

Is your environment a “Temple?”

Temple, the first thing that comes to mind is a building or a place for worship. We traditionally consider our environments, our classrooms as places for education not worship. Maybe we need to refine our definition by considering how God looks at the word temple.

When Solomon built the temple it was never with an idea to become a place that God would live. It would have to be a small god that could be contained within the four walls of an earthly structure. Yet, there were times when God’s presence would fill the temple and overflow the temple in demonstration of His presence, His power and His pleasure in and to His people.

Solomon understood that his purpose in building the temple was to create a unique place that would “honor” God’s name. There may be something we are missing about the concept of name. Scripture after scripture records “He bore a son and called his name Seth” “And he called his name Enos.” “And he called his name Noah.” The ancient Hebrews put great store in the meaning of names. Names, it seems, are not considered just as identifiers but as revealers of something bigger, a harbinger of the future, destiny and character of the one named.

The most amazing conversation on names comes when Moses asks God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your Fathers has sent me to you’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’” “Then what shall I tell them?” “I AM WHO I AM.” “I AM has sent me to you.” Now, take a moment to think about the implications of the grammar. (Sorry, we are school people. After all, God created language.) I AM. Can there be anything more simple – or more profound?” I AM. Not I wasn’t. Not I was. Not I am. Not I will be. Not I won’t be. (All of those apply to us.) I AM. Yesterday, today, forever. I AM is His “Name.” Ponder the theological implications. No beginning. No end. I AM.

Yes, then, we might consider a temple as a place to honor that name. A place to ponder the imponderable. A place to consider the miraculous, the mysterious and the awesomeness of God and His creation. Because we serve an invisible God, it does not mean that His handprints and footprints are not visible all over His creation. So, what better place to build a temple (a place to contemplate and honor God and His handiwork) than a place where we study the Cosmos – cosmic education. Your environment is a place of wonder – how numbers go together, the shapes of leaves, the curve of the earth, the animals and the planets. The amazing things hidden in written symbols (words) and how to create your own hieroglyphics 😊. And when you can add the history of God speaking to His people (the Bible) you are creating an environment that is complete, filling and thrilling. And then you are truly meeting the whole needs of the child.

The environment becomes a temple as it expands the horizons of our awe, the horizons of our understanding, as it gives us names to take dominion of our world and as it helps us order the chaos around and within us. Can the study of God’s creation and its people be any more awe inspiring than when we know where the origin, the creativity, the power and the beauty came from? The great human creative projects of cathedrals and temples of the world might pale when compared to the amazing nature all around us – the kingdom of the ants, birds in the sky, the cycles of weather and clouds, the seasons, the green and growing things – each a miracle of how they are put together and how they cooperate in all creation like bees and flowers and the balance of nature. All are testaments to the invisible God who is made “visible” in His creation. And as our children mature they add to their

understanding how God works in us to change us and transform us. There is much to worship if we know where to look and whom to thank.

Finally, even though God was never going to “live” there, whether it was the tabernacle or the temple, it was to be a place of beauty. The scriptures often speak about the beauty of holiness. Beauty is a part of God’s character and an element of worship. Look at the world He has created in living color, with myriad fragrances, tastes and pleasing sounds. Now look at your environment because it has all of the elements to become a temple – a beautiful place to honor God and His creation if we know where to look and whom to thank.