



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Gypsy Smith, a great evangelist from another era, sang and preached his way around the world. He was simple, original and colorful. He used to say, "I was born in a field; don't try to put me in a flower pot." And nobody ever did.

Somebody wanted to teach him music and told him he ought to sing from his diaphragm. He snorted and said, "I don't want to sing from my diaphragm. I want to sing from my heart." And he did, right up until he was 87 years of age when he died preaching.

Someone once asked the Gypsy what was the secret of the freshness of his ministry. The old man paused, and then with a sparkle that came from the heart, said, "The secret of my ministry is that I've never lost the wonder."

Whether the Gypsy realized it or not, that's the secret to all freshness. Jesus flattened the theologians of his day by saying that only a little child could enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You see, children haven't lost the sense of wonder. They haven't been here long enough to get used to it all. Anything can happen to a child. Everything is new. Around every corner waits a brand new surprise, because they've never been there before.

Children, like bears, go over the mountain to see what they can see. Adults go over the mountain in order to buy a 1,200-acre plot of ground and subdivide it into shopping centers.

Only children believe in tooth fairies and lollipops, merry-go-rounds and butterflies, fireflies on a summer night and fiddler crabs on the beach. Adults never

pause and watch the particles of dust swirl in a sunbeam, or put their noses to the ground to watch an ant carry a beetle 10 times its size. Adults see clouds as a threat to an afternoon on the golf course, while children look into the sky and see dragons and castles, hump-backed giants and alligators, or flying cows with overshoes. The life of a child is the most exciting, adventurous and fresh life in the world. All because a child hasn't lost the wonder of it all.

When I was a boy, growing up in what was then the "country," we had time to be still. There was time for a walk in the grove to watch the spiders build their webs, time to sit on the old swinging bridge across the main canal, throw acorns in the water and wonder where the ripples went after they hit the bank. I had time to think. And pray. And do a lot of reflecting on who I was, who God was, and what kind of man I was supposed to be when I grew up.

Now everything is organized, supervised, planned and programmed. You don't take a walk today, you take an organized hike. Television, computers and machines do our thinking for us — and our nation falls apart from the top and the bottom with crime in the streets and in the White House.

I can't solve the problems of the world, and, very frankly, I doubt if I can have much influence on Washington. But I can do something about myself. And even though I've passed 40 and am cresting the hill, I'm determined to regain the wonder. If it means becoming as a little child again, then so be it. After all, there's nothing wrong with flying cows with overshoes.