Find Land Now

A Quick Guide for Homesteaders

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The Sudden Homesteader

JESUS. LAND. LOVE.

Find Land Now: A Quick Guide for Homesteaders

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DEDICATION

To Jesus Christ
My Savior and Lord
The Messiah
The Son of God
The Savior of the World
The Creator and Sustainer of Life
The Keeper and Lover of My Soul
The Only Perfect Sacrifice for My Sins
The Blameless Passover Lamb of God
The God Who Died so I Could Live Eternally
The God Who Rose from the Grave and Will Raise Me
The High Priest of Heaven Who Hears Every Prayer
The Only Hope for Human Reconciliation to God
The Generous Giver of the Holy Spirit
The Coming King Who Will Rule the World with Justice
The Prince of True Peace

To My Husband
I am the luckiest.

To My Children
I love you forever and always.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the many homesteaders, farmers, gardeners, preppers, and hobbyists who have created content for folks like myself, who would otherwise have no clue about living off the land. *Find Land Now: A Quick Guide for Homesteaders* is my small contribution to the growing body of knowledge available to those seeking a better, simpler, more sustainable way of life.

DISCLAIMER

There is great financial, emotional, and physical risk in transitioning to a more sustainable way of life. Should you apply to your life the advice or information in this book, or any other related advice, then you are responsible for the outcome. You are the owner of your decisions and the consequences.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS GUIDE

The beauty of homesteading is that it can be pursued anywhere. You can catch rain, grow food, raise bees, and harness solar energy in the suburbs or on a rooftop in the city. Even so, there are some homesteading activities that will just never fly in populated areas. For example, unless monumental reforms are made to residential laws, you will most likely never be able to pasture cows in suburbia.

Even if you *can* do certain homesteading activities in your city, you must ask yourself if you *should*. I've walked through at least two suburban neighborhoods where someone owned a rooster. I doubt it was legal to keep a rooster in either of these places and, even if it was, the roosters were loud. I would wager that more than one neighbor disapproved.

Roosters are loud no matter how much land you own, but in the country, you are less likely to make enemies with your neighbors by keeping a rooster or undertaking any number of homesteading activities that might make urbanites squeamish.

If you're thinking about homesteading, or have been gardening and canning food in suburbia, then chances are, you've thought about buying land at least once or twice. But how do you find land? Where do you begin to look? How long does the search process take? What costs can you expect? How much land should you buy? What property features should you look for? Which pitfalls should you avoid? These are exactly the kinds of questions I will address in this book.

This quick guide is by no means intended to be exhaustive. My purpose is not to micromanage your decisions, but to give you an overview of your options. I will give many examples from my family's land search to show you the thought process behind our decisions. Your thought process and decisions will be unique to your homesteading goals and life situation.

Also, I am writing this book under the assumption that you have determined buying land is the right move for you and your family. As you read this guide and look into acquiring land, you might decide not to buy land or to delay buying until a more opportune time. No worries. I have also included a chapter on ideas for finding land right where you are.

CHAPTER 1

Starting the Search for Land

When you first entertain the idea of finding land, the thought can be daunting. Where do you begin to look? How do you search? How long will it take to find something? Should you start looking now or should you wait until you have a clearer idea of what you want? I will cover these questions in this chapter.

Start Looking Now.

If you have even the slightest desire to possess some land for your homesteading endeavors, then now is the time to start looking. Getting land, moving onto the land, building or renovating a house, and preparing your land for cultivation takes time—more time than you think.

In fact, if you start looking for land right now, while your desire is fledgling, while homesteading seems more like a dream than a clear and present reality, then you'll have a better chance of locating your land by the time your desire is full-blown and you've worn out the graces of your neighbors with your reprobate chicken flock and busting-at-the-seams food forest.

If you don't start looking for land until your desire is full-blown, that's fine too. Just know that the search will take time, and your neighbors will have to endure your renegade squash vines for that much longer.

How Long It Takes to Find Land – A Sample Timeline From Our Search

Our family began to look for land at the start of 2019, but we didn't get serious about our search until January 2020. From that point, it took us until October, about ten months, to make an offer on a property we liked. We finalized our purchase in December 2020 and moved in July 2021, so that's about a year total for the land search and another seven months for the move. A year is not a terribly long time to be searching for land, but we also chose a property relatively close to our suburban home, less than two hours away, a factor that we think shortened our timeline.

The timeline for your land search will be unique to your circumstances. If you are looking to move out of state, for example, or if the properties you're viewing are more than a two-hour drive from your current residence, then your search may take longer. It could very well take less time, Lord willing. Whatever the case may be, plan for the land search to take 6-24 months.

The Total Timeline for Your Move

The amount of time between the day you begin your search and the day you move onto your homestead will also vary based on factors like the size of your family, your health, finances, work schedule, level of motivation, and available help. But one thing is certain. The sooner you find and buy land, the sooner you can settle your homestead.

The Longer It Takes, the More Shifts You'll See in the Housing Market.

Another reason why you'll want to start your land search ASAP is that the housing market can do all kinds of things between now and the day you list your current home for sale, assuming you're a homeowner. The sooner you find land, the sooner you can step off the emotional roller coaster of watching the value of your home fluctuate with the whims of the market.

To give you an example, in December 2020, at that time we bought our land, we didn't think our suburban house would sell for much of a profit. The housing market wasn't doing anything extraordinary. A few months later, however, the demand for houses in our area had shot up to an all-time high. We weren't ready to sell, as we were still renovating the country house and needed to live in suburbia for a little while longer.

When we finally put our suburban house on the market, in Fall 2021, the demand for houses had peaked. We were still able to sell for much higher than we'd anticipated. If we'd put our house on the market any later, however, we might have missed the market boom.

Please note that we did not attempt to time the market, and I suggest you don't either. The market will do what it's going to do, and trying to time your move based on the market could cause more frustration and delays than it's worth.

An Early Start Means More Time for Research.
Even if the housing market had not shifted in our favor, I'm grateful our family began our search for land sooner rather than later. An early start gave us more time to watch *YouTube* videos and think through our decisions. The more time, prayer, and research you can give to the land search, the more familiar you'll become with the land and housing market, and the more clarity you'll gain about your homesteading goals.

Also, my inner prepper wants me to tell you that the sooner you find land, the sooner you can start growing your own food. Should a food crisis strike your area, or the United States as a whole, it's better to have acreage than to be scrambling for land along with everyone else.

Don't Get Desperate.
At the same time, please don't feel pressured to buy the first 5-acre lot that comes your way. Desperation almost always makes for poor decisions. The only thing worse than not having land is having spent all your money on the wrong plot of land. Slow down. Read this book. Read as many books as you can. Do your research, and make a calm and calculated decision.

CHAPTER 2

Count the Cost: Financing Your Homestead

Before you get any deeper into your land search, you must ask yourself if you have enough money to buy a new property. If not, are you willing to hustle and make the necessary sacrifices? Finances will make or break your homestead. Getting your head and heart straight about money now will save you grief later.

How Much Is Homesteading Going to Cost Me?
Some people are able to make the transition to the country cheaply, while others will pay more. A single person, a retired couple, or a young couple may be able to move more swiftly and with fewer expenses than a family with small children.

Your standard of living and homesteading goals will also impact your costs. If you are low-maintenance and your goals are to grow a garden and keep a small flock of chickens, then you will need less acreage and a smaller shelter. You will most likely be able to live off-grid or partially off-grid with little fuss. If you have high power and water demands and a growing family, then off-grid living may not be attainable in your immediate future, and you will most likely need a large shelter and several acres on which to produce enough food for everyone.

Also, the more skills and time you have to build your own shelter and develop the land, the more money you will save. The less time and skills you have, the more money you will need for purchasing premade items and hiring help. I've heard of people buying land and building their own cabin for under 100K, and I've heard of others who bought an established farm for 500K or more. The costs are as varied as you can imagine.

Expenses to Include in the Budget

No matter how cheap or expensive your move to the country may be, there are some expenses anyone pursuing homesteading should consider. In addition to your land purchase and closing costs, you will want to set aside money for some of the following:

- Improving and updating your current residence (if you're planning to sell it)
- Moving day – trucks, help, childcare, etc.
- Homestead renovations or house construction
- Getting a land survey
- Constructing outbuildings, especially a barn and a greenhouse
- Installing fences
- Repairing or connecting to utilities
- Creating roads
- Acquiring animals and all that's needed for their care
- A tractor and other farming equipment
- Compost, soil, plants, seeds, garden beds, trellises, irrigation equipment
- Hired help

- Land clearing, tree removal, pond excavation
- Equipment for going off-grid, such as solar panels, a wood-burning stove, etc.
- Equipment for processing and preserving food
- Homesteading books and courses

Paying for Your Homestead With a Mortgage

Some homesteaders will go the traditional route of buying a house with land on it and financing their purchase with a mortgage. Before you apply for a loan from a large bank or institution, consider speaking with banks that are local to your property of interest. A local bank may (or may not) be able to give you a better deal.

If you plan to buy a small plot of raw land, a transaction that many larger institutions won't finance, then you will also want to speak to the local banks about financing. Generally, you will need to have more cash available when buying a small, raw plot.

Financing your purchase with a traditional mortgage or through a local bank may be the best way to save on interest rates, but there are many other options to consider when paying for your property.

Debt-Free Really Is the Way to Be.

Yes, I've heard of Dave Ramsey, but I haven't researched him enough to say more than that. I encourage you to pursue a debt-free lifestyle, with or without the advice of a financial expert because it's God's desire for humans to be indebted to no one. See Romans 13:8 in the Bible.

Being debt-free sounds like an impossibility to most of us living in the United States. It certainly sounded impossible to our family before we embarked upon our homesteading journey.

Once upon a time, we bought most of our groceries from a certain, high-end food store. Fancy pastries and artisan confections always seemed to make their way into our cart. We couldn't imagine our lives without a gym membership. Certain entertainment events were as mandatory as Sunday church service, and Netflix seemed as essential as water. Shopping was our therapy, and weekend getaways were our medicine.

Oh, and we were in debt. That is to say, we had a mortgage, like most people. And, yes, a mortgage is debt. If you owe it, it's debt. In the years leading up to our move to the country, it was hard for us to even think about paying off our mortgage. The interest rate was good and having a mortgage freed up our cash for investments and entertainment.

But when we got serious about this whole homesteading thing, we set our minds to clearing all debt. And God provided. He opened up opportunities for us to save and generate income. He made us feel rich despite having sacrificed any and all luxuries we could. We learned to trust Him for everything, to work more diligently with our time and talents, and to have our eyes and ears open to opportunities we would have otherwise missed.

In the end, we were able to afford the down payment on our homestead, and the sale of our city home allowed us to pay for the homestead in full. All the praise to God!

My Challenge to You

If you are currently in any kind of debt right now, I challenge you to examine where your money is going. Do you know the difference between a need and a want? Do vacations, exotic foods, name-brand products, frivolous memberships and subscriptions, techie toys, expensive clothes, fancy hotels, accessories, decorations, and entertainment feel as necessary to you as do plain old clothes, food, and shelter? Do you indulge in luxuries, great or small?

Even small indulgences add up over time, and they establish the habit of giving into unnecessary purchases. This habit can make us feel like we need little luxuries on a regular basis, as opposed to reserving such items for special occasions.

Drop the luxuries—all of them. Spend on your needs only. Then, use whatever extra money you save to pay down your debts. Owe nothing, barring, of course, any debts incurred due to unforeseen emergencies, which hopefully do not come your way.

And, no, I won't judge you if you take out a mortgage for your homestead. Just pay it down quickly if you can.

You're Going to Need Extra Cash.

Whether you buy your land outright, take out a mortgage, or broker a deal with the seller directly, you will need a lump sum of cash for the initial payment. You will also want to have funds saved for your first few home and land projects.

As you search for land, try to make extra money. If you own a home, now is the time to make it sparkle. This way, when you're ready to sell, you have the best chance of getting a good price. Or perhaps you can sell some of your possessions, or sell produce from your yard, or start an online business to make extra income. The possibilities are endless.

Also, try to save as much money as you can. Look at your spending habits and cut corners wherever possible. Eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches instead of going out for dinner. Get a cheaper cellphone plan. Drive a reliable used car instead of buying a new one. Cancel your cable. You don't need to be watching TV anyway. You've got a homestead to plan. Cancel your gym membership and workout at home. Stop paying private school tuition and homeschool for a bit. Homesteading is one big sacrifice. Start making some small ones now.

Buy a (Possibly) Cheap Property.

Another way to possibly save money is to buy cheap land. I say *possibly* because cheap properties usually require a large investment of time and money to become useful to the buyer. Truth be told, there is no such thing as cheap land. You might get a great deal on a raw plot, but your upfront savings will most likely be canceled out by the money you spend on fixing it up.

There are many ways to find cheap properties, some of which may not be listed on your typical databases. You can search for such properties at state auctions, land banks, and on foreclosure websites, to name a few.

In homesteading circles, buying owner financed land is a popular method for acquiring cheap land or land that a traditional lender is not willing to finance. In fact, the topic of owner financed land is so popular that I will dedicate the next chapter to it.

Buy an Asset, Not a Liability.

When buying land, keep in mind that it should be a valuable asset to you and your family. A way to test if a property is an asset is to ask yourself whether or not you would be able to resell it quickly and for a good price. It’s hard to think about needing to sell a property you haven’t even purchased, but I’m asking you to do so for test purposes.

If the property would indeed be easy to sell, then it is most likely an asset. If it would be hard, or impossible, to sell the property, then it’s most likely a liability. Aim to buy land that is an asset, not a liability.

Don’t Quit Your Job…Yet.

I know, you want to quit your job and homestead full time, but the truth is, you still need an income, and you will continue to need that income as you establish your homestead. Once your homestead is up and running, you’ve paid your debts, and you’re able to produce most, if not all, of your own goods and services, then, you might be able to cut back on your hours or transition to a lower-paying, but more rewarding, job. In the meantime—so long as it’s possible—please keep your job. Please.

If you’re able to generate income through homesteading, then great. But don’t let the breadwinner of your household leave his or her job until that homesteading income becomes livable and sustainable. If the breadwinner is unable to keep his or her job due to your family’s relocation, then make sure he or she has secured a job with comparable pay before you move.

Making Money from Your Homestead

Many homesteaders wish to eventually make money from their efforts. This is a great goal, and the more money you make from homesteading, the more easily you will be able to transition out of your current job.

There are countless ways to make a full or supplemental income through homesteading. You could sell homegrown produce and animal products, handmade goods, courses and books, consultation sessions, and any number of services. You might also have success with hosting a podcast or posting homesteading videos online. The options are limitless.

Test the waters now. Start small. Create a blog or publish some articles in a magazine. Post a few homesteading videos online. Sell a batch of handmade items at a local market. If you can make a decent supplemental income from your side gigs, then you can start thinking bigger and planning for a job transition.

It’s been a full year since our family moved to the country, and my husband still works his office job. By the grace of God and the kindness of his employer, my husband was able to keep his job and work remotely from home. He will probably be working remotely from home for the next three years, or more, depending on whether or not our homesteading endeavors prove to be lucrative.

CHAPTER 3

Cheap Dirt: Owner Financed Land

If a traditional mortgage is not your thing, or if you'd rather skip getting a credit check, or if you're looking to buy cheap, (most likely raw) land, then you might consider searching for owner financed land, also known as *seller financed*, *seller will hold*, or *owner will carry*. A property that is *for sale by owner* does not necessarily mean it will be owner financed. In this chapter, I will walk you through the steps of locating and investigating owner financed land.

Owner Financed Land May Not Actually Be Cheap.
Owner financed land is not always cheaper than a traditionally financed property. The price of owner financed land depends on the contract agreement between the buyer (you) and the seller (the landowner). You will most likely have to negotiate with the seller to get the deal you want.

When an owner finances his own land, the buyer makes payments directly to him, as opposed to taking out a mortgage with a bank or lender. The buyer might work directly with the seller or use a title company or attorney to broker the deal and set up payments.

Generally, buyers can negotiate a low monthly payment when buying owner financed land, but the interest rate will probably be higher than that of a traditional mortgage. Expect to pay an average of 4-10% interest.[1] The interest is how the landowner makes money. The down payment can be as high as 20-50% of the purchase price, though you may be able to negotiate lower.[2]

Where to Find Owner Financed Land

You can search for owner financed properties on almost any database that hosts real estate listings, and if you have access to an MLS, then you can also search there. *Craigslist* and *Facebook Marketplace* are increasingly popular places to locate owner financed properties that may not be listed elsewhere. There are also databases specifically for rural land, such as *Rural Vacant Land*, *Compass Land USA*, and *Land.com*.

You might also want to check local newspaper listings, which may be available online. If not, consider traveling to your counties of interest to collect as many local newspapers as you can. Then, spend some time searching through the classifieds for owner financed properties.

Investigating a Property

Buying an owner financed property can be risky because you don't have the protection you would otherwise have in a traditional financing situation. For example, the seller may not actually own the property, or he might be trying to

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[1] *How Does Owner Financing Really Work?* (2021, March 15). reali. https://reali.com/resources/owner-finance-homes/

[2] Meggitt, J. (2018, November 21). *What Is the Down Payment Required to buy land?* SFGATE. https://homeguides.sfgate.com/down-payment-required-buy-land-82649.html

unload a property with liens on it, or he might believe that he owns the property but actually doesn't, or he might co-own the property and be trying to sell it without the permission of the other co-owner(s), or…insert your worst-case scenario here.

You do not have to be a victim when buying owner financed land. Do your research. Ruthlessly Investigate the property. Then, hire a title search company or a real estate attorney to investigate further.

Most of the information you will need to investigate a property can be accessed online or by making a few phone calls, so doing a preliminary investigation yourself is feasible, and it can save you the time and grief of further pursuing a property that is unfit for purchase. The remainder of this chapter explains how to investigate a property.

You Must Confirm the Title.
This might sound strange, but before you buy owner financed land, you must confirm that the person selling the land is, in fact, the owner. Even if you inquire about a property, and the seller shows you the title with his name on it, you must must must must must confirm that the seller is the legitimate titleholder.

The best way to confirm the title is by investigating the tax records through the county assessor's office. The great thing about this method of investigation is that it's free. To access the records, you will need the name of the county in which the property is located and the lot number. The seller

of the property should be able to provide you with the lot number.

Many counties keep up-to-date tax records online, but if the county does not have online records, or if you want to verify that the records are current, then simply call the assessor's office during operating hours.

Once you locate the tax records for the property, check that the name on file matches the name of the person selling the land. If there is more than one owner on record, make sure everyone listed has consented to the sale of the property.

You will also want to make note of the property's parcel number, officially known as the Assessor's Parcel Number (APN). You will need the parcel number to investigate the land further.

There are services that collect county record data for you, such as *AgentPro247*, *LandGlide*, or the HUNT app from *onXmaps*. These apps are available for purchase or, perhaps, can be accessed through a free trial period.

Know Your Landowner.
Now is the time to play sleuth. If the landowner has a *Facebook* page, spend some time getting a feel for who (s)he is. Search for any criminal records that may be available through the police department or state records. Does the landowner have a history of lawsuits? Ask around town. Does the person have a good reputation? You basically want to protect yourself from a scam, especially if incriminating evidence about the landowner has already been documented.

Check for Back Taxes and Debt.
When financing land through the owner, you don't want to

get duped into paying back taxes or debts that you did not incur. You can check online with the county's treasurer department, using the parcel number, that the seller owns the land outright, and that there aren't any back taxes, mortgage payments, liens, or debts owed on the property. If you can't locate the information online through the treasurer's office, then you will have to make a phone call.

Determine the Zoning.

To verify that you will be able to use the land as you wish, you will want to investigate the zoning or land use code (LUC). You can find the LUC for a plot through the county assessor's office or the planning and zoning department. You should be able to locate the information online or by calling around.

Basically, you need to determine whether or not you will be able to use the land as you'd like. You want to know which uses for the property are allowed and if any uses are conditional or denied.

Investigate the Road Access.

Before buying any land, you need to figure out how easily you will be able to get to it. You should be able to see if the property has road access through the county GIS maps (Geographic Information System), or you can call the county assessor or clerk with your inquiry. You can also use the property's coordinates to view it on *Google Earth*. You will want to see if the roads are paved or dirt, and you will want to confirm that they are wide and long enough for first responders to fit through and for meeting your homesteading goals.

You could also try hiring a real estate photographer to visit the property for you. Not only will you get photographs out of the deal, but you will have the chance to ask the photographer about the road access.

Research Utilities.

If you plan to be on-grid at all, then you will need to see if the land comes with utility hookups and, if not, how difficult it will be to get utilities. The closer your land is to civilization, the easier it should be to get utilities. You can see if there are houses or buildings near your desired plot by using the world images layer of the county GIS map or by using the property coordinates to search *Google Earth*.

For more information about your utility options, you will need to contact the county planning and development office or the utility providers directly. The county should be able to tell you the requirements and permits needed for a well, septic system, or sewer, and they should be able to give you the name of the power company that will service your property.

It’s also not a bad idea to inquire about internet service, especially if your livelihood depends on the internet. When inquiring about utilities, you will need to provide the county and your service providers with the property’s address, or you will have to give them a way to zero in on your lot, such as the nearest main intersections or proximity to a landmark.

Calculate the Slope.

If you plan to build a house or other structures on your land, you will want to buy a plot with a gentle slope of 10% or less. If you want to calculate the slope of a property, please see the link in the footnote for an in-depth article and a video tutorial on how to find the elevation and calculate the slope of a property.[3]

Hire an Attorney or a Title Company.

Once you've done your homework, and your property checks out, it's time to hire a real estate attorney or a title company to broker the deal. You might also decide to handle the deal on your own. If you can afford it, however, I highly recommend hiring a trustworthy professional to help.

Within a few weeks and for a few hundred dollars (or upwards of 1000 dollars for complicated properties), a title company should be able to turn up all the information you need on your desired property.[4] A real estate attorney should be able to do the same for a flat fee of 750-1250 dollars.[5]

If you go with a title company, check with your state licensing website to make sure the company is licensed. Also, if you plan to buy title insurance, check that the title company has a legitimate underwriter, such as Fidelity National, First American, Old Republic, or Stewart, who will be able to play a claim should you ever have one.

Before settling on a title company, ask for an estimate of the

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[3] Cristofaro, F. *How to Check Property Slope and Elevation for FREE in 2021. Compass Land USA.* https://www.compasslandusa.com/check-property-slope-elevation/

[4] Perry, N. (2021, 14 December). *How Much Does a Title Search Cost?* Orchard. https://orchard.com/blog/posts/how-much-does-a-title-search-cost

[5] Friedlander, J. (2020, 7 August). *How Much Does a Real Estate Attorney Cost?* Ownerly. https://www.ownerly.com/real-estate/real-estate-attorney-cost/

title search cost, which they should be able to obtain with the address of the property, and inquire about any and all fees they charge.

Once you've hired your company or attorney, they will investigate the property as you did, hopefully even more thoroughly, which is why you're paying them. Then, they will help you to negotiate your contract with the seller and close the deal.

Further Considerations for Owner Financed Land

If you buy owner financed land, find out if the seller will be reporting your payments to any or all of the top three credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian, TransUnion. If not, your payments will not count toward improving your credit score.

You can report your own payment history if you are a data furnisher. No worries if you have no idea what that means. Or you can simply report your payment history through a third-party service, such as RentTrack, PayYourRent, or Experian Rent Boost. You might also want to look into UltraFICO and Payment Reporting Builds Credit (PRBC).

In addition to inquiring about credit reporting, you will want to make sure your contract spells out when you will be able to move onto land and start building. Some sellers will not let you build until they receive most, if not all, of the payment for the land. There may also be constraints about when you can move onto the land or start doing certain activities on it.

Also, before signing a contract, ask about balloon payments and early penalty fees. Balloon payments might require you to make a large lump sum payment at some point, and an early penalty is a fee you could be charged for paying off the property earlier than expected.

Finally, have a plan in place in the event that the landowner fails to uphold his end of the deal. A good contract can safeguard you from many hardships, but you also need to prepare yourself for any worst-case scenarios. To whom can you appeal if things go south? Is the title company or attorney required to help you, and if so, what kinds of issues will their help cover? Will your title insurance compensate you for any losses? Does your state have certain requirements for your contract that will serve to protect you in the event of a breach? Plan for the worst, and pray for the best.

CHAPTER 4

More Search Methods

There are many tools and tactics that can help you find the perfect plot for your homestead, some of which I've already covered in the chapter on owner financed land. In this chapter, I will talk about additional methods for finding land, including an exploratory internet search, an email blast, word-of-mouth advertising, and the use of public records.

An Exploratory Search for Inspiration

If you're just dipping your toe into the land search, a great way to begin is with a quick exploratory search. All you need to do is go to popular real estate websites, such as *Zillow* and *Redfin*, and sites that specialize in rural listings, such as *Land and Farm*, *Land Watch*, and *FARMFLIP*, and search for properties with 2-50 acres of land within an hour or two of where you live. Even if you live in a congested city, chances are, there's habitable land no further than a few hours away.

You don't have to settle in any of the towns you find in this initial search, but an exploratory search like this is encouraging and educational. You will get a sense of the rural towns around you, and you'll see the various sizes of plots available for purchase.

There is much more research to be done before buying your homestead. But who knows? You might end up buying that farmstead you found the first time you searched *Zillow*.

Finding Land With an Email Blast

When we first set out to find land, my husband and I sent a single email blast to everyone we knew, telling them about our desire to move to the country. We briefly laid out our goals for the land, and then we popped the question: Does anyone own land they'd be willing to sell us, or does anyone know of anyone who would be willing to sell us land?

Our email did not produce any direct leads to properties, but it did put us in touch with a friend who raises cattle, and he recommended to us the real estate agent who sold us our homestead. I think we would have had more success with our email blast if we had not been so specific about the amount of land we wanted and the price we were hoping to pay. In hindsight, I would have left out those details, as they may have overwhelmed our friends and made them less likely to respond.

If you decide to send an email blast, then I highly recommend keeping it brief and general. I know, you've been conditioned to think that details are important, and they are, but not in an email like this. Simply tell people you're looking to buy land for a homestead, and you're wondering if they have any or if they know of someone who does. Quick tip: BCC your recipients if you don't want everyone to see all of the other recipients on your email.

After you send your email, let your recipients respond with specific details about potential land or leads they might have for you. One friend might be looking to sell a family farmhouse with 10 acres. Someone else might have 20 acres of raw land to offer. You may or may not like any of the options presented to you, but at least you'll have options, and you'll have gotten the word out that you're on the hunt.

Good Old Word-of-Mouth

Don't keep your intentions to buy land confined to an email. Talk to everyone about your endeavors—family, friends, neighbors. At the next family gathering, you might be surprised by who whips out a map of family land he's looking to sell. This actually happened to my husband and me at a gathering. The land for sale wasn't right for us, but we would have never known it existed if we hadn't spoken up.

On another occasion, a neighbor I'd told about our family's homesteading goals approached me to ask if anyone we knew would want to buy her farmhouse in the country. Our family had already purchased our homestead, and we didn't know of anyone who would want to buy her property, but imagine that—a farmhouse with land, ripe for the buying. The key to your dream homestead might be hiding in your own neighborhood. All you have to do is talk to others about your plans.

Use Public Records to Find Land.

If you want to dig even deeper and find land that isn't necessarily listed for sale on the market, then you can try searching public records. This is my least favorite method for finding land, as it's the most time-consuming, but it can yield results. Although similar to searching for owner financed land, this method requires that you search for land based on size and location, rather than on how it’s financed.

How does this method work? Once you know which counties you’d like to live in, you can use each county’s online tax record database to pull up maps of those areas, as long as the counties have made the maps available online. When my husband and I searched county maps, we looked for squarish plots of land of approximately 10 acres. The maps allowed us to see what the road access was like and whether or not the plots were next to a power plant, a small airport, or something like that.

When we found a plot we liked, we determined whether or not a person lived there by looking at the address. If the lot lacked a proper address, for example, if it had all zeroes for the street number or a plot number for an address, then we assumed the land was vacant. We were looking for vacant lots because if a plot had been vacant for a while, then chances were, the owner lived somewhere else and, perhaps, had no intentions of doing anything with the land, other than eventually selling it.

We ended up not going any further down this route to find our homestead, but if we had, after locating an ideal plot of land, we would have dug around on *Facebook* to find the landowner. We might have also searched more public records to have gotten the owner’s physical address. Then, we would have either penned a personal letter or sent an email to the landowner with our intentions for the land and a request to buy. We would have repeated the process for each desirable plot.

Although we did not use public records to find our homestead, we did use them to purchase a plot of land adjacent to our homestead. In this case, we knew exactly what plot of land we wanted, so the search was not time-consuming. After finding the landowner's name on tax records, we dug around online and ended up contacting him through *Facebook*. The landowner agreed to sell us the desired plot.

We did not approach the landowner with a price. Rather, we let him set the price. We did our research to make sure the price was fair, which it was, and we hired a real estate agent who specializes in land sales to facilitate the deal.

CHAPTER 5

The Best Location For Your Homestead

One of the most important considerations when buying land is the location. Which states are the most hospitable to homesteaders? Which counties and towns best support your family's life and homesteading goals? This chapter will address how to find ideal homesteading locations.

Where Should I Buy Land?

You might do as my husband and I did and spend countless hours researching free land available to homesteaders in the US, only to find that many of the locations and conditions are undoable. Or you might love the locations and conditions and seek to cash in on the free land available in, say, Lincoln, Kansas, or any of the other US cities giving away land.[6]

There are factors, in addition to cost, to consider when determining where you would like to homestead. Your desired location will depend on your family's goals, needs, and preferences. You will have to determine how your future location and its laws will affect your homesteading activities, children's schooling, healthcare, taxes, available

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[6] Ferguson, D. (2021, October 18). *19 Cities in the US Giving Away Free Land in 2021*. Dime Will Tell. https://dimewilltell.com/free-land/

jobs, personal politics, and religious beliefs.

You will also want to consider your proximity to things like a major airport, a good hospital, schools, churches, community centers, and stores. If you frequently host out-of-town visitors, how far are you willing to drive to the airport? Will you survive if Home Depot and Tractor Supply are more than thirty minutes away? How far are you willing to drive for groceries? Are church and community events important to your family?

Even rural towns can have active community life, thriving businesses, and resources readily available to you and your family. You just have to search around for the right ones. On the other hand, if you're totally self-sufficient, and aiming for maximum privacy, then proximity to civilization may not factor heavily, or at all, into your search criteria.

Make a List and Check it Twice.

I found it helpful to read through several online lists of the best locations for homesteaders because much of the criteria used to create these lists aligned with my family's goals and values.[7] This may or may not be the case for you.

Take time to develop the criteria for your ideal location. For example, when my husband and I set out to find land, we researched the best overall towns for homesteading, the best locations for homeschooling, the states with the best soil, most rainfall, longest growing seasons, and political policies

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[7] This is just one article about the top states for homesteading. There are many more articles available on the topic: Tamara, N. *The Top 12 U.S. States for Homesteading*. Crisis Equipped. https://crisisequipped.com/best-states-for-homesteading/

that, at least, vaguely matched our personal convictions.

You might be tempted, as we were, to move somewhere tropical so you can grow crops like coffee and bananas. When we considered the entirety of our criteria, however, many tropical locations did not best match our preferences. Not to mention, most tropical locations were too far from our families. Who knows? Tropical may work great for you.

Whatever the case, make a list of all of your goals and preferences, and search for states, counties, and towns that most align with the items on that list.

Where We Bought Land

If you really must know, our family's search criteria best aligned with many states in the Southeast and the Midwest. We ruled out the Midwest due to the cold winters. In the Southeast, we seriously considered Tennessee as our top pick. We also considered Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, West Virginia, and the Carolinas. In the end, we landed in Georgia. We were already residents of Georgia, which made the transition to the country easier on our family, and as it turns out, we just really like Georgia.

We chose a small rural town with an active community, abundant church options, decent schools, and nearby parks and attractions. We are about a ninety-minute drive from the airport, a five-minute drive to the grocery store, twenty minutes from the hospital, and fifteen minutes from the interstate, Home Depot, Tractor Supply, and Chick-fil-A. That's right, Chick-fil-A.

Visit Local Farms to Get Ideas.

If you plan on homesteading within your current state of residence, or not far from it, then I highly recommend visiting as many local farms as you can. The internet is a great way to locate nearby farms.

I also found it helpful to look at the labels of my favorite local foods to find the nearby farms that produced them. If you order CSA boxes (Community Supported Agriculture), you could request a list of the farms that supply the produce and then visit some of those.

Once you locate several farms of interest, check to make sure they accept visitors and what the policies are for visits. Even if a website says you can tour a property, it's best to email or call ahead of time to make sure your visit will be welcomed.

You might have to drive an hour or two, or more, to get to a farm, but your drive should give you a feel for the area and help you to determine whether or not you'd like to live there or somewhere similar. After your visit, consider sending the farmer a gift for taking the time to show you around.

If you notice that many farms are located in the same region of your state, then you might want to drive through that area to see what it's like. You don't necessarily have to tour a farm, though a farm tour can't hurt. You should, at the very least, stop at a local restaurant or farmer's market as part of your reconnaissance mission. There are reasons why so many farmers have settled in that area, and hopefully, your visit will reveal why.

By visiting local farms, our family discovered a few regions within our state where we could see ourselves homesteading, and we added those to our land search. Honing in on these regions also made it easier for us to locate real estate agents who covered the areas. I'll talk more about working with agents later.

What If I Want to Move Out of State or Far, Far Away?
Farm visits are a great way to find homesteader-friendly places near your current location, but what about locating land far away from your current residence or relocating to another state?

For any number of reasons, you may choose to move to a different state. Perhaps you want to be closer to family. Or maybe your current state places heavy restrictions on homesteading or homeschooling. Or perhaps you're seeking a change in weather. Or maybe you just plain want to leave your current state of residence.

You will use the same methods as described in this book to find land, the only difference being, that you will probably spend more time on the internet than on traveling from town to town in person. Even so, when you find a property of interest, you'll most definitely want to see it in person. Although video house tours are a thing, when buying land, there's no substitute for seeing the entire property with your own eyes. And, yes, you should walk the entire property.

If you have family or friends who live close to your desired listing, and if they are willing and able, then they could scope out a property for you. Hopefully, they will be able to warn you of any glaring issues before you make the long trip for yourself. A real estate agent could do the same, forewarning you of issues you couldn’t glean from the listing, such as there’s a meat processing plant nearby, or train tracks cut through the backyard, or the house faces a landfill. You could also try to view the surroundings on the county GIS maps or *Google Earth*, but those images might be outdated, and there’s no substitute for human eyes.

If the property checks out with your friends or agent, then it’s time to make the trip and see it for yourself.

CHAPTER 6

Focusing Your Search: Raw Land? A House? An Alternative Shelter?

Once you have chosen your desired state, or top 2-3 counties, or better yet, your top 2-3 towns, it's time to decide if you want to buy raw land, land with a house on it, or if you want the option of living in an alternative shelter.

Raw Land or a Land With a House?
You might decide you want raw land so you can build your own home or a (legal) alternative shelter. On the other hand, you might be looking for a move-in-ready country house with a few acres for a garden and a chicken yard. Great.

If you're handy and looking to save some cash, you might consider buying a fixer-upper of a house on a large plot of land. Whatever your desire, please make sure your plans are realistic and legal.

A Word About Alternative Shelters
You might decide to forgo a house and instead live in an alternative shelter, such as, but not limited to, one of the following:

- Yurt
- Geodesic dome

- Cabin
- Tiny house
- Folding house
- Mobile home
- RV
- Container house
- Earth shelter
- Army tent
- Treehouse
- Converted barn, van, bus, garage, or shed

Whatever you choose, please make sure your abode is legal and up to code. Government workers really do check up on these things, even in the most remote parts of the country. Also, the mom in me wants you to be as safe as possible, especially in severe weather.

A Shelter for the Transition

Unless you buy a move-in-ready house with your property, you will need a transitional property, that is, a place to stay until your homestead is habitable. If you can swing two mortgages while you build or renovate your homestead, then you could simply stay put in your current home for the duration of your transition. Many homesteaders opt to live with family or in a (legal) temporary shelter on their newly purchased property during this time.

Our family considered living in a yurt on our new property while renovating the house. However, the cost of a yurt, even a used one, and the hassle of raising small children in such a shelter paled in comparison to staying put in the burbs and paying two mortgages for the seven months it took us to make our homestead habitable. Also, we discovered that the laws in our state forbid living in a temporary structure for more than two weeks, even if that structure is a tent on your own property.

Currently, in many US states, a yurt is considered a temporary structure, an auxiliary building, or a tent. Yurt dwelling is generally prohibited for the long term, but some places are laxer with restrictions than others, and some towns may even make an exception for your temporary structure if you get permission.

There are plenty of YouTubers out there who live in yurts, and other alternative shelters, so obviously, there are ways to make it happen. You might also be able to eventually convert your temporary dwelling into a permanent one, thereby, making it legally acceptable as your primary residence. Please check the local laws and building codes before doing anything like that.

Although our family could have pursued approval for yurt living while renovating our homestead, and then later recouped the cost of the yurt by renting it out as an Airbnb, we decided to keep things simple and skipped out on the yurt. We had enough to think about with our remodel, and adding a yurt to the mix would have been too much. We can always buy a yurt or invest in an Airbnb shelter later.

This is in no way to discourage you from pursuing an alternative shelter as a transitional or permanent residence. If it's your dream to live in a tiny house, then please pursue it.

There's No Shame in Buying a Move-in-Ready House

With Cleared Land.

Although I am impressed by the many homesteaders who have purchased raw land, cleared it themselves, and built their own shelters, I can tell you from our family's experience that I'm grateful we bought a fixable house with our land.

If you have been living in the city or suburbs for most of your life and have little building skills and limited contracting knowledge, then you might consider buying a move-in-ready house located on a plot of land with several cleared acres.

Even if you have contracting skills and the resources to build your own home, you still might want to buy a move-in-ready house so you can put all of your energy into getting the rest of your homestead up and running.

CHAPTER 7

How Many Acres to Buy

As you search for your desired property, you'll want to determine how many acres you need to meet your homesteading goals. There's no one-size-fits-all number, but in this chapter, I will do my best to give you the information necessary to think through your decision.

Be Flexible.
When determining our family's acreage needs, my husband and I found it helpful to read articles and watch videos from other homesteaders to get a feel for the kinds of activities they were doing on the amount of land they'd purchased.

Don't be surprised if your desired number of acres changes several times throughout the search process. The number you ultimately settle on will become clearer as you distill your homesteading goals and learn more about buying land.

How Many Acres Does One Person Need?
When our family first started homesteading on our 1/3-acre lot in the suburbs, we found several *YouTube* videos created by people who had grown almost all of their own food in urban neighborhoods, on plots even smaller than ours. We were convinced that we could do the same, but we soon

realized that a vegetable-patch lawn would not fit in with the rest of the landscape in our neighborhood.

Sure, we could have experimented with aquaponics, but we were still learning how to grow food in dirt. This is not to discourage you from trying to feed your family with your 1/4-acre lot. If you, your Homeowner's Association (HOA), and your next-door neighbors are okay with you having a food forest for a yard, then go for it.

While our family managed to harvest a good bit of food from our 600-square-foot garden and four chickens, we realized we were going to need more land if wanted to feed ourselves year round. Exactly how much land?

If you divide the amount of habitable land in the world by the current population, then each person would get about 2 acres, 4 acres if you divide up all the land total.[8] Of course, this number varies depending on population fluctuations and how we define *habitable*.

According to some sources, a family of four can survive on as little as 2 acres of land, but the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) says that a single person living in North America needs as much as 17 acres.[9]

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[8] Knouse, J. (2018). *If the Habitable Surface of Earth Were Evenly Distributed, How Many Square Meters Could Each Person Inhabit?* Quora. https://www.quora.com/If-the-habitable-surface-of-the-Earth-were-evenly-distributed-how-many-square-meters-could-each-person-inhabit

[9] Vukovic, D. (2019, 7 October). *How Much Land Do You Need to Be Self-Sufficient?* Primal Survivor. https://www.primalsurvivor.net/much-land-need-self-sufficient/

Consider the Calories.

One way to get a rough estimate of how much land you need is to consider the number of calories you can produce per acre, which will vary based on your preferred food items. Let's say the average person in your household eats 2000 calories per day. Then, you will need to produce 730,000 calories per person, per year. A calorie-dense food, like Potatoes, can provide up to 15 million calories per acre.[10]

In theory, you could feed a family of four, many times over, with 1 acre of land. But do you really want to eat potatoes all day every day? Rice, wheat, soybeans, and corn are also prized for their high-calorie content, but you will probably want to add other food items to your diet, such as fruits, vegetables, and meat.

Meat: Calories Aren't Everything.

As a former vegetarian, I can't believe I'm about to write these words, but I am. While it is true that it generally takes many more acres to produce calories from meat than it does from plants, the benefits of raising animals are worthwhile. Animals naturally till and fertilize the soil, help to manage pests, and improve the quality of the land, not to mention they produce a variety of products for human use and consumption.

To feed a calf-cow pair for a year, the accepted rule is that

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[10] Haspel, T. (2015, July 12). *In Defense of Corn, the World's Most Important Food Crop.* Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/in-defense-of-corn-the-worlds-most-important-food-crop/2015/07/12/78d86530-25a8-11e5-b77f-eb13a215f593_story.html

1.5-2 acres are needed.[11] One 1200-pound cow will yield about 430 pounds of meat once processed,[12] which according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will supply about 280,000 calories. While this is far fewer calories when compared to the calories supplied by potatoes, grains, and legumes, the benefits of raising animals extend far beyond calorie provision. Spend some time reading books by Joel Salatin and watching *YouTube* videos that demonstrate his farming style, and you'll see what I mean.

If I Had to Give You a Definitive Number

After reviewing several articles and *YouTube* videos on the subject of acreage, I've concluded that the average answer to the question of how much land a single person needs to be self-sustaining falls somewhere between 1-10 acres. Our family decided that 2 acres of clear land per person of our household would more than suffice.

Our family is not your family, so your target number of acres may vary greatly from ours. For one, our family is hoping to pasture cows. If you're not going to pasture cows, and all you want is a large garden and some chickens, then 2-3 acres might be plenty for your household. You might decide that 1 acre is enough. Fine. Just make sure you buy the right amount of land to meet your needs.

If it's your goal to achieve complete freedom from the

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[11] *How Many Cows Per Acre Do You Need?* Farming Base. https://farmingbase.com/how-many-cows-per-acre-do-you-need/

[12] Holland, R, et al. *How Much Meat to Expect from a Beef Carcass*. The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/documents/pb1822.pdf

supply chain, or if you want to earn extra income by selling produce and animal products, then you'll want to acquire more, rather than fewer, acres per person. Obviously, the more land you have, the greater your options, but also, the more money and resources you will need to maintain the land and actualize your goals.

Keep in mind that if you buy more than 10 acres of workable land, you're moving away from the realm of homesteading and venturing closer to that of farming. On 20+ acres, you could make some significant income if you raise the right products. But please don't quit your day job until you're absolutely certain you can make a living off your land.

The Starter Homestead Approach to Buying Land

If you're a city slicker through and through and you're not sure how this whole homesteading thing is going to pan out, or if you don't have the funds to buy a large plot of land, then you might want to start out on a 1-2 acre lot with the intention of buying a larger plot later. A cleared acre is plenty of land for a sizeable garden, a flock of chickens, and a few goats. Some towns may limit how many farm animals you can have per acre, so please check the local laws before making any decisions.

The experience gained on a starter homestead certainly has value, but think about the future, 5-10 years down the line, when you've outgrown your small homestead and want to size up. You'll have to leave much of your work behind. Yes, you can take your animals and transplant many of your plants, but think of all the improvements you've made to the soil. Think of all the structures you've built, the systems you've installed. You will either have to leave all of that or uproot it with the hopes that it will survive the move.

Instead of buying a starter homestead, my recommendation is this: Start homesteading right where you are. You can grow a good bit of food with 100 square feet. Even if all you have is a postage-stamp yard, grow some food on it. Make a container garden if you must. Grow microgreens under fluorescent lights on your kitchen counter. Turn your balcony into an herbal oasis. If you enjoy the work and become irrevocably addicted to homegrown basil, then you'll quickly find yourself on the hunt for a larger plot of land.

If you live in an apartment and have no space at all for growing anything, then you might want to get involved in a community garden as an introduction to homesteading. You can then pursue a starter homestead, or community gardening might inspire you so much that you decide to rip off the band-aid and buy those 10 acres in the country.

I personally would only use the starter homestead approach to buying land if I had no other options, or if I thought there was a good chance I'd never size up and simply remain on my small plot.

Why We Bought a Fixer-Upper and 32 Acres of Woods

To further illustrate the kinds of decisions you and your family will have to make when buying your property, I will share with you how our family arrived at our decision to buy a fixer-upper situated on 32 acres of woods.

My husband is extremely handy, and he worked in construction for two years after graduating from college. In the years leading up to our relocation to the country, our family had been putting aside money for our land purchase and renovations. We also budgeted so we could afford two mortgage payments for some time, which would allow us to stay in our suburban home while we renovated our country house.

What do I mean when I say we bought a *fixer-upper*? Simply put, the house was structurally sound but needed a lot of cosmetic repairs. We also chose to reconfigure the layout a bit, but this update was elective and not due to any structural unsoundness. There was no settling of the foundation. The roof was in fair shape, and the house showed no signs of water issues. Also, the house did not have any strange additions that made for a confusing floorplan, a feature we'd observed on many of the rural properties we'd viewed.

Every weekend for seven months, my husband fixed up the homestead while I stayed in the suburbs with the kids. He did all of the carpentry, and we hired out the skilled trades, which helped us to get the remodel done in a timely manner. At the end of seven months, the fixer-upper was safe enough to inhabit. We sold our house in the suburbs and moved to our homestead. We are still fixing up the homestead, but the huge projects are behind us. Praise the Lord!

Now, our family can focus on those 32 acres, the very reason why we moved to the country in the first place. First things first, we will be clearing some land. We've hired a company to clear about 10 acres, and we will be selling the lumber to pay for the job and to help offset the cost of cleaning up after the job is complete.

As I will explain later, I don't recommend buying a heavily wooded property unless you have a plan to clear the number of acres you need. Our family was fortunate that our plan to clear land worked out the way it did. I cannot guarantee things will work out the same way for you.

In summary, we bought a fixable house on 32 acres of wooded land. Ten of those acres will be cleared, and the remaining 24 will most likely stay wooded. Ten acres should be plenty of land to meet our goals of growing most of our food, raising a reasonable number of chickens, goats, pigs, and cows, and providing excess produce and meat to sell to our community.

Should our homestead expand into a farm, or should we decide to build a rental house on our property, then we might consider clearing more land. We may never need to clear any more than 10 acres, but we like having the extra land available to us. Also, wooded land is beautiful and provides plenty of recreational benefits for our family and guests.

CHAPTER 8

Desirable Property Features and Pitfalls to Avoid

A good real estate agent should inform you of both the desirable and undesirable features of the properties you're considering for purchase. It is still wise to do your own research. No one cares about your property as much as you do.

When considering property features, you will want to be mindful of these four categories: location and surroundings, the land itself, the house and outbuildings, and laws and regulations. In this chapter, I will address desirable features to look for within these categories, and I will list out pitfalls to avoid.

Desirable Location and Surroundings

Preferable Climate, Rainfall, and Soil
Climate preferences can vary greatly from person to person. As a homesteader, you might value milder winters and a longer growing season, or you might be a winter person. Harsher winters generally make for harder homesteading, but the challenge excites some. I think all homesteaders

would agree that good rainfall and rich soil are a plus. In my experience, poor soil is easier to deal with than is poor rainfall. I will address natural water sources later in this chapter.

As per soil, you might want to get a soil test done before planting, especially if you plan to grow crops that require a certain pH or soil type. Building or restoring soil takes time, and if you don't have time, you will have to spend money and put great effort into getting topsoil onto your property.

You will definitely need a soil compaction test if you are going to build on the land, get a septic tank, install a retaining structure, pave a road, dig a well, or anything of the sort.

A Safe Location

Try to choose a location that is normally safe from extreme weather and pesky or dangerous animals. Be aware if your desired property is located in a flood zone, in the midst of Tornado Alley, along the gnat line, or in an area that's prone to hurricanes. Snakes are a problem where I live, but there are ways to manage them.

Of course, natural disasters and wildlife attacks can strike anywhere, but it's best to avoid putting yourself in harm's way if you can. No matter where you settle, make sure you have a plan for severe weather. Buy fire or flood insurance if the area is prone to either of those. Build a storm shelter, particularly if your dwelling lacks a basement.

The only place a human is truly safe is in God, through Christ Jesus.

No Unpleasant Sights, Smells, and Sounds

If the price of a property seems too good to be true, it may be because the surrounding area is unsightly or produces unpleasant smells or sounds. You can use *Google Earth* and the county GIS maps to search for unsightly structures, such as cell towers, airports, railroad tracks, landfills, and industrial facilities, but online tools can only reveal so much.

You will want to inquire with the property's listing agent, the landowner, and the locals about issues like smells from nearby chicken houses, harmful effects from crop dusting, noise from air traffic and trains, pesticides from neighboring farms, and anything else that could cause a disturbance to you, your family, your produce, or your livestock.

A Location Near Civilization

As alluring as it may sound to live alone in the middle of the woods, please consider buying land that is located close enough to hospitals, churches, friends, stores, schools, and civilization. You must determine what *close enough* means for you.

Personally, I am nervous about having to drive any further than twenty minutes to the nearest hospital, but that's just me. Some homesteaders desire total isolation from everything.

Accessible Fire Hydrant and Mailbox

Along the same lines, make sure there is a fire hydrant and a mailbox near your property. It should be obvious why you want a fire hydrant nearby. If you don't have a mailbox on your property, then you'll have to add trips to the post office to your list of chores.

Our property came with a mailbox across the street. This may not seem like a big deal, but trying to teach small children to stay put on one side of the street while you fetch the mail from the other can be a challenge. We suspect our mailbox was placed on the opposite side of the street years ago, perhaps at a time when the mail carrier only serviced one side of the street, which was no longer the case.

We contacted our local post office to ask if we could move the mailbox to our side of the property, but we were told we could not. When we asked our mail carrier, however, via a handwritten note we'd placed inside our mailbox, she said it would be fine. Our carrier processed the request for us, and we moved the mailbox. I give you this example to say that if you buy a property with a mailbox issue, you may or may not be allowed to address it the way you'd like.

No Future Industry or Developments in Sight

Before buying your desired property, check with your Chamber of Commerce or local officials to see if there are any plans to develop the surrounding area. You'll most likely want to buy land located in a farming community, where it's less likely that your neighbors will sell out to developers or industry.

If you buy land some fifty miles from a major city, expect development in your area. Consider buying a plot that backs up to protected land or one that is surrounded by several medium-sized or small plots, which are less likely to be acquired for development than are plots of 100+ acres.

When investigating the zoning for your own property, also check the zoning of the plots around you. A 200ish-acre plot of commercial or industrial land might be developed in the future, and you will want to think twice before settling your homestead beside it.

You will also want to inquire about the density grading for such large plots, that is, the number of people, housing units, or families allowed per acre (or some other form of measurement). The higher the density, the higher the potential for housing development in the future. According to the US Census Bureau, the population density inside cities is 1600 people per square mile, compared to 35 people per square mile in unincorporated areas. These numbers can vary greatly. For example, the density of New York City is about 28,000 people per square mile.[13]

Good Neighbors

Need I say more? Before you buy a property, it's wise to drive around and talk to any neighbors who might be out in their yards. I would also stop at a local shop or restaurant to chat with the folks inside. Get a feel for who they are and how they receive an outsider such as yourself.

Also, you might want to bring a plate of cookies to the neighbors closest to your property of interest. Tell them you're thinking about moving next door and wanted to know what they thought about the area. I personally would rather talk to neighbors who are already outside or with locals in a public setting, but you might be the bring-a-cookie-plate type.

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[13] Cohen, D. (2015, 4 March). *Understanding Population Density*. United States Census Bureau. https://bit.ly/3MkGMRQ. Shortened URL from *Bitly*.

Usable Outbuildings and Structures

Safe outbuildings and usable structures are a bonus. If your property comes with usable sheds, barns, and fences, then you're blessed. The keywords here are *safe* and *usable*. An ugly barn may or may not be safe and usable, so please inquire about the soundness of all outbuildings on the properties you consider.

No worries if there aren't any outbuildings. It is better to have zero outbuildings than it is to have a structure that needs tearing down, a job that requires a fair amount of time and money. If your land doesn't come with outbuildings, you can always build what you need. Budget and plan accordingly.

Desirable Land Features

Natural Sources of Water

Most homesteaders desire land with water on it, in the form of a pond, creek, river, spring, a working well, or abundant groundwater.

If the land you're considering has a natural source of water on it, then check with your local government to make sure you are allowed access to that water. The scenic creek in your back yard might not actually belong to you, or you may be prohibited to use it, or it might only be available for use by the utility company. Also, get the water tested, and treat it accordingly, especially if you or your livestock will be drinking it. You never know whose dumping what upstream.

A folk method to determine if groundwater is abundant is to observe whether or not the land sustains water-loving trees, such as red maple, white poplar, weeping willow, river birch, and ash.

Having access to a natural source of water may not be a big deal for you, especially if you plan to capture rainwater or simply use city water. I will say that our family has benefited from our well, which allows us to irrigate our crops for next to nothing. It was expensive to service the well, and we still have to pay for the electricity that runs the pump, but that could change if we go solar in the future.

Healthy Trees

Many homesteaders enjoy trees as an asset to their land. Wood from trees can be used for heating the house, building structures, and so much more.

If you plan to sell lumber, you'll want to make sure the trees on your property are healthy. Clusters of dead or dying trees are a bad sign. Before buying a property, you could, with the permission of the landowner, have someone from your local branch of the US Forest Service assess the trees. The forester should be able to identify any potential issues and tell you about the kinds of trees on the land.

Unhealthy trees could decrease the value of the land, and you don't want to overpay for a plot of land filled with sick trees. If you are planning to clear the trees and don't care about lumber sales, then you may not care so much about disease and infestation. Whatever the case, make sure the health of the trees is reflected in the price of the land.

Clear or Clearable Land

Clear or clearable land is essential for growing plants and pasturing (most) animals. Clearing land takes time and money, so if you buy a forest, budget accordingly. Otherwise, simply buy land that already has some clear plots. If you are able, I suggest you buy a combination of pasture and woods as a happy medium.

Ethically Cleared Land

If you buy land that has already been cleared, confirm that the clearing has been done ethically.

- Check for eroded topsoil due to logs being haphazardly dragged through the landscape.
- Make sure the healthiest and most mature trees have been left in place. Avoid buying land that has been stripped of its most mature trees, leaving behind only the smallest and weakest to propagate.
- Make sure the trees and vegetation around any natural sources of water have been left intact so as to avoid erosion.

When in doubt, contact your local forestry service for assistance or information.

Flat or Gently Sloped Land

Flat or gently sloped land with no evidence of slips or erosion is ideal. Flat land means you won't be battling slopes when working and that water will have less of a chance to cause damage and erosion.

Gentle slopes are both pleasing to the eye and a plus if you're into permaculture gardening. Just make sure the slopes do not cause water to flow toward any of your buildings or animal areas.

Road Access

If you plan to come and go from your property as you please, then you'll need good road access that meets code requirements and will allow first responders to get to your residence.

Keep in mind that large utility or work trucks may also need to access your land, especially if you hire out some of your homesteading projects. When considering a property, inquire about road access, and ask if any repairs are needed. How easy will it be for a vehicle to enter your property? Do you have to add or fix any roads to meet code?

A Lot That Isn't Landlocked

It is best to buy land that isn't landlocked. A landlocked plot can be difficult to access and will probably require that you drive through your neighbor's property to get to your house. Even if you make an agreement with your neighbors that will allow you to access your land by driving on part of their property, this agreement might be nullified in the future.

Also, keep in mind that landlocked plots can be difficult to sell. No matter how many improvements you make to the land, the resale value of a landlocked homestead may never be as high as you'd like.

A Property That Has a Survey on File

Before you buy your property, make sure you get a hold of the survey from the county tax records. Steer clear of properties that do not have a survey, as it is difficult to prove ownership without one. Buying land without a survey is like buying a car without a title.

The survey on file should clearly mark the property's boundaries and corresponding pins, which are usually metal landmarks that locate the corners of the plot. The quality of the survey and how old it is might affect whether or not you can physically locate the pins on the land. If you can't find the pins, then you can try your hand with a metal detector, which will not work if the markers happen to be stone. You can also contact a local surveyor to help you locate them.

If the survey on file is old and questionable, then you might want to get another one. You will definitely want a fresh survey if there are any disputes among your neighbors about property lines. The cost of a survey can vary greatly based on how much land you're looking to buy.

Good Plotlines

Neat square or wide rectangular plots of land are more desirable than those with jagged edges, pointy sections, and narrow areas. A good plot of land might also have an orderly combination of rectangular and square shapes. Think neat, spacious, and clean when it comes to plotlines.

Also, beware of inset neighboring properties or houses. Your desired property might have once belonged to a larger plot of land that got divided up over the years, and small pieces of inset properties not belonging to you might cut into your property lines. These inset properties could disrupt your use of the land.

Good Resale Value

It's hard to think about having to sell a property you haven't yet bought, but you must always consider the resale value of your homestead. A good house, on good land, in a favorable location will make for a better resale experience than the opposite. By a *good house*, I mean one that is structurally sound, logically designed, and pest-free. It should be clear to you by now what makes for good land and a good location.

Desirable House Features

No Water Issues With the Land or Shelter

You will want to inquire about water issues on the property. Carefully check the house and any outbuildings for signs of water damage or issues that could lead to water damage, such as the following:

- Water drains toward, rather than away from, the house and outbuildings.
- Missing or damaged roof shingles
- Window or door leaks
- The sound of water dripping somewhere in the house. Search for its source.
- Water stains on ceiling or walls
- Cracked or warped flooring or wet spots on carpet
- Depressions or soft spots on the floor, especially near sinks, baths, and appliances
- New repairs that have patched over but not fixed water problems. Ask for paperwork or some kind of proof that the issues have been sufficiently serviced.
- Water or mold in under-sink cabinets
- The smell of mildew in the house, attic, basement, or crawlspace

If possible, walk the property on a rainy day. Observe where water collects. If there's a house on the property, check to make sure the water runs away from it. If waiting for a rainy day is impractical, then simply visualize where the water might run. Pay attention to slopes, and look for areas of the yard where topsoil might be eroding away. Ask yourself, where will storm runoff flow?

Before buying a property, your agent should provide you with full disclosure of any issues, including water problems, the seller has had to deal with in the past. To cover all the bases, ask the listing agent for a copy of the flood determination. According to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), a 1% chance or higher that the area will flood each year is high.[14]

Don't depend solely on information from others. Do your own research. Find out what the highest crest was for the area in the last thirty years. If there is a natural source of water on the land, such as a creek, figure out what feeds it.

You'll also want to find out if any part of the property is considered wetlands. If so, then ask for the wetland delineation, and make sure you will be able to build the structures you desire on the property.

A New(ish) House

One of the first properties my husband and I toured during our search was an old farmhouse, built in the early 1900s. The house was considered historic and needed a complete renovation. The renovation would have required that we follow strict guidelines to retain the home's historical value, and it would have cost as much as the property itself. Not only that, but the cost of keeping up such an old house would have amounted to a fortune over time.

Unless you want to spend the money to rehabilitate and maintain an old house, I recommend that you buy a house

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[14] *Flood Maps*. (2021, November 10). FEMA. https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps

built in the late sixties or thereafter. Double-check that the home was built with modern materials and that it has modern electrical work and plumbing.

If you really want to play it safe, you could buy a home no more than fifty years old. If you're worried about lead paint, then get the proper testing done, or buy a house built after 1978.

If you simply must buy an old house, have it tested for radon, especially if it has a basement. Even if it's been tested in the past, you'll want to re-test. As a rule, inquire about radon for any house you're considering for purchase.

Remember, you can always make your home look old-timey with décor if that's your desire.

A Pest-Free House

If you're buying a property with a house on it, then at the very least, get a termite letter, to make sure it's clear of those. Also, check for fleas and evidence of mice, roaches, or any other infestation. Droppings in the attic insulation and crawl space are a bad sign. Tree branches that touch the roof are an invitation for vermin to climb aboard.

If you spot a pest problem before buying a property, you might be able to negotiate a price reduction or request compensation for a pest-control plan.

Utilities

Even if you're planning to go completely off the grid, you should inquire about what utility hookups are available. Unless you are equipped and ready to go off-grid, you will most likely need to start your homestead on the grid. And keep in mind that bringing power to raw land is expensive and may not be feasible for some locations. When, or if, you decide to go off-grid, remember that it takes time and money to acquire and build the apparatuses necessary for accessing your own power and water.

If a property comes with utilities, make sure they are in good working condition. For example, if there's a septic tank on site, ask if it works and when it was last pumped. If a property comes with a well, but the well has been neglected, it could take thousands of dollars to service it. Also, keep in mind that some wells require electricity.

Our family has enjoyed having full access to utilities, a luxury that has given us the option of gradually or partially going off-grid.

High-Speed Internet

Having a good internet connection is a must for most people, especially those who work from home or make a living online. Before buying a property, make sure you can get a good internet connection, emphasis on *good*.

When viewing properties of interest, if you see any neighbors out and about, ask them about their internet. Also, check discussions on the town's *Facebook* page. If people frequently complain about the internet in a certain part of town, then chances are, the internet works poorly there.

Thankfully, recent legislation is bringing fiber to more rural areas. Check with your county to see if and when internet improvements will be made available to you.

No joke, the house we bought was the last one on the street that was able to get high-speed internet. Thanks be to God Almighty! If the opposite had been true, we would not have bought our property.

Desirable Laws and Regulations

No Easements or Non-Burdensome Easements

Check to see if there are any easements on your land of interest before you buy it. Easements are agreements that allow others to access your property. For example, a landlocked neighbor may have the right to drive through your land to get to her house.

If the previous owner of your property has made a quitclaim agreement with a neighbor, the agreement ceases after the sale. However, you might make enemies with your neighbor should you decide to suddenly cut off her access to a portion of your land that she'd once had.

Easements might also give the utility company the right to your creek or free access to the powerlines on your land. Or someone else might have the right to lay a railroad track through your yard. Phone carrier companies will generally not erect a cell tower on your property unless you enter into an agreement with them.

Easements come with the land and are sometimes irrevocable. Make sure the portion of your land affected by an easement will not inhibit your goals. To give you a personal illustration, a powerline runs right through our food forest, and we have to keep our plants clear of its path so the electric company can access it. This is not a huge deal for us as we have a large planting area. If our garden plot had been small, however, we would have lost much planting space to this easement.

Non-intrusive Covenants

Covenants are agreements that protect the land from undesirable development or neglect. Restrictive covenants are those that limit the landowner's use of the land in some way (negative) or require him to maintain the property in a particular way (affirmative).

Some covenants *run with the land*, which means they come with the land, and others are *personal*, meaning they only apply to the people involved in the original agreement.[15] Covenants may expire or require renewal after a set period of time.

Before buying land, check if there are covenants attached to it. Covenants are usually beneficial for land conservation, but they might limit your project plans. Some homesteaders see covenants as deal-breakers, and others embrace them.

If you feel a covenant is unreasonable, you can request that Land Registry amend or remove it. Your request may or may not be honored. On the plus side, there are usually tax incentives for honoring land covenants. Removing a conservation covenant could result in higher property taxes. Our family personally likes our covenants.

No HOA and Favorable Local Laws

In addition to checking for covenants, you'll want to inquire

[15] *Covenant That Runs with the Land*. Cornell Law School – Legal Information Institute. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/covenant_that_runs_with_the_land

about what kinds of activities your HOA and the local laws prohibit or require. Even remote properties can have an HOA, and there’s no escaping local laws, even in the most remote places.

Many homesteaders want to live in places that will allow them to raise animals and hang their clothes on a line to dry. Others may prefer to live in places where associations and laws limit potentially dangerous or unsightly activities. If you’re serious about homesteading, then chances are, you prefer the former to the latter, and you will, thereby, value a location without an HOA and homesteader-friendly local ordinances.

Favorable Setbacks and Building Codes

A setback is the minimum distance from a property line or a land feature where your house or other structures can be built. The county planning commission can give you your setbacks and building codes before you break ground on your land.

Some homesteaders don’t like any kinds of codes, but codes are generally fair and could keep you from building a dangerous structure or one that will negatively impact the resale value of your property.

Residential, Agricultural, or Mixed Zoning

You can locate the zoning for a property on the public tax records, as explained in the chapter on owner financed land. Residential, agricultural, or mixed agricultural-residential zoning are ideal for homesteading. You don’t need to worry about industrial or commercial zoning for homesteading, but do be aware if such zoning exists around you. Commercial or industrial zones could undergo development in the future

If you buy a property zoned for agriculture, you should be able to build any number of outbuildings on it. If you want to build a house for living, however, your laws might require that you rezone some of the agricultural land as residential. Rezoning can affect your tax exemptions, so inquire about your future taxes if you plan to build a home on agricultural land. Rezoning land takes time and effort, so plan ahead as much as you can.

If you buy land that is strictly residential, then you will want to check the laws about outbuildings and keeping animals. Residential ordinances could hinder some of your homesteading goals. You should be able to build a permanent dwelling on land zoned as residential, so long as you follow the codes and obtain the proper permits. If you do, in fact, want to build a house on your property, please confirm that you will be able to do so.

Mixed residential-agricultural zoning is a happy medium. Our family has enjoyed the benefits of mixed zoning. If you buy land with mixed zoning, make sure you will have the right amount of space for your desired buildings and activities.

Mineral Rights

Valuable minerals are a wonderful asset to any land, and you can reap the benefits so long as you own the mineral rights. Although you might own the land, someone else might own the rights to its minerals, and it could take up to twenty years for those rights to expire.[16] If you have any intention of mining your land for minerals, such as oil, natural gas, coal, metals, clay, and gravel, you need to inquire about the mineral rights.

Do the mineral rights come with the land or does someone else own them? Did any of the previous landowners sell the rights to some of the minerals but retain the rights to others? Do you own the rights to both surface and subsurface minerals?

Even if your deed, which you can get from the county recorder's office, says that you were conveyed the fee simple title (complete rights to the surface, subsurface, and air above your property), you may want to hire a title search company to make sure some of those rights have not been parceled out.[17]

Mineral rights may or may not weigh heavily on your decision to buy a plot of land. It depends on your hopes and ambitions. I personally would rather own the mineral rights than not, but mineral rights were not a deal-breaking issue for our family.

General Warranty Deed (aka, Warranty Deed)

You want a general warranty deed, as opposed to a special warranty or quitclaim deed, when you buy a property. A warranty deed, provided by the closing attorney, guarantees

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[16] Moore, R. (2022, February 2). *What Are Mineral Rights and How Do They Work? Different Types of Ownerships and Trading in 2022*. Pheasant Energy. https://www.pheasantenergy.com/mineral-rights/

[17] Sandvick, C. (2021, November). *How to Check Mineral Rights.* wikiHow. https://www.wikihow.com/Check-Mineral-Rights

that the seller owns the title and can transfer it to you, free of liens or title issues. After the deal closes, you are awarded the warranty deed, and the property legally belongs to you.[18]

Deal-Breaking Pitfalls to Avoid

If you flip this list of desirable property features around, then you can easily see the kinds of issues that would be undesirable, and even deal-breaking, if they applied to the property you were considering for purchase.

To spell it out, you will most likely want to avoid the following when honing in on your desired plot of land.

- A location with little rainfall, poor soil, or a climate you dislike
- A location prone to severe weather, pests, or dangerous wildlife
- Unsightly or unpleasant surroundings
- Total isolation from everything
- The fire hydrant and mailbox are far from the property
- The plot is located near land that is likely to be developed or used for industry
- Bad neighbors
- Unusable outbuildings and structures
- No access to a natural source of water
- Unhealthy trees
- Absolutely no trees or a dense forest of trees with no means to clear it
- Land that's been cleared irresponsibly
- Steeply sloped land with slips or erosion issues

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[18] *Warranty Deed: What Is It and Should You Get One?* (2020, April 21). Quicken Loans. https://www.quickenloans.com/learn/warranty-deed

- Poor road access or a landlocked plot
- Bad plotlines
- The property lacks a survey.
- Poor resale value of the house and/or land
- A house with evidence of water issues or a high risk of flooding
- An old or historic house
- A house with a pest problem
- Absent or poor utility infrastructure
- No or slow internet
- Burdensome easements
- Restrictive Covenants
- HOA requirements or local laws that infringe upon your homesteading goals
- Setbacks and codes that interfere with your building plans
- Zoning that interferes with your plans
- Someone else owns the mineral rights
- A deed other than a warranty deed

CHAPTER 9

Clear Land is Essential.

The topic of clear land is so important that it needs its own chapter. If you fall in love with that cabin in the woods and must buy it, then please have a plan to clear enough land to meet your homesteading goals. Clearing land almost always requires heavy-duty equipment, time, energy, and money. Before buying a property, figure out exactly how much food you want to produce for your family, and make sure you will have enough clear space, or the ability to clear enough space to exact your goals.

Hunting and Foraging May Not Be Enough.
You might be thinking that living in the woods will allow you to forage and hunt for all of your food. As much as I love to forage, there's no way I'm going to feed my family with my daily pickings. Even on a prolific day, the amount of time it takes for me to harvest a few hundred calories from the woods is laughable when compared to the number of calories I can locate in my garden within minutes.

Hunting is a good way to provide calories for yourself, but unless you are a skilled hunter or have a plan to become one, it will probably be more efficient for you to raise and process your own animals for meat.

I Can't Clear Land. I'm a Tree Lover.

I love trees too, and the thought of clearing them pains me, but the reality is you can't do much homesteading without some clear land. If it's any consolation, most land clearing contractors will allow you to mark some trees for saving. You can also state in your contract that you will save trees of a certain diameter and wider from being cut down.

And keep in mind that you're clearing trees with the intention of improving the land, not pillaging it. Think of all the beneficial plants you'll be bringing onto land. Think of the soil improvements you and your animals will make.

If the prospect of clearing land bothers you too much, then you have all the more reason to simply buy land with clearings already in place.

Many Contractors Won't Clear Small Plots.

If you plan to buy wooded land, make sure you will be able to clear the number of acres you will need. Many land-clearing contractors will not bother with small jobs. My husband and I were lucky to find a contractor who agreed to clear 10 acres of mature trees, which is small potatoes to most.

The Cost of Clearing

If you're worried about the cost of clearing land, the price you'll get for your lumber will most likely offset the clearing costs. Ideally, you will make a profit from the lumber, which you can use toward cleaning up the cleared land or buying the equipment necessary to clean it up yourself, such as a tractor.

Clearing Your Own Land

If a contractor won't clear your land, then you will have to find an alternative or clear it yourself. Some homesteaders find it rewarding to clear their own land, but before you go running through your woods with a chainsaw, I encourage you to research your options. Manually clearing land is difficult and time-consuming, especially if the trees are mature. I kid you not, it took my husband an entire afternoon to clear a single mature tree from our yard. Granted, he used only a chainsaw and some ropes.

If you don't want to bother with clearing land or hiring someone to do so, then simply buy a property that is already clear or one with very young trees that can be mowed by those goats you were going to buy anyway.

Whether you clear the land yourself or hire someone for the job, make sure the clearing is performed ethically. Improperly clearing land can result in a long-term degradation of the soil, erosion, and a decline in the quality of future trees.

Playing With Fire

Whether you clear your land yourself or hire out the job, you will have to clean up the debris left behind. If you plan to clean up by means of slash-and-burn (cutting down a bunch of stuff and burning it), then I recommend you check your local laws and enlist help if needed. Fires are dangerous, and your local laws may prohibit yard-waste fires.

If prescribed burns or slash-and-burn agriculture are allowed where you live, then you'll want to apply for a burn permit and contact your state forestry commission for guidance on your project. It’s wise to contact your forestry agency whenever you’re considering clearing land or cleaning up debris.

CHAPTER 10

It's Time to Buy Your Land.

Once you get a sense of the general location and the type of land and shelter you're looking to buy, it's time to get serious about zeroing in on a property. You'll want to enlist the help of a trustworthy real estate agent, determine your exact preferences for your property, and set up viewings for properties that catch your attention.

Hire a Good Real Estate Agent (or two).

When you get serious about your land search, it's time to hire a professional real estate agent to help. Search the internet, call around, and find yourself an agent who seems professional and knowledgeable about your area(s) of interest. Rural real estate agents sometimes cover large regions of land, but even they have their limits. Ask your agent how far he or she would be willing to drive to show you a property.

If you would like to broaden your search beyond where the agent will drive or if you are considering more than one region of a state, then you will want to work with a second (or third) agent who covers the other area(s). Your first agent may even be able to make recommendations to you about other agents. If you work with multiple agents, make sure their regions don't conflict with each other. You don't want to find yourself in an awkward situation in which two agents contact you about the same property.

As always, mind your manners when working with your agent. Many people in rural areas are interconnected. Your real estate agent might also be your child's future soccer coach, and your agent's brother might be the building inspector who has the power to either approve or deny your building permit.

I say this to by no means knock country folks. In fact, country folks are one of the top reasons why our family moved to the country. Basically, you want your agent to see you and your family as a potential asset to the community. Don't give the agent any reason to see you as a discourteous city slicker with unrealistic fantasies about country living.

Our family worked with two real estate agents, and they seemed to take us more seriously when we told them we were keeping chickens in the suburbs and wanted more space so we could raise more animals. We also made clear our intentions to improve an older property. Improvements mean you'll be adding value to the area and stimulating the local economy with jobs and purchases. It's a win-win for all.

Once you find an agent (or multiple agents), she will put your shelter and land preferences into a database that will pull up listings as they become available. Our agent forwarded listings to us every few days, so be prepared for the updates. Your agent might also be able to tell you about properties she’s heard about in passing.

I Don’t Want to Use a Real Estate Agent.
True, you can buy a property without a real estate agent, but I highly recommend getting an agent if you’re a buyer. At the very least, consider using a title company or real estate attorney to seal the deal. You can revisit the chapter on owner financed land for more information on title companies.

If you are avoiding a real estate agent because you’re looking to save money, please note that the seller usually pays the buyer’s agent’s commission. It makes more sense to forgo the use of an agent if you are selling a property rather than buying one. My husband and I actually sold our house in the suburbs without an agent, but selling a property is different than buying one.

Sometimes both buyer and seller can work out a deal without an agent, ideally saving both parties some cash, but in my opinion, it’s not worth the hassle. When buying a property, I recommend using an agent. The agent will handle all parts of the transaction and, ideally, should safeguard you from investing in a poor property.

Make Your Preferences Narrow and Broad.
By the time you’re ready to work with an agent, you should have a good idea of your preferences, such as how many bedrooms you need, the number of acres you want, and any special property features you desire. Even if you know what you want, you’ll want to keep your preferences slightly broad. Your agent will most likely put broad preferences into her database for you, but you’ll want to double-check that

she's going to do that.

For example, if you know your family needs at least three bedrooms, have your agent set your search for 3-4 beds or even 2-4 beds. If a smaller house with a decent-sized basement becomes available, and if you're handy enough, you can add a bedroom down there.

My husband and I added a guestroom to our basement. The room is small and basement-like, but it has a window and a closet, and it serves the purpose of housing guests on occasion. Warning: If you decide to add a bedroom to any part of your house, make sure it meets code and is inspected by your local municipality. Improper or unapproved renovations can result in fines and substantial loss of resale value. If creating more bedrooms isn't your thing, then simply buy a house with the exact number of bedrooms you desire.

As per acreage, if you want 10 acres, don't set your search for 10-15 acres, but rather something like 5-35 acres. You might find an affordable fixer-upper of a house on 20 acres that appeals to you. Or you might locate an amazing house on 9 acres, which you may end up buying, even though it's an acre shy of your desired lot size. If you had kept your search parameters limited to 10-15 acres, then you might not have found either of these options.

Your agent may suggest going even wider with your acreage range than I've suggested. It can't hurt. Rural properties tend to become available more slowly than do those closer to cities. Even with broad search parameters, you most likely won't get overwhelmed with listings. In fact, you may be underwhelmed by how many properties keep coming up in your search over and over again.

Name Your Price.

Set a price range that is realistic and affordable. Your price expectations will probably change as you see what's available and for how much. Your agent should be able to send you the figures for recent sales of complementary properties in the area.

If you plan to buy a house with the property, ask for the average price per square foot of comparable homes. Also, look up the tax records for your properties of interest, which can help to give you a sense of their worth.

As per the land, ask your agent for the average price per acre in your desired location.[19] The price of land can vary greatly depending on location, features, and zoning.

Keep Up Your Own Search.

A good real estate agent is priceless when it comes to buying a property. At the same time, do not rely entirely on the agent alone to locate your dream homestead. Keep up with your own search.

My husband and I found our property ourselves on *Redfin*. We told our agent about it, and he was quickly able to show it to us. Soon after, we put in our offer.

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[19] According to the US Department of Agriculture, the average cost of farmland in 2021 was 3380.00/acre. *2021 Agricultural Land – Land Values and Cash Rents.* (October 2021). NASS. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Highlights/2021/land-values-cash-rents.pdf

The End Is in Sight.

Once you hire a real estate agent, things can move quickly. Within four months of viewing our first property of interest, we had made an offer on the property that is now our homestead.

Despite the relatively swift ending to our land search, the process seemed to drag on at times, and we wondered if we would ever find the right property. It was also hard to keep motivated after viewing several properties that failed to live up to their listings. But we pressed on, and the Lord led us to just the right spot. All praise be to God!

CHAPTER 11

Find Land Without Moving to the Country.

Perhaps you've read this far and have decided you don't want to buy land, or that you'd rather wait to buy land. Or perhaps you have a family situation, a health issue, or a job that requires your physical presence in the city. There are still ways to find land and grow food. You can buy a nearby plot, lease land, borrow some land from neighbors, or even inspire several neighbors to grow communal front-yard gardens.

Buy a Nearby Plot of Land.

By using any of the search methods described in this book, you might be able to locate a small plot of land near your current residence. A plot in a popular city will in all likelihood be expensive, but who knows? You might find a golden deal.

You might also be able to unofficially rent or use a vacant lot, with the seller's permission, until someone buys it for development. Ask around. Post an inquiry on the neighborhood *Facebook* page.

There are obvious drawbacks to buying or using a plot of land in the city. For one, if the plot isn't in your immediate neighborhood, you will have to commute to it. Also, you risk losing your hard work should a buyer come along and plop down a house where your food forest once stood.

And while I do not advocate for guerilla gardening, that is, randomly and illegally planting seeds in vacant lots without permission, it is an interesting topic to research. Google away.

Buy Now, Move Later.

If you can afford it, you can buy a plot of land with the hopes of moving onto it later. Plenty of people own land they plan to use upon retirement. Keep in mind that in addition to paying for the land itself, you will have to pay annual taxes based on the assessed value of the property.

Leasing Land, Which Is Basically Renting

If you're tied to the city, or if you don't yet have the means to buy your own land, then you can try leasing land from a nearby landowner. The closer the land is to your home, the better. Fewer barriers between you and your land means fewer excuses to keep you from working on it.

There are many different kinds of leases, so research your options. You can visit websites like *Land Lease Exchange* to see listings. You might also want to post your request for leasing land on your city's message board. And never underestimate the power of email blasts and word-of-mouth advertising.

The downside of leasing land, which is perhaps an upside depending on how you look at it, is that the land does not belong to you, though in some cases you might be able to lease to own.

Borrowing Land from Your Neighbors

You don’t have to lease land to find some nearby garden plots. In fact, if our family hadn’t moved to the country, I would have asked my neighbors about renting sunny plots in their yards or working out a produce exchange for the use of such plots. Some gardeners have even made a business out of farming in other peoples’ yards. Local restaurants might also let you garden on their sunny plots in exchange for produce.

The downside to borrowing land is similar to that of leasing it. Borrowed land does not, and most likely never will, belong to you. Also, borrowed plots of land might be scattered throughout your community, which may limit how diligently you are able to monitor your crops.

You Can Always Join a Community Garden.

Many cities and suburbs have community gardens. If you’re just getting started with homesteading, or you have zero land, or you would like to meet other gardeners, then renting a vegetable bed in a community garden can be a good starting point. You will be limited in the amount of produce you can grow, but your participation in such an organization might lead you to hear about more gardening opportunities in your area.

Turn Your Neighborhood Into a Communal Orchard.

Another alternative to buying land is to inspire your neighbors to plant front-yard gardens for sharing. When our family lived in suburbia, we had the privilege of befriending a gem of a gardener and his gem of a wife. Our gardener friend had a vision of turning our neighborhood into a walkable orchard. He began by planting a blueberry patch for neighbors in his front yard. Come summer, our children, and others, would pick handfuls of fresh blueberries from his bushes.

Inspired by the generosity of our gardener friend, our family planted a small community garden in the front of our yard. Many neighbors enjoyed the fresh produce, and our passiflora vine was quite the conversation starter.

The Downside of Communal Gardens

A walkable neighborhood orchard is a wonderful way of connecting neighbors to each other, reaching out to folks who don't have the time or desire to grow their own food, educating the youth about how food grows, and enjoying God's bounty as a community.

The downside is that if you move, as we and several others on our street did, you can't guarantee the next homeowner will keep your community plot going. A new resident will most likely hang onto the fruit trees, so planting those is probably safe, but not everyone will love the look of blackberry canes in their front yard.

Also, some neighbors may push back at the idea of a communal orchard, not wanting to see people grazing on each other's lawns. They might also fear that the flowers and herbs will attract too many bees, or that the free food will bring outsiders into the neighborhood. I personally loved to meet new people as they grazed in my curbside garden, and I especially loved to talk to them about Jesus, but not everyone is like me.

On the other hand, I did not enjoy dealing with the few neighbors who didn't understand boundaries. Such neighbors would walk past my community garden and let themselves into the other areas of my yard, despite proper signage and the several conversations in which I re-explained the boundaries.

The takeaway lesson is this: If you open up part of your property to the public, be prepared for anything. And I mean anything. I've had entire plants uprooted from my yard, plants that were nowhere near the community section of the yard, and the job had obviously not been done by an animal.

I'm not trying to discourage you from being generous. Just make sure you establish clear rules for the you-pick areas of your yard, and kindly enforce the rules when necessary. Be prepared to escalate persistent trespasses if necessary.

The Dark Side of Communal Gardens During a Crisis

Another point to consider, which saddens me to think about, but is necessary to address, is that in a crisis, things could get ugly. By *things*, I mean people. Should a famine or supply-chain crisis ever come to your neck of the woods, your neighborhood orchard could quickly turn into a horror scene. I'll stop there. You can imagine the scenarios.

Land for Survival

Even if you feel tied to the city and see no exit in sight, keep up your hopes for land. You never know when your situation, or perspective, might change. Land cannot solve all of your problems, but it can help to mitigate a few.

For one, land puts physical distance between you and other humans, which may sound harsh. But think, for a moment, about someone you know who gets hangry if he skips breakfast. Now, imagine being surrounded by thousands of people like your hangry friend after they've forgone several meals. You get the idea, right?

Also, the more land you have, the more people you can help to feed should times get tough. God might use your desire for land to help you get ahead of a crisis, as He did when He sent Joseph to Egypt ahead of a famine. If you have land, then you have the option to produce food for a time when your family and friends will need it most.

Understand that land will help you to get through, not protect you from, a crisis. Making it through a crisis is better than becoming a victim. Get through. Get land. And remember, the only true security a human has is with God, in Christ Jesus. Above all else, take shelter in Almighty God, the One who made you, and the only One who can offer you true and eternal protection in Jesus.

Seek and Find

Hopefully, by now, you have a sense of what kind of land and shelter you want, how many acres you'll need, and the kind of location you'd like for your homestead. You may have even decided that you don't want land right now. Whatever the case may be, I pray you find what it is you seek.

CHAPTER 12

Bonus Chapter: How To Receive Eternal Life

There's no point in setting up a homestead and planning for your survival in this life if you haven't yet figured out where you'll be spending eternity. Eternity is infinitely longer than the average human lifespan, which means that pondering your eternal fate is infinitely more important than any other activity you could possibly be doing for the next five minutes.

To Get to Heaven, You Must Be Re-Created. Imagine you owed GOD a million dollars every time you sinned. Sin is anything from thinking bad thoughts about others, withholding forgiveness, having crushes on people to whom you're not married, speaking perversely, joking crudely, looking at bad things on the internet and media, watching unwholesome TV and movies, listening to music that encourages lust and sin, fornicating, using your body for pleasure outside of marriage, committing adultery, cursing, misusing the names GOD and JESUS, getting drunk, abusing substances, indulging fantastical thoughts and desires, looking down on others, burdening others by being lazy or doing poor or incomplete work, neglecting family duties and employment obligations, incurring irresponsible debt, over-indulging in life's pleasures, being prideful or always thinking you deserve a higher position, practicing gluttony, being greedy or stingy, wanting what others have, complaining about your life, taking advantage of others, disrespecting or mocking your parents and those in authority over you, lying, stealing, cheating, bragging, slandering, gossiping, exaggerating to make yourself look good, using company or church resources or time for personal projects or entertainment, putting your needs and preferences ahead of others, abusing your authority to get ahead or avoid consequences, offering or accepting bribes, living like the rules don't apply to you…The list goes on.

We have all sinned in many ways, which means no one on Earth would be able to pay GOD back for their sins, not even Elon Musk. And anyway, GOD doesn't accept money as payment for sin. There is nothing on earth a human can give to GOD as payment for sin, not even our good deeds or kindness. Kindness is good, but kindness can't pay for sin.

Moreover, because of our sin, we are separated from our perfect and holy GOD; our bodies will die one day; and if we die in our sin, we will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire, known as Hell. We cannot enter the presence of our perfect GOD in Heaven unless we are free of both sin and death. We must be recreated, without sin and with bodies that never die.

That's a problem because not a single one of us can recreate ourselves, no matter how cleanly we eat, or how many hours we spend working out. Even being a "good person" can't make you fit for Heaven because being a "good person" doesn't make you a *new* person. Nothing and no one on Earth can make you a new person—without sin and with a body that never dies. If we're going to enter Heaven, where there is no sin and death, GOD HIMSELF must take away our sins and recreate our bodies without death. We need the CREATOR to recreate us.

God sent HIS SON JESUS down to Earth to do just that. JESUS is ONE with the FATHER. HE always existed and always will, and about 2000 years ago, HE came down from Heaven and was born of the Virgin Mary. HE lived on this Earth in a human body. JESUS is GOD IN FLESH. He is THE MESSIAH. HE never sinned once during HIS life on Earth, and HE willingly died on the cross as the perfect LAMB OF GOD. Only JESUS is qualified to take away our sins because HE is GOD IN FLESH and HE had no sin. No other sacrifice would satisfy the sin-debt that each person owes GOD. Only the perfect blood of the SON OF GOD is a high enough price to pay for sin. By HIS blood, JESUS made it possible for a human soul to be raised from eternal death to eternal life.

After JESUS died, HE was buried and rose from the dead three days later, into a body that will never die. Anyone who trusts in JESUS' death, burial, and resurrection to free him from sin and death, is saved from eternal condemnation and becomes a child of GOD. The believer is reborn, or born again, of the HOLY SPIRIT. He or she is a new creation in CHRIST JESUS, free of sin and sealed by the HOLY SPIRIT for the day of resurrection. When the believer dies, his or her soul goes straight to Heaven, and at the resurrection, the believer receives a new heavenly body, like the one JESUS has. Unbelievers are also raised into an immortal body of some kind. They will face the White Throne Judgment and then be cast into Hell for eternity (Revelation 20:11-15).

As a new creation in JESUS, the believer lives with GOD forever in paradise. Eternal life is the free gift of GOD, available to anyone who trusts in CHRIST alone as SAVIOR and LORD of all. GOD never takes back HIS gift. If you truly trust in JESUS alone to save your soul, you are sealed by the HOLY SPIRIT, who is ONE with GOD THE FATHER and THE SON, and your salvation can never be lost. You cannot be un-born again. JESUS is the giver of eternal life, and no one can snatch HIS sheep from HIS hand (John 10:28-30).

All other beliefs and attempts to reach Heaven without the blood of JESUS trap a person in sin and mislead him or her to the Lake of Fire, known as Hell. GOD wishes none would perish eternally in Hell, which is why HE sent HIS own SON down from Heaven to buy our freedom with HIS perfect blood.

Claim GOD'S FREE GIFT of Eternal Life Today!
Turn away from all false beliefs and sin. Believe that JESUS is GOD IN FLESH. HE created you, and HE died on the cross to recreate you. HE was buried, and three days later, rose into an immortal body. In JESUS alone, you're a new creation, free from sin and death, and fit for Heaven.

Ask GOD to forgive you and give you HIS free gift of eternal life in JESUS. Admit to HIM that you're a sinner and have believed in JESUS' work on the cross to save you from sin, death, and an eternity in Hell. Try praying something like the prayer below. Please understand that this prayer doesn't save you. Only genuine trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of MESSIAH JESUS saves.

Pray: HOLY FATHER, I am a sinner, destined for Hell.
I can't save myself. I give up all false beliefs and sin.
I believe YOUR SON JESUS died on the cross as payment
for my sins. HE was buried and rose on the third day.
I believe JESUS CHRIST is GOD IN FLESH.
JESUS, please be my SAVIOR and LORD.
YOU are my only hope for Heaven. Thank YOU for saving
me from sin and Hell. Please baptize and seal me
with the HOLY SPIRIT. I can't wait for the day when
I will be resurrected into an immortal body like YOURS.
Thank YOU JESUS for YOUR blood!
Amen.

What Happens if I Reject JESUS as the Only Way to Heaven?

Rejecting JESUS as the only way to Heaven will keep you trapped in sin and mislead you to eternal torment in the Lake of Fire, known as Hell. GOD wishes none would perish and sent HIS SON to save anyone who trusts in the blood of JESUS from having to go to Hell.

I Believe That Jesus Alone Is My Savior. Now What?

- **Keep believing** that JESUS is the **only** way to GOD THE FATHER.
- **Turn away from false beliefs,** false religions, man-made traditions, superstitions, practices the Bible forbids, fantasies, idols, and self-made beliefs.
- **Turn away from all sin,** such as anger, grudges, ingratitude, constant complaining, sexually immoral

thoughts and deeds, profane and dirty speech, hateful thoughts and speech, gossip, substance abuse, selfishness, pride, greed, laziness, irresponsible spending, the consumption of empty media and entertainment, and over-indulgence in luxuries and nonessential pleasures of this life.

- **Stop trusting in your own efforts** and the people, products, and systems of this world for your security and happiness. Trust GOD alone to take care of you and fulfill your deepest longings.
- **Listen to the HOLY SPIRIT.** JESUS promises to send the HOLY SPIRIT to all who belong to Jesus. The HOLY SPIRIT dwells with each believer, seals us for the day of resurrection, comforts us, helps us, prays for us when we don’t know how, empowers us for ministry, and teaches us GOD’s ways.
- **Live as a child of GOD**, talking to HIM continually in prayer. Listen to GOD by studying HIS word, the Bible, daily. If you’ve never read the Bible before, start with the Gospel of John. Try reading a chapter a day, and you’ll be done in 21 days.
- **Obey the Bible.** Worship GOD and pursue friendships with other believers. Try joining a local church, and get baptized.
- Do as CHRIST commands in HIS great commission, and **tell everyone about JESUS**. Make disciples of JESUS.
- **Keep watching and praying** for the blessed appearance of CHRIST, at which time all who are in HIM will receive resurrected bodies, just as HE lives in a resurrected body.

FAVORITE ONLINE RESOURCES

There are a number of websites, search engines, and *YouTube* channels available to help you find land, set up your homestead, and study the Bible. The following sections contain short lists of some of my favorite online resources. Many of the content creators on these lists have also written books, which are good to have on hand in the event that you ever lose internet or choose to go completely off-grid. I'm sure you will find lots of other helpful resources for yourself as you search for land.

The One Book You Must Have

Okay, I know this section is about online resources, but I would be remiss if I didn't share with you this tidbit of information. While I am grateful for the many books I've purchased and read on the topics of gardening, herbal medicine, animal care, homesteading, and preserving food, if I suddenly found myself without power, and I had to survive off-grid, I would want this one book with me: *The Encyclopedia of Country Living* by Carla Emery.

At over 900 pages, the book covers every homesteading and survival topic imaginable, and if you need a deeper dive into a specific topic, Emery gives generous references to other books and resources. There's a reason why *The*

Encyclopedia of Country Living tops the list for many homesteaders. If you can afford the twentyish bucks it's (currently) priced at on *AbeBooks*, then don't hesitate to buy it.

A fair warning, the book is huge, about the size of a telephone book or print dictionary. If it's ever made available in hardcover, I would buy that. I've seen it available with spiral binding, but I'm not sure if that would be significantly better than the paperback. I've protected my paperback copy by covering it with clear contact paper, which seems to be working well.

Search Engines for Rural Real Estate and Land

LandWatch
https://www.landwatch.com/

Land and Farm
https://www.landandfarm.com/

Lands of America
https://www.landsofamerica.com/

FARMFLIP
https://www.farmflip.com/

Land Lease Exchange
https://www.landleaseexchange.com/

Zillow
https://www.zillow.com/

realtor.com
https://www.realtor.com/

trulia
https://www.trulia.com/

Redfin
https://www.redfin.com/

Craigslist
https://www.craigslist.org/about/sites

Facebook Marketplace
https://www.facebook.com/marketplace/

Rural Vacant Land
https://ruralvacantland.com/

Compass Land USA
https://www.compasslandusa.com/

Land.com
https://www.land.com/
Provides links to other land search sites.

AgentPro247
https://www.agentpro247.com/index.aspx

LandGlide
https://landglide.com/

HUNT app from onXmaps
https://www.onxmaps.com/hunt/app

Google Earth
https://earth.google.com/web/

County Public Records and GIS Maps
Websites will vary from county to county. Some counties may not post all the information you need on their websites. You might have to make a good old-fashioned phone call or two when inquiring about a property.

Homesteader Resources for Finding Land

Homesteading Family
https://homesteadingfamily.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/HomesteadingFamily?app=desktop

Better Together Homestead
https://www.youtube.com/c/BetterTogetherLife/videos

Red Tool House - Homestead
https://www.youtube.com/c/RedToolHouseHomestead

Mountain Roots
https://www.youtube.com/c/MountainRoots

Becky's Homestead
https://beckyshomestead.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/Beckyshomestead

General Homesteading Resources

Homesteading Family
Links given in the previous section.

Off-Grid With Doug and Stacy
https://offgridwithdougandstacy.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/OFFGRIDwithDOUGSTACY/videos

Edible Acres
https://www.edibleacres.org/
https://www.youtube.com/c/edibleacres/featured

Justin Rhodes
https://www.youtube.com/c/JustinRhodesVlog/videos

Joel Salatin
https://www.polyfacefarms.com/

Melissa K. Norris – Modern Homesteading
https://melissaknorris.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/MelissaKNorris

Amy Fewell – The Fewell Homestead
https://thefewellhomestead.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/thefewellhomestead

Rain Country
https://www.youtube.com/c/RainCountryHomestead/featured

The Survival Gardening Channel with David the Good
https://www.thesurvivalgardener.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/davidthegood

Sow the Land
https://sowtheland.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/SowtheLand

The Fit Farmer – Mike Dickson
https://www.youtube.com/c/BigPondFarm/featured

You Can't Eat the Grass
https://www.youcanteatthegrass.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/YouCantEatTheGrass

Jill Winger – Old Fashioned on Purpose
https://www.oldfashionedonpurpose.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/theprairiehomestead

Mike Reed Outdoors
https://www.youtube.com/c/BCRachelReed/featured

Exploring Alternatives
https://www.exploringalternatives.ca/
https://www.youtube.com/c/ExploringAlternatives/videos

Living Traditions Homestead
https://www.livingtraditionshomestead.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/LivingTraditionsHomestead/featured

Squeaky Tree Homestead
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHMjoUM3YJlRFVvboNIHb3g/featured

Jesus Loving Homesteader
https://www.youtube.com/c/JesusLovingHomesteader/featured

Old Alabama Gardener
https://www.youtube.com/user/OldAlabamaGardener/featured

Fouch Family Off Grid
https://www.youtube.com/c/FouchomaticOffGrid/featured

An American Homestead
https://anamericanhomestead.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/Anamericanhomestead

Farmhouse Teas
https://www.farmhouseteas.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/FarmhouseTeas

Nourishing Days
https://www.nourishingdays.com/

Back to Eden Gardening
https://www.youtube.com/c/BacktoEdenGardening/featured

Back to Eden Documentary
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rPPUmStKQ4

Greg Judy Regenerative Rancher
http://greenpasturesfarm.net/
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi8jM5w49UezskDWBGyKq5g/featured

Deep South Homestead

https://deepsouthhomestead.com/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUuuFD-Mv2s

HOMESTEAD HEART
https://www.youtube.com/c/HOMESTEADHEART

Resources for Studying the Bible

There are many good Bible study tools on the internet. These are just a few to get you started.

BibleGateway
Free online Bible in multiple translations. The audio Bible feature lets you listen to the Bible anywhere.
https://www.biblegateway.com/

Blue Letter Bible
A great tool for studying the Bible, comparing different translations, doing an in-depth word study, and more.
https://www.blueletterbible.org/

E-Sword
A downloadable study tool that lets you locate Bible passages, commentaries, and dictionary entries.
https://www.e-sword.net/index.html

Bible Hub
All kinds of searchable Bible tools.
https://biblehub.com/

BibleRef
Easy to understand Bible commentary.
https://www.bibleref.com/

Bible Teachers, Lectures, and Studies

Understanding God's word, the Bible, does not come naturally to our human minds. Sometimes we need guidance, as did the Ethiopian eunuch who asked Philip the Evangelist to explain to him the scroll of Isaiah (Acts 8:31-32).

The best teacher and guide we have is the Holy Spirit. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit has also gifted some believers with the skill of teaching others how to study God's word.

I've listed a few of my favorite Bible teachers below. The people on this list are human and, thereby, subject to human error. I don't agree with everything they teach, but I have benefited enough from their work to recommend them. Always check any teachings you hear against the Bible, and ask God to reveal the truth to you.

Dr. Andy Woods
Free lectures on *Sugarland Bible* website and *YouTube*.
https://slbc.org/
https://www.youtube.com/c/AndyWoodsBibleStudy/featured

Dr. Ken Johnson
Free studies and live videos about the Bible and extrabiblical Dead Sea Scrolls are available on his website and *YouTube*. Johnson has written many fascinating books.
https://biblefacts.org/
https://www.youtube.com/user/biblefactsorg

Verse-by-Verse Ministry International
Verse-by-verse Bible studies.
https://versebyverseministry.org/
https://www.youtube.com/c/VerseByVerseMinistryInternational

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum
Fruchtenbaum has written many books and created resources from a Messianic Jewish perspective, which are available at *Ariel.org*. If you are at all interested in studying Biblical prophecy, *The Footsteps of the Messiah* is a must-read. Several churches have posted free lectures from Fruchtenbaum on their *YouTube* channels. A free collection of some of his lectures can be found here:
https://www.ariel.org/resources/come-and-see/studies

Michael Pearl
Pearl has written many books, and you can support many evangelistic ministries through his website. He also posts instructional Bible teachings on his *YouTube* channel.
https://nogreaterjoy.org/
https://www.youtube.com/c/TheDoorMichaelPearl

Pastor Tim Henderson
Pastor Tim shares End Times news, passionate gospel presentations, and sermons on various websites and on his *YouTube* channel.
https://www.youtube.com/c/TimHenderson

The Jerusalem Channel – Exploits TV
Biblical End Time updates from Christine Darg.
https://subsplash.com/jerusalemchannel/media
https://www.youtube.com/user/JerusalemChannel

Chosen People Ministries
A solid organization with an emphasis on ministry and evangelism to the Jewish people. Many educational resources are available through the website, including a podcast and *YouTube* videos.
https://www.chosenpeople.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/ChosenPeopleUSA
https://ourhopepodcast.com/

One For Israel
Another great organization that works to make Jesus known to Jews and Gentiles throughout the world. Lots of online resources and a highly informative podcast.
https://www.oneforisrael.org/
https://www.oneforisrael.org/podcast/
The "I Met Messiah" testimonies are well worth watching:
https://www.oneforisrael.org/met-messiah-jewish-testimonies/

Fun Bible Teachings for Kids and Adults

I use the following resources to teach scripture to my children. I end up learning too.

My Father's World
A wonderful Christian homeschool curriculum. MFW teaches children academics while grounding them in God's truths.
https://www.mfwbooks.com/

Seed Family Worship
Media and memory verse songs available on their website and *YouTube* channel.
https://www.seedsfamilyworship.com/
https://www.youtube.com/user/seedsfamilyworship

Bible Mom
YouTube videos that teach simple object lessons and Bible memorization. It's like having a Sunday School teacher in your home.
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5rz5W_7x0xAwzplF6wNwWg

Slugs and Bugs
Bible-based music and videos for children.
https://slugsandbugs.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/SlugsandBugs

Superbook
All kinds of Bible resources for kids. Our favorite is the *Superbook* TV show, full episodes available on the *Superbook* website and *YouTube*.
https://us-en.superbook.cbn.com/
https://www.youtube.com/c/SuperbookTV

RedeemTV
Free (donor-funded), ad-free Christian movies, Bible studies, animated videos, and more. Our family can't get enough of *Pilgrim's Progress* (2019 version) or *The Torchlighters: The Heroes of the Faith* (also available at https://torchlighters.org/ and on *YouTube*).
https://redeemtv.com/

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alicia Tubbs is an evangelist for Lord Jesus Christ, the wife of the best husband ever, a homeschool mom of two big little blessings, and a part time homesteader. She can be found online at evangelizegeorgia.com.