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## A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

### “The Shreveport Plan....For All Cities”

At some point in our lives we have all discovered that simplicity is just not that easy. Everyone has a time when they begin to long for “the simple life.” Usually that time comes when you have to move. You discover all of the “stuff” that you have accumulated over all of the summers of life and you see the rather daunting task of hauling the load to a new location. Then you commit to “simplify” your life. But each piece of “stuff” has its own baggage. When you lift up something the weight of a memory goes with it. Something else has a “future need” attached to it. You know that you cannot get rid of it because you are sure to need it “someday.” Decisions! Decisions! It all gets so complicated that the best way to “simplify” your life right now is to forget about wrestling with the ghosts of your things and just pack it all up to move to your new clean house. And so you move with layers and layers of “stuff” trailing after you. It is just not easy to “simplify.”

The many examples of this paradox can easily be trotted out. It is a truth which encompasses every arena of our lives. Simplicity is the foundation of all great truths. Simplicity is more readily “seen” than it is achieved. To achieve simplicity is sometimes terribly difficult. We see Ghandi with staff and wrapped linen looking ever so much like an aged diapered baby spinning cotton in a spare room. A man of stark simplicity who just so happened to lead four hundred million people to freedom without armed conflict. History has never seen such a revolution. Simplicity of life and principle is what Ghandi lived. But read his struggle to reach the simple and to stay there!! When I studied his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, it exhausted me! Simplicity is not easily achieved.

Now each of you has been given a booklet called, *The Shreveport Plan*. It is simplicity itself. Bob Honig, our most practical of all strategic planners, sat down one afternoon this summer and wrapped up the entire thrust of our work and vision in a series of simple sentences each illustrated with clip art and line drawings. The result is stunningly clear. It is a perfect statement of our mission and method. It is so simple! Bob has a genius for that sort of thing.

Look at the opening statement of truth. “A city rests on a foundation of relationships.” Of course. We all “knew” that. We all “assumed” that. *Everybody knows that!* But it has literally taken us three years to be able to strike the chords of truth in such simple strokes! Getting simple ain’t easy. Visions can get complicated quickly. They can accumulate extra baggage and a lot of “stuff” as you go along. Life is built upon simplicity but works against it!

I want you to take this booklet and let it be both a guide to understanding the mission of SCR, which is to **rebuild the neighborhood system of caring relationships necessary to restore a safe, loving, and nurturing community**, and a reminder of our method, which is the three-pronged initiatives of The Mission Team, ordinary folks committed to rebuilding community, The Haven House Plan, our street by street strategy to restore caring relationships, and The Internal Care Unit Plan, which is the dynamic thrust of restoring the infrastructure of injured neighborhoods by moving trained caregivers into those areas to teach others to care for themselves.

I want you to become so familiar with the simple truth that “When relationships disintegrate a city begins to sink!” that you will resolve to help others to remember what we all *knew* but kind of forgot as we got busier and busier. You can help them by giving this booklet, *The Shreveport Plan*, to them. We have plenty of copies. Donnie McVay of Image Set Graphics committed to print 10,000 of these simple little tracts and donate them to the cause!! Donnie and his whole staff are dedicated to this mission. So when you become clear through the simplicity of this booklet, pass it on to a friend.

Simplicity is attractive. When I journeyed to Washington, D.C. last month to attend the White House Conference on Community Renewal, I took a bunch of these booklets and passed out *The Shreveport Plan* to everyone I saw. It was amazing to see the reaction of these sophisticated folks who deal with complexities “inside the beltway” there in our nation’s capitol. I promise you that I saw an electric reaction everywhere. People at *The Washington Post*, planning staffs of US Senators, Senior Analysts in

Congressional Research Services, top officials in the various Cabinet Departments, other faith based groups, leaders of Ameri-Corps, and even chiefs of national corporations all were *simply amazed!!*

***A city rests on a foundation of relationships. When relationships disintegrate a city begins to sink!*** They read those first pages. I watched them become hooked. I saw light bulbs come on. I am telling you that sophisticated folks who somewhere deep in their souls, like all of us, yearn for simplicity, were touched. One Senior Analyst from the Congressional Research Services, a Ph. D. with twenty five years of experience in the advisory trenches told Bob and me, “You are on to something big. You may have just hit bedrock with your vision and method. You could unleash a revolution for this nation.”

I believe it. I don't believe it because they said it. I believe it because I have seen the truth of caring work. I don't need to go to Washington to find the truth, I just go to Highland, Cedar Grove, Queensborough, all across our city. There is a revolution happening here. It started quietly. But it is now beginning to gather momentum. It is becoming inexorable, unstoppable, and you are at the very heart of this revolution of renewal. God bless you all!! (By the way, if you would like some more copies of *The Shreveport Plan*, please call us and we will send you or your group as many as you need!)

Isn't life a great adventure!!