. You had a driver and a navigator. Good navigators were just as important as good drivers. Navigators watched the map and told the driver the next road or exit to use with enough of a warning that the driver had time to get in the correct lane, but not so far in advance that the driver might forget the next target location or road.

I think that Brent and I made a pretty good team. We said farewell to our home in the San Bernardino mountains and headed east. Not even two hours into our journey, it became apparent that something was going to need to change. (That's right... we didn't have time to do a distance test to see how well the RV would perform pulling the car for a long period of time.) The RV was running too hot. We had only made it to Bakersfield, CA in the high desert. We determined that

the weight of the car added too much stress to the aging RV. I would drive the car and follow Brent. It wasn't ideal, but it was the right choice. We would drive for awhile and at night we would sleep in the RV. The overheating was temporarily resolved.

This system worked well until we reached Arizona. We were a little nervous about overheating again in the heat of the desert, especially when we would be climbing in elevation. We thought it best to avoid driving during the day. We would drive in the morning and evenings when it was cooler outside. It was the first time that we were using the headlights for an extended time on the RV. Originally, we had only planned to travel during the day and had not tested running the headlights for a long time. As we traveled, it became apparent that the headlights were becoming increasingly dim. The alternator was not keeping the battery charged.

Brent pulled over and explained the situation to me. We would rest for the night. He had seen an auto parts store in the little town where we stopped to talk. In the morning, he would go and get a new alternator for the RV and change it. Roman went to sleep, peacefully unaware of the transportation issues. Brent wanted to remove the alternator that night so that he would be ready in the morning to get right to work installing a new one. I was glad that we had the toolbox with us. I held the flashlight.

Once the alternator was removed, I was out like a light. Holding the flashlight is hard work. Anyone who has had this job should completely understand. Honestly, I am surprised that with the stress of a broken vehicle, in an unknown town, far from our destination that I was able to sleep. I snuggled next to Roman. Brent wanted to look at something else under the hood.

I woke up to Brent saying, "Wake up. Let's go." I was confused. The sun wasn't up yet. I didn't think that an auto parts store would be open so early. The store

hadn't opened yet. Brent explained. He stayed awake, tore the alternator apart, rebuilt the alternator, and installed the alternator while Roman and I slept. All of that without my flashlight holding assistance! I knew Brent was good at fixing stuff, but that one caught me off guard. Plus, I was happy that we didn't have to spend the money on an alternator. Brent's late night of working also gave us a few more hours of driving time. By now, because of our complications, we were cutting it close to attend the job fair.

I am happy to report that we made it safely back to Ohio. This was the first time that Brent had driven unfamiliar roads as both the navigator and the driver. There was one time in a big city when he changed lanes suddenly. I was afraid that I wasn't going to be able to change lanes fast enough and would get separated from him. Then I would have no idea of where to go. Thanks to God, that did not happen. It was a close call. My little chatterbox in the backseat never noticed the near mishap.

We finally pulled into my parents' driveway with just a few hours to spare before needing to leave for South Carolina. Brent's mom rode with us. She was concerned about all our driving and our lack of sleep. I made it to the fair and was offered a job with one of the school districts. I had a couple of weeks to accept the offer. I waited to see how my Cleveland interview went before I replied.

Once back at my parents' house, Brent and I decided to take the RV to a state park just about five miles down the road. It wouldn't move. To the best of my knowledge, the transmission went out. We literally took the RV from California to Ohio and it stopped moving in my parent's driveway. When I think back, every time I prayed, I asked to make it there safely. That was done. We were able to sell the RV for \$750 to someone who had to tow it away. It was evident to me that God was with us!

