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Is it Only My Home and Garden?

By Jason Mayhall

RECENTLY, A MAN I ADMIRE taught me a lesson. He recited before a crowd of 60 or so people the familiar nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty. You know how it goes; in fact, you could say it without really trying, but I'll save you the time:

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty took a great fall,
All the King's horses, and all the
King's men
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back
together again.*

He then asked if someone in the crowd would take a marker and draw the reality of this rhyme. One brave soul agreed to try and approached the dry erase board. With everyone else watching, he proceeded to draw an egg,

complete with a sad face, broken in two. I have to admit that my inner artist scoffed at his simplistic rendition while I was imagining myself creating each scene in order, almost like a Sunday morning comic strip.

But to my surprise, the man simply asked one question, "Why did you draw an egg?"

Most people in the crowd seemed a little confused.

He asked again, "What in the text of this nursery rhyme gave you an indication that Humpty Dumpty is an egg?"

The answer we were all thinking was, "That's what was always in the picture books!" And hence, the lesson.

The real reason we think of an egg when we think of Humpty Dumpty is our bias. Regardless of where you are or what you do, we bring a previously determined bias to our understanding of any given situation, person, group, idea, or nursery rhyme. Those biases may be formed by a number of factors, but do not doubt that they are there. We are all ingrained with prejudices and these affect our homes and communities.

When thinking about the "Home and Garden" theme of this issue, I couldn't get over the fact that every time I considered the idea of "home" or "garden," it was always in the context of "my home" or "my garden." Why is that? Why would I

be pre-disposed to think of only my stuff? I suppose it has something to do with my family being associated with my home. After all, they live there with me in that house and that house is being continually filled with memories that make my heart both leap and be warmed. When I think of "my garden," I snicker a little at the thought of my wife and I planting flowers that will sustain the barrage of soccer balls being kicked and bikes being ridden by our kids in our small backyard.

Those are "my" ideas of home and garden. But it bothers me that nowhere in the text, "Home and Garden," is there any indication that home and garden are mine. Those are my biases. I only think about how to make my home better. I only worry about weeds in my garden. I only think about how things affect my stuff. And that's where the ingrained prejudices begin to impact my true home...my community.

We bring a previously determined bias to our understanding of any given situation, person, group, idea, or nursery rhyme.

When the idea of "my" home begins to transform into "our" home, this community will truly become a community. And believe me, it starts with me. I'm not trying to convince anyone other than myself that I need to recognize my bias to serve myself rather than looking out for the homes of my neighbors. Neighborhood watches are great, but I'm more concerned with the personal interest and development that I need to have for the people on my street. I'm inspired by people like Bono, the lead singer for the rock band U2, who seeks to redefine personal faith and ambition in terms that change the global community. That may be down the road for some of us. But for most of us, we would do well just to start with our own road here in Frisco.

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