

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR EVALUATING YOUR REFUGE PLACE

Chuck Reber, 2016

- I. How do you envision the future unfolding?** Considering political or legislative, financial, social, and technological issues in your analysis:
- What do you see as the Positive trends?
 - What do you see as the Negative trends?
 - What scenarios can you see playing out if these trends come to pass?
 - In light of the above, what do you need to modify in your plans for your refuge place?

II. What is the Purpose of your refuge place?

- Do you plan to live there year-round?
- Is it a bug out location for you and/or your family where you will relocate to in the hour of great crisis?
- A temporary fallback zone in times of crisis, so after the crisis you return home?
- An outreach base to serve your church or community during crisis?
- Other...

III. Evaluating Your Refuge Place Property – Finding a Model that Works

a. S.W.O.T. Analysis

1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

2. Points of Evaluation to Consider

- ✓ Location and Accessibility (seclusion with year round access)
- ✓ Cost to purchase, develop, and maintain property
- ✓ Time necessary to prepare property and maintain it
- ✓ Utilities – availability and cost; alternative solutions; cell phone reception/land line availability; potential for septic a system; southern exposure for solar
- ✓ Sustainability: climate which allows growing food; source of water; wood lot for firewood; reasonably flat or terraced
- ✓ No restrictions, or covenants; no home owner's association; limited building codes/zoning; full mineral, water, and timber rights
- ✓ Security: theft and vandalism; is it defensible?
- ✓ Safety (distance from emergency services & hospitals)
- ✓ How many working people needed to staff and operate
- ✓ Potential relationships with the local community.

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IV. What are the values and priorities shared among your team?

- a. Values reflect our relationship with God and men. They represent our *being and becoming*, which precedes our *doing*.
- b. Priorities define our *doing*, or how our values are expressed in practical ministry. Priorities spell out how we use our time, energy, and money. They should flow out of our values. We practice daily what we believe (values) or it's just religious talk.
- c. Write your values out and clearly and scripturally define them.
- d. Which ones are non-negotiable? Which ones are negotiable? "In Essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, love"
- e. Does all share these values and priorities with heartfelt conviction?

V. What is the organizational makeup of your refuge place?

- a. How many families or individuals make up your retreat team?
- b. Does one family own the property or does each household own their own share in the property?
- c. Does each family have their own house or is their shared housing?
- d. Who is allowed to come to your retreat to live in times of crisis? Will it be only the core members, or are family members, relatives, or friends allowed to come? If so, what is your vetting process for allowing new people at your retreat?

VI. Leadership Structure, Procedures, and Guidelines

- a. What is your leadership structure? What is the decision making process among your team? Does someone have final authority on decisions if the team is deadlocked on a decision?
- b. Does each person have a job or role of responsibility at the retreat? How is the decision making handled in those roles? There needs to be pre-determined job descriptions and list of responsibilities.
- c. What jobs/chores can your guests help with to contribute to the community? Biblically, everyone should work and serve the community in some capacity. (1 Thes 4:11-12; 2 Thes 3:6-15)
- d. How will you communicate guidelines/rules and handle those who won't comply? Disciplinary procedures need to be thought out and set in place. (Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1-5)
- e. How will you meet the social and recreational needs of your guests?
 - ✓ What potential issues do you project your retreat community will face?

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- f. In a long-term situation, how will you meet the educational needs of children at your retreat? Do you have the books and materials available?
- g. Who makes the financial decisions? Do you have checks and balances set in place for accountability with finances?
 - ✓ Do you have cash on hand to make purchases? Silver or gold?
 - ✓ How will you store your money securely at the retreat?
 - ✓ Begin developing a barter list and purchasing inventory. How could you develop a barter network locally? What knowledge and skill sets do you have to barter with?
 - ✓ Where will your ongoing financial support come from?

VII. Christian Compassion and Charity

- a. Are you setting aside resources to be used to extend Christian charity to others in need?
- b. What do you project will be the greatest needs in your area?
- c. How will you connect with those in need? How and where will you distribute these goods?
- d. How will you transport of the goods to the distribution site? What if security is needed at the distribution site?

VIII. Networking with Other Refuge Places and Developing An Auxiliary Network

- a. Do you have a relational connection with others in your region, or outside your region, which are developing places of refuge?
- b. If so, where are they located? Do they share any of the same values that you hold? What knowledge, skills or resources do they possess that may help your retreat? What do you have to offer them? Is it possible to establish barter with them?
- c. If you can't base the relationship on shared values, what priorities and mission do you share?
- d. Do you have relationships with others in the community that are may be considered your auxiliary network? What skills or resources do they have to offer and how can you link with them to fulfill your call?
- e. If you had to vacate your refuge retreat where would you go?
- f. If another refuge place had to evacuate their retreat, would you be willing to receive them into your retreat? If not, what type of assistance could you offer them?

IX. Communications – Developing methods and systems of communication

- a. Standardize equipment and protocols – Scanners, AM/FM/Short Wave,

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- FRS/GMRS, CB radio, Amateur Radio, antennas, list of call signs, etc.
- b. Establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and train everyone to it.
- c. How will you communicate when mobile? How will you communicate with others in your network? Consider developing communication hubs.
- d. Prepare alternate power sources for using and charging equipment in case no electric grid power. Purchase portable solar chargers to charge your devices.
- e. Have Faraday shield bags available for your electronics. (Tech Protect Bag; Blackout Faraday Shield)
- f. Always remember – others are listening to your conversations. How will you pass information privately? Develop Codes, Signs and Signals.
- g. How would you develop a Message Relay Network (radio, texting, email, social media, etc.)? How can you pass on information discretely?
- h. **Cyber Security**
 - ✓ Consider how you can reduce your Digital Footprint
 - ✓ Subscribe to secure email service (Hushmail; Start Mail)
 - ✓ Use anonymous search engines: duckduckgo.com, Startpage.com
 - ✓ Consider subscribing to a VPN service. (Virtual Private Network)
 - ✓ Use caution when posting on social media. Use it for information gathering. It is a “honey trap” for gathering free information about you.

X. Logistics & Transportation – Moving people and resources

- a. Vehicles – cars, Trucks, ATVs, boats, bicycles, etc.
 - ✓ Do you have vehicles adequate for moving people and resources to and from your retreat?
 - ✓ List your vehicles and their purpose and capacities.
 - ✓ Do you have spare parts to vehicle repairs and maintenance?
- b. Do you have fuel stored for each vehicle and piece of equipment at your retreat? How far can you travel on one tank of gasoline?
- c. How will you safely move people or resources between locations?
- d. Do you have an evacuation plan in place?
 - ✓ Does each member of your retreat team understand how to follow it in case of an emergency? How often does your team practice it?
 - ✓ Which vehicle(s) would you use?

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- ✓ Where would you go for a fallback location?
- ✓ Have you considered establishing caches of fuel, food, or resources along your routes? How would you do it?
- e. Do you have paper maps – city, county, state, aerial maps, or topographical maps? A GPS unit with pre-programmed locations?
- f. Do you have someone in your group, or in your auxiliary network, that knows the county roads and short cuts in your local area?
- g. How could you safely direct someone to your retreat location without giving away your location over the radio?

XI. Security and Safety

- a. How can you make your retreat less noticeable and blend in with the landscape? You want to be “hidden in plain sight”?
- b. Conduct a “Threat Assessment” of your local area, neighborhood, and property. List vulnerabilities, strengths, manpower, skill levels, means of protection, etc. How can you best handle the defense of your property?
- c. Are you team members trained in situational awareness skills? Does your team practice discretion when dealing with others in the community?
- d. Develop a plan to establish layers of security, starting with your house, then your property, and work outward toward your neighborhood, subdivision, and town.
- e. Consider setting up a neighborhood watch or patrol. How would you control traffic in and out of your neighborhood (Gate or check-in)? How will you staff the watch?
- f. Are your team members trained with defensive firearm skills? What is your armed defense plan? How often will you practice? Are you in physical shape enough to do your part in the defense plan?
- g. Develop an evacuation plan with at least two ways out. Where will you evacuate? Do you have resources staged at that location?
- h. Who in your retreat team has advance first aid/ medical training? Do you have adequate medical supplies on hand to meet the potential medical needs? Are they stored properly and are they easily accessible?
- i. Do you have a fire safety evacuation plan? Make adequate preparation of your house and buildings with smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.