

SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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Overview

The definition, development, and practice of relationships seems to be a lifelong learning activity for virtually everyone, although many do not seem to realize this. My hope is that this month's essays will provide new ways of viewing and understanding that challenge.

Being a Gracious Receiver

The current narcissistic attitude of doing for one's self rather than channeling communal activity, has rendered many opposed to compliments, symbiotic exchange, and even empowerment. Rather than each empowering the other, the individuals of a community remain disconnected and separate, allowing greater evils of every sort to flourish. It is not always that I need whatever is being given, as much as that I am offered an experience of stewardship by which I can shape and mold the journey of a particular blessing from one person to another through my community--much like vessels carrying blood throughout a human body.

Being a gracious receiver is consequently not a matter of being the final resting place of a specific blessing, but rather of participating in its journey. In the final analysis, the particular gift may touch a large number of lives, while passing from one pair of hands to another, another, and another. The value of the gift may even be increased by such transition, becoming a sort of family heirloom with a long and wondrous story.

An additional consideration is that sometimes the person extending the blessing may feel a need to give, even when one doesn't feel a need to receive. By accepting and effectively using the gift, one may support the growth of generosity, awareness, and interconnection--and honor the giver. The end result is thus not measured by the item itself, as much as by multiple effects within individual lives it touches along the way.

Consequently, money cannot measure what love does within the larger number of lives affected. Relationship is thus the better measure

of life, for those with the ability to see. It can be difficult, however, not to be discouraged by those who are short-sighted and do not understand.

Consequently, for wealth to be genuine and authentic, everyone must be included. Any unmet need indicates imbalance, disparity, and disconnection instead of all-encompassing, unconditional, and inclusive love. Economic disparity is thus equivalent to life-threatening blood clots within the body of humanity.

For those with circulatory disorders, certain activities must be either avoided or done in particular ways that do not encourage the formation of blood clots. What is essential to humanity within the current time, is identifying and putting a stop to activities that are in fact creating blood clots where none should be. In the same way that it is imperative to learn proper ways of lifting heavy weights in order to support skeletal health, the challenges encountered by specific relationships must also learn methods and dynamics by which every task can be safely and constructively engaged.

I'm reminded of a social club that put a priority on the maintenance of cultural identity, but refused to integrate possibilities of anomalous orientational development. Any son, daughter, or member discovering being gay, lesbian, or transgender, consequently, was faced with a choice between personal integrity and separating from unaccepting familial relationships.

Truth should never be the reason that love stops, but if it does, perhaps it wasn't genuine love in the first place. Coming to new awareness that is genuinely true, is often challenging, but ideally empowering--if one is willing to embrace the growth involved. Being a gracious receiver is as much about growing and being both alive and relational as of exchanging goods or services.

Additionally, the gift may not be anything physical, but rather a relational opportunity to which some respond, "I don't have time." If one does not have time to engage in love, however, one may be choosing not to truly live.

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

Owning One's Blessings

Time and time again, it seems that life is less about ownership and more accurately concerned with stewardship. It occurred to me years ago that everything should be wherever it can do the most good and, consequently, that the resources and opportunities affected by my control or influence, are specifically to empower individual, relational, and communal growth. One way of measuring my life is thus the extent to which my choices and actions have facilitated growth rather than stagnation of wisdom and love.

In a similar way, a significant part of having a mind, voice, and consciousness, is being truly committed to effectively both listening and speaking, in order to address greater insights and understanding that are discovered within ongoing growth and development. Far too many would rather avoid conflict than resolve it, which might explain but not excuse why they remain silent. The mere fact that one is where and when one is and notices what one does, may be an indication of a divine calling to be the one who makes a positive difference.

When one fails to truly listen or speak, in response to opportunity, one's life remains at least partially un-lived and the collective reality fails to become all that it could otherwise become. That being noted, one must also remember that there is no final word, but rather that everything ever spoken is part of an ongoing dialogue, within which understanding is continually growing. Whatever one says, is a contribution to be integrated and should never be considered dogmatically (right versus wrong)--which is consistent with the assertion that life is ideally collaborative rather than competitive.

It is imperative that thinking oriented to "us/them" and "either... or..." be replaced by "we" and "both... and...", remembering that "we" is composed of a wide spectrum of diversity. The discovery of solutions that truly work for everyone, may require more time, but it is absolutely worth the effort--specifically because each unique contributor can thereby increase collective understanding and ability. The sense in which this is part of owning one's blessings is that one does not do so in a manner that is fearful and insecure, worrying whether one's contribution is "good enough," but rather from the confidence that if it is one's best, then it is

inherently good enough--while remaining open to further growth and development.

Competition encourages every participant to be fearful of being "good enough." Collaboration encourages every participant to be included within ongoing growth and development that is dependent upon each participant feeling loved and embraced by the community, so there is no need to overcompensate, as if trying to prove one's self to unaccepting others. Owning one's blessings involves being aware of the value and reliability of one's creative contributions.

Owning one's blessings is not inherently narcissistic, if one understands one's self and one's creative contributions as expressions of relational individuality. It is not that one owns any particular resource, but that one is the steward of particular creative possibilities that may not be available within anyone else. If, conversely, there is one or more other persons who share similar abilities and resources, a collaborative team can be formed, so that the resulting contribution is greater than any single member of the team could produce.

Ultimately, owning blessings relationally, is concerned with everyone being winners, rather than distinguishing winners from losers. If one does not truly own one's blessings, however, a hesitancy lingers, as if the particular blessings are uncertain of satisfying all persons who jointly own the blessings. The other persons involved, however, may not understand the blessings as deeply as the one experiencing them internally.

Specifically due to individual experience, a particular challenge can be understood in ways that are not superficially apparent. This allows the response to integrate deeper sensitivity and both anticipate and prevent complications that it is wise to avoid. One might even say that the one who has lived through particular applications of the resource, will more wisely utilize that resource within future applications.

A very basic metaphor of this is riding a motorcycle. The one who has experienced a specific vehicle will know the exact sensitivities of the brakes, clutch, and weight of that vehicle, which becomes extremely important to safely travel curves at highway speeds and avoid potential accidents. To own the vehicle thus becomes synonymous with knowing the vehicle.

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

Allowing Blessings to Shine

With or without awareness and with or without expressions of gratitude, blessings have a reality all their own that may or may not be served by related actions and attitudes within others. That being said, there is still much that can be increased by awareness and conscious intention within interactions. To the extent that I am aware and utilize deeper meanings, the effect or light of the particular blessing may be greatly magnified.

In a sense, I can serve as a mirror within which the blessing's light is reflected and effectively doubled, if I am willing to allow that reflection to be seen by others. This is the unselfish acknowledgement of others' contributions often included within acceptance speeches and the introductory pages of many books--which is distinct from advertisements for promotional purposes. It's the difference between "selling" advertising and expressing gratitude only because one wants to do so.

The primary result is that light is increased and viewers are made aware of a resource they might not previously have noticed--which raises awareness of how much humanity is now and always inescapably one vast interconnected family. Many have spoken of "the breakdown of the family." Raising awareness is a way that healing and reconstruction can occur, instead of resigning one's self to a world with a reduced presence of genuine familial relationships.

The focus, however, is not upon how others respond, but rather upon the investments made. The more one understands how much exchange and interconnection is occurring, the less any need to feel as if they are facing challenges all alone. Essentially, it's a matter of remembering and recognizing all of the other members of the team.

In most cases, those whom I encounter seem unaware that any sort of team even

*"The love one invests
is not always returned,
but it is not for that reason
less real."*

– Sister Who

exists. The challenge is therefore not a matter of creating a team, but rather of discovering the ones that already exist. In a similar way, I once advised parents of a child with autism that their child already had ways of expressing thoughts and assigning values, but that it was a language with which they were unfamiliar and needed to learn, if their child's abilities and insights were ever to be shared.

What is conspicuously absent in most cases is interpersonal commitment. When others' response to being a genuinely loving and generous person is to be treated as if one's contribution and one's very existence were optional rather than important, it is difficult to sustain faith in the value of one's own life. In such cases, maintaining any sort of dedication to infusing the world with love and kindness in any way one can, becomes many times more difficult to do and only comes at a much higher personal cost, but the gifts that others receive are often not recognized as having been essentially purchased for a very high price.

The disregard with which such gifts are thus viewed, demonstrates a lack of awareness, depth, and understanding within the recipient, but, conversely, there have been many occasions when I strove to honor a gift by demonstrating such awareness, but was discouraged by dismissive attitudes within the particular donors. I strove to honor their gifts to me, but they were the ones who acted as if what they had given had little value--even though the difference within my life was quite significant and extremely appreciated.

There are consequently more than a few ways that the light of a particular blessing can be dimmed, many of which are facilitated by a lack of understanding or awareness within those involved. It's as if the symbiotic nature of life itself is devalued by being ignored. Living fully and completely means being aware of whatever love is infused within each moment.

Yet even such awareness cannot prevent misfortunes from happening. What must be remembered is that misfortune is opportunity for love to arise and shine brilliantly into otherwise overwhelming darkness--but this will not happen without personal investment. Proactive choice and response are required.

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

Symbiotic Light

Light is always in need of a means by which to shine into otherwise darkened spaces. What remains amazing to me, is that anyone could be such a means. Even the most unqualified persons, as measured by human logic, have often been divinely selected--although many would shrug off the possibility that the Divine is in any way active within their personal lives.

The dynamics within any particular moment may be very subtle, but are not for that reason less pivotal. Even a few words within a precise time and situation, can dramatically alter the outcome. In a similar way, being willing to truly listen when no one else is willing to do so, may open a door of greater opportunity for growth.

Understanding is inescapably a relational phenomenon, requiring both one who speaks and one who listens. Light is likewise a relational phenomenon, requiring both a source and something upon which to shine. Were it not for planetary bodies to reflect its light, the sun would be an isolated star within a vast expanse of blackness.

Sharing light, love, and resources, is thus a way of diminishing isolation. It has been widely recognized that solitary confinement is among the most devastating attacks upon mental health, but few seem to recognize the ways that this has been subtly woven into contemporary societal life. Love strives in the opposite direction, seeking to know, include, integrate, and support even anomalous individuals.

Failing to do so, creates relational darkness that impoverishes any surrounding community and diminishes any metaphorical equivalent of light. The community may stumble onward in one way or another, but the incidence and probability of disempowerment, injuries, and mishaps are radically increased. When the light of every constitutive individual is conversely shared, darkness is virtually eradicated.

Yet as with cycles of night and day, there is no point at which the ongoing exchange can stop, but rather must be continuously maintained--and deeper contemplation will show that there is wisdom in that as well. If I had Godde's perspective, divine love would not be quite such a mystery, but I persist as I can.

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

On a Personal Note

I have finally received notification of the pending arrival of my doctoral degree certificate within the next week or so, which means that a doctoral ceremony will need to follow, probably within the subsequent four weeks. Anyone who wishes to be present during that ceremony is encouraged to contact me as quickly as possible, so that the most effective date and location can be selected. All are welcome and encouraged to take whatever health-related precautions they feel are necessary, while respecting the individual choices of others.

Work on songs for the fifth album is going relatively well, such that approximately a third of the songs for the album are mostly complete.

Innumerable adversarial and uncooperative elements prevented the creation of a winter holiday special, but production of thoughtful seasonal reflections was nonetheless accomplished during late February.

Significant computer repairs were also accomplished during the past month, which will hopefully be evident within related creativity during the rest of this year.

On a more concerning note, Gawain, one of my ESAs (emotional support animal), has been experiencing some minor health problems which may be indicative of more serious dysfunction related to his kidneys. Prayers for his recovery are very much appreciated.

My own health remains at about 80%, due to how poorly insulated for winter temperatures my current residence is, but I persist as I'm able.

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

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