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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“The greatest thing that a man can do is *see*. And once having seen, to help others to *see*.”

James S. Stewart, the peerless Scottish preacher, issued that challenging axiom in his Yale Lectures during the early 1950's. He was speaking about the critical elements necessary for the transformation of human lives. He insisted that profound change must always begin with clear vision. We can't get better until we can *see* better.

Think about that. If a person is to improve and grow toward wholeness, then the clear insight and honest admission of inadequacies and short comings is the first step in change. The simple sentence, “I am not what I should be.,” uttered in a moment of inward honesty underlined with sincere conviction is the cornerstone for building a new life. Denial of need means no door to a fresh start.

But to see only need is not enough. Nothing is more pitiable than seeing someone stuck on the first rung of the ladder of growth always lamenting “I am not what I should be!” We end up running from those who only have eyes to look within. The magnet of self-centeredness is capable of distorting our ability to fully *see*.

If we are to enter the adventurous land of transformation, we must begin the process of seeing ourselves as we are and to confess, “I am not what I should be.” But then we must allow the next step in that process to have its way with us. We must say, “I don't have to stay the way I am!” *It is with this conviction that we begin to see what we could be.* Now it is here that vision takes on a mysterious quality.

It is true that we must see ourselves as we are, ***but for us to become our best self, we must see beyond ourselves.*** That part of the equation of true change takes a Power which we do not have on our own. The ancient psalmist said it best, “Thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, Thou art my glory, and the *lifter of my head.*” What a magnificent image! Think of that! It is the power of God's love that helps us to see beyond the parched landscape of our own lives. As a loving Father, God takes our cast down chins which have been glued to our chests in the shame of seeing self, and lifts up our heads so that we can *see*!

There is mystery in the power of vision because we must grow new eyes to see what was invisible before.

“The greatest thing that a man can do is see. And once having seen, to help others to see.” *What is true for personal change is also true for the process of transforming our society.* We must see the need very honestly and courageously confess our starring role in the dysfunctional drama played out around us in our cities and towns. But having taken that step, we let our eyes be lifted up to the hills and see the vision of higher possibilities.

I want you to see Shreveport and Bossier. See our cities as they are. Be honest about what you see around you and what you see within you that has created and

perpetuated our conditions. But I also want everyone to help their fellow strugglers to lift up their drooping chins so that each can begin to see a new community! And when you begin to receive these new eyes to see the invisible cities waiting to be born, then a new power and energy to attain that vision will drive you to make that future hope a present reality.

Our Strategic Planning Committee, now comprised of visionaries from twenty-six agencies and organizations, under the inspiring leadership of Bob Honig, *sees new cities*. They see new neighborhoods filled with caring connected people, each of whom has a sense of self and a sense of destiny, thus recapturing the time that the Greek poet, Hesiod, described saying, “Neighbors come to your aid when even your relatives dawdle over their gear.”

How does it happen? For months they have worked to reach the bedrock principles which are critical in effecting true neighborhood change. They have then sequenced these principles into a dynamic process which can be personally applied to every willing soul, even in our most marginal settings. The steps are simple. But the ramifications are as complex as life. And while simple, they are not easy.

Each of the steps outlined below has an entire and detailed “how to” connected with its realization. But to catch the import of the process, I have purposely omitted those details. Let me just promise you this: *the entire plan is absolutely stunning in its strategic steps!* When folks see it they say, “That is right!” “That will work!” “I see *how* it is going to work!” So here is the outline.

To transform a neighborhood we must do the following:

1. Together we must build a system of caring relationships through systematic friendship.
2. Together we must help our new friends, who are willing, to see new possibilities for their lives.
3. Together we surround each willing friend with a Covenant/Friendship Team to help them in developing and formulating a plan for achieving their possibilities.
4. Together we organize each participant into neighborhood planning teams.
5. Together we establish neighborhood goals.
6. Together we organize and develop the resources to implement the individual/family/ and neighborhood plans.
7. Together we set the requirements for each individual participant (e.g. for every hour that is given in help an hour is required of serving others by the participant.)
8. Establish a process for reporting, measuring, and monitoring true progress.

We can *see* it now! Come join with us in Shreveport Community Renewal’s adventure in seeing transformation.