

THE STEWARDSHIP PAPERS

The Structure of Our Lives

I've been editing a number of brochures, lately...some good, some not so good. How easy it is to become enmeshed in the editing process—a comma here, a semicolon there. They seem so important...until one remembers that they are only a means to an end. Language exists in order to communicate. Its structure may obey certain rules, but it isn't THE LAW. It's a tool...or, perhaps, a toolbox; because, basically, languages "house" ideas, holding them (as well as us) together in "community."

Even though we know that "it's what's inside that counts," we often make the "houses" of our lives more important than the essences of things. When we do this with languages, how we say something becomes more important than what we say. Not that structure is all bad, mind you. For many people, it's safe and comfortable. And although it puts certain limitations on life, it allows definition and reason to give order to (what some might consider) chaos. We know, for example, that the structure of a tree remains relatively unchanged. Whether it is an elm, dogwood, cedar, or oak, we have no doubt that it is a tree.

And as far as a "house" is concerned, there may be times in our lives when it is easier to recognize the structure of a human being than it is to see the soul inside. But it wasn't always like that. Soon after we were born, each of us knew, instinctively, to look into someone's eyes...the windows of the soul...and see the

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essence of what was there. It was only after we began to see ourselves as separate entities that we began to focus on the outward appearances, instead.

But as we grow older, we once again learn to look at what's inside of things: the hand inside a tightly clenched fist, the gift inside a Christmas present, the love inside of each and every one of us.

During those times when structure is more important to us than essence, we are in the "middle" of our lives...and it is a very safe place to be. But, to

"turn and be born again" [Matt. 18:3]

means to let go of things, perhaps even the rigidity of outward appearances, and to look anew on that which is the essence of our beings. For some reason, this seems easier to do when we are either very young or very old. And perhaps that's why

"I am the beginning and the ending," [Rev. 1:8]

saith the Lord.

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