

A Personal Word for You

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Over the past months we have experienced a virtual explosion of hopeful enthusiasm from every quarter of our community! Again and again as I have detailed the strategic plan which we are following for rebuilding caring relationships and for recapturing our city so that creative living with one another can prevail, I have been struck by the response of audiences hearing of our efforts. The audiences vary in every imaginable way: large, small, churches, clubs, men, women, all forming a mixed and colorful portrait that Norman Rockwell would have loved to have painted! But the reaction never varies. Not even a smidgen. It is always the same.

It comes in the form of a question. People gather around after our presentation and they ask, “Do you really think that we can be successful?” I never believed that you could end up a declaration of hope with a question mark, but I was wrong! People are asking that question in such a way that it becomes almost a rallying cry to dispirited troops in the heat of battle. I see eyebrows arched high so that eyes can widen in an almost forgotten anticipation of life itself. “Do you really think that we can do it?” I see that they believe we can even before they ask the question. Now isn’t that something!!

I agree! I believe that we have found a way to stop the collapse cycle of civilizations and to transform our culture from decline and decay into one of blossoming fulfillment for the people of our land.

It is critical for us to remember that we cannot create the Power to transform ourselves and our cities! We simply must not continue to make the fatal error that it is we who can set the universe aright. It is critical for us to remember that we must follow the principles necessary to appropriate the transformational Power of God’s Love.

I have found that there are only four steps necessary to solve any problem and meet any need. First, you must correctly analyze the root problem or basic need. Second, you must accurately conceptualize the solution of the problem or the satisfaction of that need. Third, you must concretely actualize the solution. And the final step, if you are dealing with an individual or societal problem or need, you must effectively mobilize a delivery system of applying a solution to the problem.

These steps are simple, but they are also ruthless in their application. There is no room here for fuzzy thinking, double-talking buzz words, or squishy soft measurements of success. I have insisted that we radically apply these principles to every step and to every stage of our strategy to rebuild the caring relationships so foundational to the making of community. We don’t have any more chances to stop the sinking all around us. We don’t have the luxury to continue painting the deck chairs of our Titanic.

Last month I said that the basic need of our city and community is the need for changed human beings. The root problem of our society is within each person – we are fundamentally self-centered. Therefore, we are fundamentally flawed in all our attempts to live together. If we can be changed from self-centered to other-centered human beings, then we will see a corresponding change in the conditions of disintegration that we have created. This is the correct analysis of our situation.

What is the accurate conceptualization of the solution? It is in this second step of problem solving that clear thinking must take center stage. We must move to a precision that embodies critical thought as well as the “intuitive leaps” of vision that our best creative personalities have described in their journeys

inward. If all of humanity were barefoot and that was our most pressing problem, then it is obvious that someone somewhere must conceptualize the shoe as the solution. They must “see” it before they can make it.

The historical concept which arose to produce the conditions for “other-centered” persons to proliferate was the human collective known as “the village.” It was here that a unique society was constructed which provided and interlocking infrastructure critical to produce a semblance of other-centeredness. The village reigned in history for over five thousand years. It approximated a community of persons who were motivated to be “we” centered in order to survive and grow. But the human village chose for its power center its own energy and identity often defied as the village god. Thus it was historically inevitable that this “we” centered living ultimately gave way to the warped pride of massiveness we call “cities.” The very success of the village sowed the seeds of its out destructive growth, reaping a harvest of the anonymity of city life.

To survive, we must return to village life. But this must be a New Village. What the clear concept of this New Village is and how it is to be formed within the decaying shell of our city, I will relate to you in next month’s NEWS. Just one hint: this New Village is both ancient and ever new! You will see what is exciting all of us about the strategy and the reality of Shreveport Community Renewal!! Come and join us in this great adventure!