

We all need to create sacred places for ourselves where we can meditate for a moment and feel the Presence of God. So much of the space in our lives is relegated to our work or other functions of living, and we sometimes neglect this. We may have a den where we try to relax with some form of entertainment, but what we really need is a special place that helps our soul to breathe.

My wife and I created such a place, although in reality it does not have to be a physical place so much as a mental one. Soozie, as an artist and gardener, came up with the idea of having a fence in the front yard to hang works of art. It also would act as a deer fence, to keep them from eating our “deer candy” (lily blooms). They had totally devastated our lily garden the previous year.

So I began putting up landscape timbers and we hung old windows in the structure to fill in the gaps. Many of the windows were etched and painted with Soozie’s creations, and soon people began to drive slowly down our street to see what was going on. I’m sure that some thought we were out of our heads.

Perhaps we were. But within the protected area, we now had a real garden with flowers blooming all summer long. It was soothing to work inside that area, and calming to just sit down so that we could look around at, not only the beautiful flowers, but the birds and squirrels that found it to be a safe haven. We even had a pond with a waterfall for fish and frogs to inhabit.

The fence was a barrier that kept the deer out, but also served as a boundary for our sacred place. Here we could celebrate life and creation, even though death and destruction occurred around us. And it was in our own way something like Adam and Eve walking with God in the Garden of Eden<sup>1</sup> – at least we could sense His Presence there with us. Sometimes it was more like the Garden of Gethsemane<sup>2</sup>, where we were earnestly seeking His Presence. There we could be still before Him<sup>3</sup>, for our sacred place was a sort of porthole into His Holy Temple. Being there makes me think of other times when people realized with great awe that God was present<sup>4</sup>.

We promoted the growing of flowers and other life, and we were creating a garden that we hoped would be better and better each year<sup>5</sup>. It was an Oasis, in a sense, from the stresses of life (especially that associated with work). And we connected the different areas of the garden by putting down stepping-stones.

This was not a high place, such as was sought many times by the Jews<sup>6</sup>; neither was it simply a remote place to get away from the crowds as when Jesus went up into the mountain to pray<sup>7</sup>. We could see the glory of God in the front yard of our own home. There was no particular astronomical orientation to the structure in the sense of Stonehenge or perhaps the Medicine Wheel – but it let in God’s light. Its physical alignment was not critical, but the spiritual alignment was. I wonder what an archaeologist of the future would think if he excavated here and contemplated the pattern of post-holes and paths. Perhaps he would understand that we were just making a statement in our own personal way.

It was a place to restore, or re-charge, the soul. We could sit out in the center of it and feel Peace. We could hear the wind slipping through the trees and tickling the chimes, and we could hear the songs of many different kinds of birds as they preached the word in their own way. And at night, the lights we had sprinkled throughout gave the painted windows a stained-glass look as though we were in a chapel.

It was a sort of fortress, as well. I think of the way Jesus described the church; “the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it”<sup>8</sup>. And we wanted our place to prevail against deer, bugs, disease, and drought. It would also be the place of spiritual peace in a time of storm<sup>9</sup>. We anticipated a beautiful Beulah land<sup>10</sup>: the promised land of rest<sup>11</sup>.

The establishment of a sacred place has a spiritual parallel in the relationship that we develop with God. We are creating a garden in our minds through our reflection on God’s Goodness. We place special items around it like we would in making a memory theatre. As Claudia Ghandi has written: “If I had a single flower for every time I think about you, I would walk forever in my garden.” This happens for me with Soozie, but more importantly it happens to us as we take refuge in our relationship with God. And the paths that we use to connect the most special places are really paths of intimacy<sup>12</sup> with Him.

1. Genesis 3:8ff
2. Matthew 26:36
3. Psalm 37:7
4. God is in this place (Genesis 28:17; Genesis 32; Genesis 35; Exodus 3:5)
5. All gardeners live in beautiful places because they make them so. Joseph Jonbert
6. 1 Kings 14:23
7. John 9:28
8. Matthew 16:18
9. Matthew 8:23ff
10. Isaiah 62:4
11. Hebrews 4:9
12. This high way isn't so much a track of gravel, asphalt, or reinforced concrete stretching from Point A to Point B. It is really a path of intimacy in Him... "The Way". God's Eye View, Tommy Tenney, p. 186

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