

David's 3 Things | Jul 2012



Let's play a game called "Things"! Has anyone played this game? If not, you should. It's really fun! My family plays this game a lot (as well as "Picture Down the Lane") because you don't need anything except paper, pens and a sense of humor. Each person writes down a category that begins with "Things that . . ." and places it in a basket. Each round a new category is picked, read and answered by each player secretly on another piece of paper. These are then read randomly by the "reader" for that round. Everyone tries to guess each others answers and scores points if successful. Here's an example to get you started: Category: "Things that you don't say at a funeral." Answer: "We should do this more often."

3 Things That I Love About Life in France

1. Mountains – Not Pennsylvania "mountains". Not New Hampshire mountains. Not even Montana mountains . . . okay, Montana mountains come pretty close. I'm talking about European mountains . . . aka the Alps! Entrepierres is only in the "foothills" of the Alps at around 500m above sea level with two mountains towering over us that top out at above 1100m and 1200m. We hiked to the top of the 1100m one (La Baume) last week and were provided with an AWESOME view of the real mountains just about an hour away. Unreal.

2. The Food – This probably should come first but I'd rather hike than eat. Regardless, give me a freshly baked French baguette (NOT from Panera) that costs less than \$1 and a jar of local raw lavender honey and I'm set for life or at least an hour. ALL the food we've eaten so far has been great! No McDonald's

here . . . oh wait, there is . . . but the locals keep torching it because it doesn't belong here.

3. "The Laid Back Country Folk" – I grew up in the country in the hayloft of a barn . . . for real (it was a nice barn that my parents turned into a beautiful home). People that we meet around town keep asking us: "So, how do you feel about Entrepierres? It's SO remote and secluded!" I love that! It's very peaceful and relaxing for guests that need to get away for a while. It's great watching sheep and goats being rounded up in the evening, hearing horses and donkeys braying in the middle of the night, and roosters getting everyone up at sunrise (over the mountaintop at around 7 . . . not TOO early). And the country people . . . we haven't really conversed much with the locals (language barrier right now) . . . but they are very friendly and down to earth when we do interact.

3 Things That I Miss From Life at Home

1. My Job – I had to quit my job . . . I couldn't just take a Leave of Absence. I really liked my job, everyone I worked with and what I got to do. It took care of all our basic needs and then some. Now I don't have a job and it may or may not be there when I get back. As the "man of the house" it was really nice to be able to provide for my family with a regular source of income and save for "the future" . . . vacation, a newer car, kids, some land with a house, retirement . . . all the normal "American Dream" stuff. A lot of that is on hold (or cancelled) and I miss it. Wouldn't you?

2. My Car – I don't have my SAABaru here (which would rock on these backcountry mountain roads) . . . or my roof rack (which I probably miss more than the car). I don't have the ability to throw our bikes, kayak, snowboards or camping gear on the roof and head off for some crazy adventure. And \$3.50/gallon gas?! I miss that! It's over \$7/gallon here! Cars are about freedom and I miss it. Wouldn't you? (One of the families here has kindly allowed us to borrow their car for errands or to get out for a hike or picnic which has given us some freedom.)

3. My IQ – I don't have a brain. I don't speak the language or understand all the crazy nuances of the culture here (yet) and I feel stupid. Isn't that what we might think when someone doesn't speak "our" language, or understand "our" culture? It's more complicated than flipping through a phrase book when you want to engage someone in conversation about life. Even if I spoke their

language fluently, there are all sorts of social constructs in the way of getting to really know someone here. I don't know how to engage random people in a meaningful way and I miss it. Wouldn't you?

This isn't to make you feel sorry for us, or for you to think that we're giving up a lot to do what we're doing . . . after all it's ONLY two months and this IS the "south of France" where life is perfect and beautiful, right?! Not exactly. It's not all paradise and at times things can be pretty difficult and frustrating.

Imagine what it was like for Jesus to come to earth from His home in ACTUAL paradise. He willingly put aside all the resources and abilities He had at His disposal. He tried to communicate with everyone about who He was and what He truly had to offer (life . . . ABUNDANT life) . . . and we didn't understand Him . . . so we killed Him. (Thankfully, this isn't the end of the story . . . more to come on that topic later.)

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." Hebrews 2:9

In light of what Jesus gave up and went through for me . . . I am in no place to cry about "Things That I Miss From Life at Home."

What love it was that brought Thee down,
Down to the depths in which I lay,
That made Thee leave Thy glory-throne,
In Servant's form to tread Thy way;
Yet lower still to death to go,
That I might never judgment know.

My place is now in Thee above,
By virtue of Thy precious blood,
Before Thy Father's face in love,
Made now my Father and my God.
Oh! that my feeble voice might swell,
The praise of Him who loves so well.

'Tis love that cannot be explained,
It is too wonderful, too vast;
The heart of God alone contained,
Such thoughts divine in ages past.
But oh! I know it rests on me,
And will throughout eternity.

O fill me Lord yet more and more,
So that my heart e'en here below,
From Thy love's rich and boundless store,
Be satisfied and overflow.
Full with the blessing Thou hast given,
The foretaste now of what makes heaven.
-Author Unknown

Rachel's 3 Things | Jul 2012



3 Things I Love About Life in France

1. They Celebrate A Well-Balanced Eco-System

Since my job back home is trying to shift people *back* to purchasing locally grown foods and starting their own gardens, it's so refreshing to see how the French already live like this. Even in the dry climate of Provence, they have found a varied group of crops that do well here. There are so many pollinating insects like bees and butterflies to signify a healthy and balanced ecosystem.

2. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle is a Way of Life

In France, the slogan "reduce, reuse, recycle" is not just a slogan to possibly aim for, it's a way of life. Here, you have to bring your own grocery bags to the store, drive small cars, create less trash and save water. Gas is expensive (more than \$7 per gallon). Trash is expensive (you pay per bag so that you are encouraged to recycle and compost). Water and electricity are expensive, so we have to use less water and dry our clothes on a clothesline. Even though it is definitely more work, it's a great way to reduce dependence on scarce resources and make use of the abundant natural resources.

3. It's Beautiful!

This country is absolutely beautiful. We took a hike on the mountain behind the village the other day and within a few minutes, we were able to see the Alps out in the distance. We're located in the Provence, in the foothills of the Alps. It's sunny 300 days a year and the sky is the deepest shade of blue I've ever seen!

The air carries the subtle fragrance of thyme and lavender and is so pure that the rain water falls down drinkable.

3 Things I Miss From Life at Home

1. Friendships & Community

Thoughts on Friendships Back Home

I miss my friends, my community and fellowship back home. I miss being able to make friends so easily. Many of my friends I've known since childhood, but many of them are ones I've met and gotten to know more deeply over the past few years. Dynamics are different here though.

Thoughts on Friendships with Guests of Entrepierre We are learning a much more selfless view of friendships. So often in the states, it's easy to only be friends with people who share similar interests, speak your language or are in the same socioeconomic class as you. While we are here, we have to take a much less proactive approach to friendships. We have to understand and respect that many of the families that visit here are coming to get away from the busyness of life to spend time alone with their families. However, we still happily make ourselves available to guests who want to interact with us. When we do make friends, the goodbyes come all too quickly. People are here for no more than 3 weeks and are only allowed to come back every 2 years. Last week we were really encouraged by several interactions with the other Christian workers: a cook-out with several English-speaking families, a game night with an American couple and dinner with an American family that is on their way to be doctors in Africa.

I also have to keep in mind that many of the Christian workers here have also had to make new friends for a short period of time. Christian workers go through many sessions of training and move around for language study and/or church planting. Many of them are heading to areas where they won't even have the luxury of having other English-speaking friends on the field.

Thoughts on Friendships with Locals

On Sunday, we had lunch at the home of a French couple with two of the staff members at Entrepierres. It was such an encouraging time! I used my very rusty French when I could, they spoke a lot of English and someone translated when

needed. This couple actively serves in the church and helps the work of Entrepierres. They have visited several times since we've been here and complimented many of the seemingly "mundane" things we've done like weeding and mulching the gardens. They even loaned David a really nice road bike to use this summer! (Tour de France?)

2. Maintaining a Home & Work Schedule

I enjoy maintaining our household back in the states and balancing my home and work responsibilities. I love the scriptural picture of the virtuous woman maintaining her household in [Proverbs 31](#). The imagery goes so much further than just a faithful wife or caring mother.

"She seeks wool and flax,
and *works with willing hands*.
She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
She rises while it is yet night
and *provides food for her household*
and portions for her maidens."

At home, I had figured out a way to balance the demands of my work as well as taking care of the cleaning, cooking and nutritional research and planning. I packed our lunches with raw vegetables and raw fruit juice and measured out portion sizes for lunch that were just right.

Here, I'm finding it hard to know what to buy at the store. I don't know their laws on what is allowed in processed foods and conventional agriculture, so I don't know if buying organic foods is worth the extra money. At the end of the day, I'm exhausted with balancing the physical work, housework and strain of trying to figure out the language. I'm sure it took me time to get in to a rhythm at home and it will take me time before I find that rhythm in a foreign country.

3. Feeling "Intelligent"

It's pretty easy to feel "intelligent" at home when you have a steady income and live in a nice neighborhood. But when you come to a country where you try to say "Hi, my name is Rachel!" and someone gives you a strange look and says "I don't understand?" in response, it's easy to feel pretty stupid. Last week, we had to buy mulch for the gardens. It seems like an easy enough task, but when

you don't know the word for mulch, and when it's sold in solid colored bags without pictures, it's not so simple! (I almost bought horse manure.)

I'm trying to use French when I can, but I know I've already said some pretty funny things. For example, some things I realized I said after the fact:

“When we don't know the word to say, we look it up in our book of strawberries.”

(Phrases with a French accent means strawberries...oops!)

“My parents live close to us. About 15 midnights away.”

(Minute...minuit...same difference...)

Anytime I begin to think that the service work I am doing is possibly “beneath me” I am reminded of the amazing example of Jesus as a servant. Think about the idea found in [Philippians 2:5-11](#) for a moment:

“⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷rather, *he made himself nothing*
by *taking the very nature of a servant*,
being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming *obedient to death* —
even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”

We serve a personal God, who created us in His image, came to this earth with a servant's heart and wants to have a relationship with us. How amazing is that?!