

# *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. ---Sister Who*

## Overview

The definitions and experiences of our lives include both spaces in which to grow and lines by which to notice our progress and position.

If we stumble blindly ahead without noticing the lines we cross, we may sometimes look around at the spaces and think we have not moved at all. We may also not realize the territory into which we have moved and wonder why certain behavior and familiar norms are no longer evident, similar to crossing international boundaries and finding ourselves subject to laws which are unfamiliar.

The lines are nevertheless not meant to contain or limit us, but rather to empower our understanding in new ways, allowing us to more successfully be agents of peace, wisdom, and love within an otherwise confusing world.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## The Bottom Line

When all of the discussion and debate is done, what really matters? What is the value, measure, or expected benefit?

If money is the measure of life and professional worth, computer programmers, attorneys, and doctors are much more valuable to humanity than teachers, ministers, and service workers of all kinds. Nevertheless, I interact with many more service workers than attorneys and doctors, within any month of the year, suggesting that except for rare moments, I could more easily survive without attorneys than without those who provide gas for my car, food for my refrigerator, and electricity for my house. Even so, literally millions of people live every day without vehicular transportation, refrigeration, and electricity.

From another perspective, the bottom line is the minimum of tolerable life experience.

From this second perspective, there are people who cannot conceive of life without cellular phones, regular paychecks, and health insurance--without all of which literally millions of people (including me) must continue to survive.

What persists within both perspectives, is an extremely pervasive and complex interconnectedness of all life. Doctors will have no income without patients who by some means or other have the ability to pay for services rendered. Service personnel will be unemployed if there is no one who is willing to engage their services. Complete self-sufficiency within current societal and environmental circumstances is an illusion at least and a tragic lie at most.

That being the case, the bottom line of life is that we must believe in each other and invest our time, energy, money, and resources into individuals and groups within our local, national, and global communities in ways that are genuinely empowering to them, if we are to ever have anything resembling moderately healthy communities in which to live.

A bigger house, a fancier car, more expensive clothes, more frequent vacations, and other examples of what might be called "conspicuous consumption" may come at a cost which is easy to overlook, but the cost is real and it is much higher than most of us realize.

The bottom line is that either we work toward ways in which everyone wins or we will remain on a collision course with societal and environmental disasters within which everyone ultimately loses.

The bottom line is that everyone matters and we must therefore work to create a world within which everyone has legitimate ways of meeting at least all of their basic needs. We cannot claim with any integrity whatsoever, to be people of love and peace, if the fate of anyone around us is somehow unimportant. To do so would incur the most terrible cost of all--that of losing our eternal souls to things that don't last.

As the popular slogan says, "Live simply that others may simply live." We really do need everyone whom God has given to the world in which we live. Potentially, all are valuable and beautiful; all have good reasons to be here.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## The Starting Line

I recall the quote, "We the unwilling, led by the unqualified have been doing the unbelievable for so long with so little we now attempt the impossible with nothing." It reminds me of the biblical verse in the first letter to the Corinthians, "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him."

Perhaps it should be obvious, but frequently the starting line is wherever we find ourselves to be, regardless of how inadequate of a starting line it may seem to us or of how inadequate we may feel with regard to the race course leading from our feet to some unknown finish line in the distance. Because we are the ones standing at our respective starting lines, we are the ones God has invited to run our individually unique races.

Among the starting lines which I encounter each and every day, is my commitment to the idea that a person is a person is a person. That being the case, I hold myself personally accountable to treating everyone with fairness, being genuinely helpful to others whenever opportunity allows, and maintaining (as much as possible) a practice of unconditional love which is as concerned with everyone else's success as it is with my own.

In one sense, starting lines offer more vulnerability than security. Within that moment, I am placing myself in readiness to pursue a course of action, the outcome of which I do not know.

Certainly there will be obstacles, competing elements, and adversarial conditions. Such things are relatively unavoidable within the ongoing unfolding of life. To the extent that I have expressed encouragement, support, and even unconditional love toward all that is around me, however, I can interpret that I have filled the world with as many allies as possible. To the extent that I have simply tried to be the toughest bully on the block, however, I can reasonably expect that I must maintain my superiority without any help from anyone or anything.

There is an important principle to note here. By giving, I make the world more safe and more constructively collaborative. By withholding and spending my resources only on myself, I further isolate myself from the strength and contributions of those around me and those I encounter along

the way.

In prayer, I give my time and energy to God. Blessings are God giving back to me.

On a personal note, I do confess to many arguments with God about what constitutes a blessing, within the experience of difficult moments. Not always but nevertheless often enough, I later find that things really did work out for the best. Someone asked me yesterday, however, whether from the perspective of a current relatively positive experience of graduate school, if I had it to do over again, would I. I honestly couldn't answer. Perhaps God understands that too and therefore refrains from allowing me to see significantly large portions of my future.

An important added aspect of starting lines, is the magical honor of bestowing them on others. When we give someone a chance to prove what he or she can do--when the Dean of the Chapel of Iliff School of Theology gave me a chance to demonstrate within a Chapel service what Sister Who can do--we invite good things to happen which in all likelihood have never happened before (or at least not in the same way as they may happen now).

Giving someone a chance requires a certain embracing of vulnerability. Giving God or life a chance also requires a certain embracing of vulnerability. This is not weakness or surrender, however, but a new sort of reaching for strength. I learned this from a friend just the other day, that as much as vulnerability can be perceived as lowering one's defenses, vulnerability is also a source of strength by the ways in which perception is significantly enhanced.

Imagine a knight engaged in a fierce sword battle. Removing his helmet may expose his head to various weapons, but doing so will also dramatically increase his vision and will also allow his supposed enemy to see his face. The potential miracle within that is that when his enemy and he are able to look into each others' eyes, they may find reasons to become friends--they may see aspects of each other which they can not only respect but also value.

A friendly handshake cannot be accomplished by a hand clutching a weapon, but a handshake can create a positive relationship which no weapon has the ability to produce. This is a very good place to start.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## The Dividing Line

My internal spiritual spaces, what one might call my soul, is frequently more concerned with recognizing essences than with focusing upon forms or expressions. If my soul is the true, enduring, and recognizable essence of who and what I am, so much so that I would be recognizable no matter in what body my essence was placed, then it follows that whether I am a man, a woman, gay, straight, or of any specific race one could name, I would still be me.

My point here is that while it would still be me within any specific form, that which is truly me does in fact need a form to inhabit and the qualities of whichever form I inhabit will have influences and effects upon all that follows as well.

Some of my friends insist that in some spiritual place just prior to birth, we really do get to choose where we will be born and into what form. I find that idea interesting, but I'm still not entirely convinced. For all practical purposes, I find it more helpful to think of the details of birth as being somehow orchestrated by God or as some say, "accidents of birth" (i.e. being born into the U.S. or into a so-called third world country or into a rich home or into a poor home or into any particular racial category). I don't recall ever choosing the place in which my current journey through human history began so I have concluded that it is more helpful to simply make the best of wherever I find myself to be or else encourage movement and growth toward somewhere else.

Obviously God and I do not always agree, but I am willing to concede that there are a great many things known to God which are not known to me--most probably including things affecting the selection of birth family, demographic context, and economic stratum. All things considered, it

*"The rich and poor  
can only be friends  
if money is a tool  
and not a measure  
within the symbiotic life  
in which we all share."*

*--Sister Who*

remains that I was born and grew up within a small working class agrarian town as a very creative gay man with varying degrees of self-awareness. Regardless of any lack of self-understanding, I was like a giraffe in a barnyard. There was simply no convenient place to put me or way to integrate me into more-or-less typical small town life. From a purely human perspective, it would have been so much more advantageous for me to have been born into the creative resources of New York City. Yet God knew where I needed to be and why.

The dividing line is that moment--any and every moment--when I finally understand where that which is truly me ends and that which is truly someone else begins. This line of distinction, however, is usually neither automatic nor obvious. Rather it is the whispers of the soul to the person, mind, and body within which it lives.

The dividing line is that moment of choice in which I embrace and affirm what God has made me to be and also choose to begin living my own life rather than attempting to be the embodiment of the expectations and definitions of others.

The dividing line is that place in relationship in which I give you the freedom to be whoever and whatever you find yourself to be, in which I give you whatever encouragement and support I can to follow the unique and beautiful dream God has hidden within you, and in which I do my best to trust the unique and often unprecedented course your life may take.

The dividing line is that place in which I recognize that although God is everywhere within and around me, God is also distinct from me in ways that allow us to engage in dialogue about the unfolding events, concerns, and influences of the lives of myself, others, and the world.

Specifically because while living within me and everything around me God is also beyond me and exists in wisdom and love and powerful presence in ways incomprehensible to my human mind, I am blessed with aspirations and a longing to grow. Thus the dividing line is also the present moment in which I distinguish between all that I have been and all that with God's help I hope to one day be.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the dividing line, similar in many ways to theological explanations of forgiveness, is that it is another chance to do things in a different and better way than they have ever been done before.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## The Finish Line

Certainly there is not only one finish line. In fact many exist. All sorts of accomplishments identify us as persons who have completed particular courses. All are finish lines: points in time and space in which we shift from one course of action or involvement to or toward another. Win or lose, there is a sense of completion by which we are liberated to pursue other activities or personal development.

If we win, many doors of opportunity may open which had previously been closed to us, but this is perhaps the easiest form of winning.

If we do not win in the most obvious sense, we have the more difficult task of discerning what the reward for our efforts is. There is, however, always a reward, no matter how subtle or hidden it may be. In every case, we do not leave the race or competition without being in some way more than we were when we started.

If we tie, neither winning nor losing anything, a sense of completion is usually evasive, instead replaced by an inner hunger to repeat the race or engage in some other competition which is able to provide the closure and completion that either winning or losing are able to give us.

If superficially we lose, we can in humility allow this loss to teach us, but it is most important to remember that losses are events and not value judgements. No one is a bad or worthless person for having lost. Rather, I show myself to be a worthy and valuable person by being willing to try, to learn from whatever happens, and to try again.

Most important, the finish line is a goal which provides guidance regarding where and how to proceed. As directly presented within the movie "Chariots of Fire," it is imperative to keep one's eyes focused upon that goal and not to be distracted by comparisons between ourselves and others. Those ahead of us, who sometimes appear to us within the most unlikely forms, may help us to chart our individually specific courses, but if we are to be the winners we can be, we must reach for the unformed future from the present moment of complete involvement rather than tying ourselves to the weight of the past behind us.

We remember the past, but once the race is on, we carry its memory and not its substance, which would impede our progress. We must let go and leave behind wherever we were.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be!

## On a Personal Note

First and foremost, the presentation featuring Sister Who which was done in Chapel at Iliff School of Theology on March 15, 2006, was positively wonderful. Response from those present has been enormous and extremely positive. For anyone who would like, a simple video and audio recording was made which is now available on DVD. If you would like to purchase a copy of this recording, please send \$5.00 to cover production and shipping costs. I will also include a printed copy of the script performed, in the event that any part of the audio is difficult to understand.

Photos of Sister Who with accompanying captions suitable for framing now number fifty and are also available for \$5 to cover production and shipping costs. A complete listing of these is included within my website ([www.sisterwho.com](http://www.sisterwho.com)) which is accessible from nearly every public library or computer with an internet connection.

A possibility exists for me to participate within a physique/bodybuilding event at the First World OutGames in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in August of this year, at which time Sister Who would also of course make some appearances. Funds are currently inadequate for this to happen. Please pray with me that if I and Sister Who are really supposed to be there for many reasons known mostly to God, that all necessary funds will be provided. Someone in Montreal willing to provide housing for ten days, would significantly reduce the cost. Considering that Sister Who would not exist had I not participated in a similar event in Vancouver, BC, Canada in 1990, there is a feeling of coming full circle as I anticipate, prepare, and hope to be in Montreal in August.

Finally, preparations for the production of new episodes of my television show, "Sister Who Presents..." continue but at a somewhat slow pace due to other responsibilities and activities. Several guests for the next episodes to be recorded, have already been identified.

May God's blessings, love, and peace be with you now and always, *Sister Who*

### Subscription Information:

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