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A Word from Mack:

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

Many of us are able to pinpoint the vital days of our lives. And while we cannot predict the future with certainty as we travel on this journey of life, we are able to look back and to see the critical turns and the salient choices which determined the adventure itself. We know the turning points as we reflect. We can discern those decisions, for good or for ill, which launched our steps and thus molded our character and fixed our destiny. It is not unusual for each of us to have at least a handful of those days.

One of those days came for me in the week following Easter Sunday of 1977. My mother had invited Dr. D. Elton Trueblood to come to Shreveport, speak for the week at the Kings Highway Christian Church, and stay in our home. He accepted!! I was flabbergasted.

You see, Dr. Trueblood, to those of my generation and the generation before us, was a true *titan*!! He had written nearly 40 books and the words and work of this great Quaker philosopher and theologian were soaked up by thousands of us. He was one of my heroes and he was staying in my home in Shreveport! I could not believe it.

I was the pastor of a congregation in West Texas at the time and a wet behind the ears thirty-two year old. I preached the shortest Easter sermon in recorded history and caught a flight to Shreveport to spend the week with Dr. Trueblood. I got in late that night. Dr. Trueblood had already retired. All I could think about was simply talking with him. Could I speak without my voice shaking? Would I betray myself with idiocy as I had done a thousand times before? Could I say one thing, *anything*, intelligent? So I went to sleep that night in a restless anticipatory repose.

The next morning, I could hear Dr. Trueblood's deeply resonant seventy-seven year old voice holding forth in our downstairs den. I showered and dressed as quickly as I could and literally bounded down the stairs, turned the corner, and after introductions, sat down with a truly great man. It was a turning point in my life! It was thirty years ago. Thirty years of ups and downs. Thirty years of washouts in the Spring. Thirty years of strivings and disappointments and joys. Thirty years. *And it seems like yesterday!*

Within one minute of my taking a seat, Dr. Trueblood (how can I ever forget this!) said, "The American congregations are doing many good things, *but they are not stopping the disintegration of our society! And we must find an effective*

means to be arrest this collapse and to reconstruct the foundations which can renew our communities!” That was it. Those two sentences, uttered with decades of deep conviction from the man whose voice had cried out for awakening and renewal in our country and her churches, stopped me dead in my tracks and spun me around to face a new road now rising before me.

Of course, my first few steps were those of a toddler unable to grasp the wide horizons of new worlds yet unseen. I spoke: “Yes, Dr. Trueblood, we *do* live in a sick society.” That was it. That was the best I could do. I was just thankful that my voice hadn’t cracked. Then he leaned forward, and said, “Young man, what do you mean by....” And I thought he was going to say, “What do you mean by *sick*?” And I was ready with the recitation of societal pathology. But no! Dr. Trueblood said, “Young man, what do you mean by *society*?” I was as blank as a goose.

Dr. Trueblood knew that if we couldn’t define it. We could not heal it. And so my journey began.

Today, we are committed to a great cause. It is the vital mission of arresting the disintegration and renewing the foundations of love and goodness. ***Society is a system of relationships.*** And therefore we must systematically, methodically, and measurably restore that system. It is only possible through the Love of God flowing in us and through us to heal the brokenness within us and around us. It is the only Hope of the World!

God bless you as we journey together!