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Before (below) and After (left) artist creations by
Suzy Borg
photos provided by Suzy Borg



The Power of a Personal Vision

By Jim Johnson

TO BE ABLE TO IMAGINE what might be – is to have vision. I am intrigued by people who can look at a “fixer upper” and see a dream home or a raw piece of land and picture a breath-taking garden. Suzy Borg is someone like that. She’s known around Frisco as the “Recycle Goddess.” Maybe you’ve seen some of her work. She has an uncanny ability to look at worn out, rusted, everyday stuff like lamps, frames or shoes and create a piece of art. Amazing.

To make what you imagine to be the driving purpose of your life – is to have a vision. In the heat of this political season, we get to hear from a number of candidates who have a vision. They can see in their mind’s eye what America could become if we all just bought into their vision...so they have made this vision the driving purpose of their lives or, at least their campaigns.

What about you? Do you have vision? Better yet, do you have a vision for your

life? Is there something in your mind’s eye that guides and informs all your hopes and dreams, thoughts and actions? Several years ago I came across a thought offered by James Allen in his book *As a Man Thinketh*. His words stuck with me and challenge me even today as I consider my personal vision for life. I hope it is both as comforting and unsettling for you as it was for me:

“...you will realize the Vision of your heart, be it base or beautiful, or a mixture of both, for you will always gravitate toward that which you, secretly, most love. Into your hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts; you will receive that which you earn; no more, no less. Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts, your Vision, your Ideal. You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration...”

The Vision that you glorify in your mind, the Ideal that you enthrone in your heart – this you will build your life by, this you will become.”

When you begin to realize how powerful your personal vision is in determining the impact and significance of your life, certain questions begin to emerge. Is the vision I have worthy of my one and only life? If I don't have a personal vision, where can I get one? And, if I have a vision, how can I make sure that it comes to fruition?

If these are questions that have disturbed your sleep patterns some, you might want to check out the little book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament. Nehemiah had a laser-focused vision and because of that he is remembered as one of the great influencers of Jewish history. In the first chapter we get insightful clues about how to answer some of these questions.

While working in the court of Artaxerxes around 445 BC, Nehemiah got wind of how the capital city of his homeland was in ruins and how the people were suffering because the walls around the city had been destroyed. Even though he had never lived in Jerusalem personally, he was moved deeply for his vulnerable brothers and sisters who were barely surviving. Out of his acute compassion a vision started to form – he would lead a group of people back to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city.

Let me ask you...can you identify a deep sense of discontent in your life? What is going on right now that deeply moves you? The truth is, most great visions emerge out of a sense that

something needs to be made right.

It is interesting to observe what Nehemiah does first after he hears the tragic news about his kin back in Jerusalem. He doesn't immediately start organizing a "mission trip" among the other displaced Israelites in the city of Susa. No, he turns immediately to God in prayer and fasting. Not half-heartedly, like many of my prayers, but passionately and consistently. Nehemiah understood one of life's great lessons. You can't make everything that strums your heartstrings your personal vision. There are too many needs to be met. You'll be spread too thin. You'll burn out. What Nehemiah did was seek the blessing of God on this endeavor. He needed to know before he set out that this indeed was to be "the" vision for his life.

Is the vision I have worthy of my one and only life? If I don't have a personal vision, where can I get one?

Once you get in touch with your areas of deep discontent, I strongly urge you to do what Nehemiah did, seek God. No one knows you better. No one has your best interest more at heart than your heavenly Father. He loves nothing more than helping his children discover that

for which they were made. Then, when you find it and make it the focus of your dreams and efforts, you won't burn out, you will blossom.

Once Nehemiah determined what the "one thing" was going to be for him, he took the next necessary step. He sold out to the vision. He was Artaxerxes' wine steward. Basically, he tasted everything the king was going to eat or drink to make sure it wasn't poisoned. Talk about a job with an extreme upside and downside! Eat like a king every day until someone poisons you. At any rate, it was a risky thing for him to approach the king with his idea. If the king happened to be in a bad mood and felt like Nehemiah was trying to take advantage of his position, Nehemiah could easily receive a permanent demotion, if you know what I mean. But it didn't matter; he was sold out to his vision. He was willing to take the risk.

Even though we're 2,500 years removed from Nehemiah's time, this truth hasn't changed. Once you've embraced the vision God has for you, you'll never see it come to pass unless you are willing to do whatever it takes to see it through. Nehemiah was...and it did. My hope and prayer for you is that in these early days of 2008 you'll pursue wholeheartedly the vision God has for your one and only life. You'll never regret it and the world will be a better place for it!

Jim Johnson is Senior Pastor at Preston Trail Community Church in Frisco.