

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter April 1999

“Every Haven House Needs Ants”

Several weeks ago I turned on the television. The Discovery Channel appeared and the screen was filled with a blob of ants. There were only about two minutes left in the show, so I watched until it was over and I could see the next hour's presentation which I was eagerly awaiting. Something about dinosaurs, I think. Within a few seconds I was sitting bolt upright in the rocking chair!

The narrator said something which almost knocked the wind out of me. “*Ants solve sophisticated problems with very simple solutions repeated over and over.*” That got my attention in a big way and I started paying attention to the blob of ants on the television. The voice went on to explain the activities of the ants before me. I watched for two minutes. Then I did something which I've never done before. I picked up the phone. Called the 800 number on the screen. Gave them my sacred Visa Card number and ordered the \$19.95 video. Shipping and postage extra. I am waiting now to receive *The Ultimate Guide To Ants*.

Now I know that that video doesn't sound just too toe-tapping exciting. But when I tell you what I saw, I know that you will agree with me that those ants were exciting! What was the two minute drill in renewal on that video?

The ants in the picture were being treated like laboratory mice. Scientist had placed a colony of them on a plain, flat surface which was not conducive to the construction of a secure nest at all. The ants had plenty of sand grains around but the ants were in trouble. They were exposed and vulnerable on that surface. (Now remember: Ants are not known for having large brains. But remember something else: Ants have constructed successful societies for *millions of years!*)

Then the scientists placed a rod from the plain surface and connected it to a surface which contained an ideal environment for the building of a nest. It looked like a keyhole laid flat on the table. It was perfect to house the colony and to blockade the narrow opening for protection. The connecting bridge/rod was only one ant wide in width. Then we watched.

A single ant began to tentatively cross the rod. It reached the new land and began to explore every facet of the keyhole-like nesting area. It's feelers were thoroughly adept at touching every milliliter of surface area. When it had completed its reconnaissance it crossed back over the bridge to the milling colony. Then it did something absolutely astonishing!!

The first ant picked up another ant and carried it bodily over the bridge to the new land!! Together they repeated the survey of the potential nest area. They both then returned across the rod, single file, and they both picked up another ant each and carried those ants across. All explored in a now familiar pattern. Now there were four. Over and over the process repeated itself. There were no variations on this theme.

At some point, enough ants had been carried bodily that some critical mass had been reached and the flow began where each member of the colony started across the bridge, every ant following another. But now they had grains of sand in their pincers. They settled into the large round area of the “keyhole” and began to place the grains of sand over the narrow entrance affording them a protected and secure place “to live.”

I watched in wonder. In the space of two minutes a “huge” problem facing the little-bitty brained ants was given a sophisticated solution: the colony was mobilized and marched in mass to a new land where they rapidly constructed a safe place for themselves and their “little ones.” They did this by using a simple act and repeating it over and over and over until they changed the situation.

Now you can see why I straight up and took notice. *This is precisely the premise we believe lies at the heart of societal change for us!* We believe and are absolutely dedicated to the proposition that the only way which complex social problems can be solved is through the repetitive rebuilding of the molecular structure of society itself. Put simply: By restoring caring relationships in a systematic way, society itself can be renewed!

It also means that we can never solve the complexities of the massive problems facing us by a frontal assault. The problems of crime, drugs, family disintegration, joblessness, poverty, and racism can never be solved by the “think tank” approach alone. By studying the problem and theorizing its solution one simply encounters a dysfunctional social “rubiks cube” where each “solution” brings new variables.

I am utterly convinced that Jesus was right when he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a woman who took a little leaven and hid it in a large amount of flour until all the dough was leavened." I believe that the leavening process of repetitive acts of intentional and systematized caring will create an environment where we can live in safe and nurturing neighborhoods. I believe that is the only way that society can be restored. It is the warp and the woof of God's universe. It is one ant carrying another ant. It is one person carrying another. That is the only way it works.

When I finished watching that show, I remember a strange passage of scripture. I knew that it was in *Proverbs* but I did not remember where. Then I found it. *Proverbs 6:6* "Go to the ant you lazybones. And consider its ways. And be wise."

If each block had a Haven House Leader who was repetitively building friendships among and between his/her neighbors in God's love and power, then like the ants, we will rebuild our city for our children and their children. We will watch crime fall, drugs cease, families come together, work increase, abundance shared, and love for all abound. I believe it!! So do thousands!! Come and join us. Be a Haven House Leader committed to ***remaking our city by making friends on our street.***