

Recommended Movie:

Mary Poppins. I am frequently amazed at how little is seen in what has been viewed for literally decades. Quite possibly, everyone has already seen this movie a dozen times or more. Next time, however, look deeper and ponder the archetypal relationships.

In Mrs. Banks, consider the feminine energy within each of us that seeks recognition, expression, and participation. In Mr. Banks, contemplate the ideals to which we are so committed, that we slip into blindness concerning other aspects of life--so much so that we fracture our own wholeness and must collide with seeming tragedy in order to reclaim all of who and what we are. In Jane and Michael, open your eyes to the numerous developing opinions and behavioral patterns that will shape our individual and collective life experience. In the bank directors, reach for compassion towards those who imagine themselves to be in control of the wealth of others, without understanding what true wealth is. In the bird woman, hear the call of those simple things in each day of life that give flight to the best qualities of personal character. In the household servants, watch for that which wishes to serve but is frustrated by uncooperative circumstances and is thereby tempted to become bitter and cynical. In Uncle Albert, recognize that each of us sometimes gets stuck in a particular emotion (rather than continuing to cycle through the full range, feeling each emotion in its appropriate context) and may need a little friendly help to get back into the flow of life. In Bert, look for the child within each of us, willing to believe or try anything at all, willing to play within life and let it be whatever it will be. And in Mary Poppins, look for that secure center of the soul in which each of us truly knows who and what we individually are--a place deep within that we too often either forget or fail to understand, but from which we can draw great strength and confidence. Yet, like Mary Poppins, the spirit within often makes little effort to explain the magic of why or how all possibilities are present there.

And when you've seen all of this, watch the movie again and look for even more.

Recommended Reading:

A Circle of Quiet by Madeleine L'Engel.

In this time of great change and transition, again and again I am struck by the way that many things seem to have "come full circle" and yet even though similar are also different, perhaps like the next verse of a particularly inspiring song. In the flurry and confusion of growth, however, it remains nevertheless essential to maintain some sort of inner circle in which to simply be and to listen, to rest from expressive efforts, and to regain one's strength and spiritual focus. Such a personal practice does not scream loudly over the din for attention to its needs; it simply waits quietly--but it is not for that or any other reason any less essential to healthy wholeness.

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Sister Who's Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant "information overload," news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding.

Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed.

Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified.

Blessings, love, and peace to you.

Surviving the End of the Millennium In situations of self-evaluation, the question is often presented of what two or three things one would quickly snatch before fleeing, if one's home were on fire and everything left behind were in danger of being lost. Similarly, I recall an older movie about a scientist who created a machine for traveling through time. At the end of the movie, he leaves with his time machine and does not return. A friend left behind notices that two or three books are missing from his vast library and asks another person present, which books she would take if she could only take two or three books with her, out of all those available.

Hundreds of stories could be told of people who "lost everything" at all different ages of life--young, old, and in between--and had to rebuild a life and a home from almost nothing. One reason that such events are typically described as tragedies is that loss is generally seen as an adversary rather than as a friend. The fact is that--in most cases--loss hurts. Times of great transition are--fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it--also times of great loss. Something must be given up, let go, and

cleared away in order to make room for something new to come into being. Since this cycling between loss and gain is inherently part of life, what is needed is a truly effective and efficient means of keeping up with whatever the pace of life-changes is. In the old testament section of the bible, I recall reading as a child that during the nomadic journey through the desert between Egypt and Canaan, whenever a leader of the people died, everything stopped for thirty days and the main focus of the time was mourning the loss of the leader. Mourning was the designated activity and no one lectured anyone else on the need to "move on" until the full thirty days of mourning were completed. In an ideal society, events such as the death of a loved one, divorce, the transition from childhood to adulthood, a mid-life crisis, or any other such emotionally charged event would receive an immediate response from society of "time off" from all other activities for the individual to focus upon and completely process the difficult transition being faced. This would allow the person to come through stronger and more completely healed than he or she could ever become while trying to maintain the usual panorama of personal and societal responsibilities.

Often as a friend and I conclude a visit and go our separate ways, one or the other of us will call out "Take care of yourself." In these times of great change, this is very wise advice, but it does not require becoming unresponsive to the need to take care of each other. As with most things, the best answers may be a little more difficult to find, but they satisfy all concerns. More directly put, it is possible to take care of ourselves both individually AND collectively--but this happens by intention and action and not by accident. In my opinion, it has never

been more necessary to take care of ourselves both individually and collectively.

The first step in being able to take care of both at the same time, is to listen to the spark of divine light within one's self and to respond positively. If you feel tired, budget some time for taking naps or going to bed earlier. If you feel sad about something, take some time to write your feelings honestly into a journal or to discuss the feelings openly with a trusted friend. If you feel restless, do something more active such as hiking, riding a bicycle, or taking an evening class in pottery or painting or carpentry. If you feel isolated, write more letters, send more emails, or begin attending classes in sign language. Whatever you're feeling, respond rather than repress. Your subconscious mind may be trying to convey a message from your own inner light, and "switching gears" for a moment may be just what is needed to get things moving again internally. The Mayans had an understanding woven throughout their culture that "I am another you and you are another me." Taking care of one's self does not mean ignoring the needs of others, nor does it mean responding to the needs of others instead of your own. The needs of one's self and the needs of others are actually part of the same spectrum of motivating life-force.

I must be at my best, in order to give my best to others. Part of this is understanding what in fact is mine and what is not mine to be and do. Although our lives are very interconnected, they are not the same. Whoever wants the muscles, must also lift the weights--but such accomplishments are much more likely to happen if we make a point of cheering each other on, of calling to each other with sincerity and enthusiasm, "Go for it!" and celebrating each accomplishment just as enthusiastically. We can also work to keep the road to opportunity open for each other. One person may own a theatre while another is able to sing very beautifully. The first gives a place where the second performs, after which the profits can be equally shared. Anyone involved in the

planning of any event has the opportunity to speak up and urge that all locations within the specific event be made accessible to people with disabilities. It has often been said that "we are all in this together" and I would like to add that it is very important that no one be left out or left behind. Other possible examples are volunteering to take care of a friend's pets so that he or she could attend an educational meeting of some kind, occasionally helping to move furniture or take care of household chores, or reminding each other of reasonable possibilities--new opportunities or accomplishments that are not miles away but rather just the tiniest bit beyond the current reach of our fingers. Most especially, surviving the current season of millennial change has to do with individually and collectively envisioning something wonderful in our immediate future. If we have nothing to look forward to, what's the point of going forward? But in being fully present together, is the opportunity to have more to look forward to, than anything we've done so far. This is the "drum roll" I think we all need most of all right now. Together we can create exactly the "drum roll" that we need, and march onto the stage one by one, until we are all there in a greater celebration of life than the world has ever seen. **Surviving the End of the Millenium** In situations of self-evaluation, the question is often presented of what two or three things one would quickly snatch before fleeing, if one's home were on fire and everything left behind were in danger of being lost. Similarly, I recall an older movie about a

"The one who wants the muscles,
must lift the weights;
but the weights
become easier to lift,
in direct proportion
to how loud the audience cheers."
---Sister Who

The Ritual of Letting Go

More often than not, the things of which we know we need to let go, are not physical things that will simply fall away as soon as we spread our fingertips. Over the years, I have often been encouraged by friends to "let go" of this or that emotional wound or painful memory. Mentally, prayerfully, even obstinately I have pushed the undesired element away--only to wake the next morning to the continuing presence of the banished entity.

I finally began to understand, just within the last year, that as long as I view the particular thing only as an adversary, I inadvertently chain my subconscious mind to the very thing of which I want my mind and heart and spirit to be free. What has therefore become my prayer ever since, is that the wound may be healed. I think this is what Jesus meant when he spoke of praying for those who persecute, rather than returning a wound for a wound, every time someone or something hurts me.

I seek to understand in each situation that arises, what it is within me that seeks to be heard, seen, embraced, or healed, and I specifically refuse to send the thing away without making my best effort in that direction. When a friend asked me to bless a house he'd recently purchased, to free it from any troubled spirits who might be lingering there, I walked through the house with a smoking censer singing songs of healing for everything present, rather than performing any sort of exorcism.

When someone betrays my trust and friendship, I may withdraw in order to honestly recognize and heal my own emotional wounds. As I am doing so, however, I make a point of holding prayers in my heart and mind instead of curses, that whatever wound within the other is capable of expressing such brokenness (which is what the betrayal of a friend is--an expression of brokenness), may be healed.

As a child, ritual was too often presented to me as being simply repetitious actions and words. Now, I have come to understand ritual as a means of illustrating one's life and thereby empowering one's self to deal positively with things that cannot be directly touched.

If I decide that there is something in my life of which I need to let go, I begin by carefully selecting an object to represent the separation I

wish to achieve. If there is a person who is attempting to control me in an unloving and excessive manner, I first remind myself that the person's unkind actions do not make the person less of a person. It is not the person from which I need to separate myself, but rather the person's actions and attitudes.

One of the millions of possibilities for such a ritual is the series of actions that follows. I begin by lighting my favorite color of candle and meditating while listening to appropriate music, seeking to draw as much peace, love, and prayerful connection with God (in whatever form or way I understand God to be) into myself as possible. Then I reach for a vine in a glass of water that has been placed in front of the candle. Nearby is a scissors which I use to cut the vine into two pieces, then placing one piece in each of two other glasses of water. Then I put down the scissors and meditate on the beauty and need for continuing growth through whatever challenges may come, that is present in both myself and the other person. In the days that follow, when the two vines have each developed their own roots, I plant the vines into good soil. One I keep. The other I give to the other person along with a few words of blessing and closure, perhaps saying something like, "I wish you well in all you do. I thank you for the stronger person you have inspired me to become. At this time in my life, I need to continue on my way independently, and I encourage you to do the same. Blessings, love, and peace to you, now and always."

But what if the feeling returns? It may be that some healings require many rituals and much growth, but even if that is the case, love requires that you set your eyes on nothing less than wholeness. May you be filled with love in all that you feel, say, think, do, and are, now and always. Amen.