

# SISTER WHO'S PERSPECTIVE

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## Overview

As important as words are, they are never complete if actions remain inconsistent. This month's essays consider a few common words and invite consideration of putting them into greater practice in ways that can ultimately be part of healing a broken and confused world.

## Doing Family

It began so long ago, that I actually don't remember a time when I did *not* pray for family and community. Yet I've also been urging others for a good while, to "stop chasing the categories." In both cases, it is equally essential to have a holistic and grounded sense of being one's self.

If I were not occasionally accompanied by the so-called LGBT+ community, for example, would I still be gay? If I do not regularly attend a religious service, would certain principles and values still define every waking moment? Do I become less of someone from the US during international travel?

A subtle challenge hidden within these and other associations, is not to be hiding from even one's self. Specifically by excessive activity within a particular group, there may not be any time left for personal and spiritual growth. At the same time, as tempting as it would be to live endlessly within a past moment or experience, I rather doubt I could ever opt for stagnation.

Having experienced an unfulfilling alternative, I am nonetheless certain I could never view the word "family" in a lighthearted or casual way. I see far too much potential for deeper meaning and related empowerment to ever do so. What remains baffling are the large numbers of people who wish to toss the word around lightly without ever committing to its additional possibilities.

Metaphorically, it might be comparable to owning a beautiful car and polishing it regularly, but never actually turning its ignition switch or driving it anywhere. Truly *doing* "family" likewise moves one across landscapes and transforms

understandings of self and others in ways that can never be forgotten or reversed. Ideally, such changes are consistently empowering steps of growth and expansive development, that make possible methods and inventions previously quite unimagined by anyone.

I will never forget, for example, driving my pickup truck up a rough mining road to the start of a hiking trail and along the way driving through a shallow stream in a way I would not have attempted with any sedan I've ever owned. It may seem strange, but this is why I consider the truck "family," but do not often speak of this to those who might not understand. Painful and difficult moments shared and jointly faced make us part of each other and of each other's stories in ways that transcend friendship.

If the manifestation of community completely fades publicly, I remain convinced that it will not do so personally. Whether such understandings are seeds hidden from view that will be essential to a particular future development, only time will tell. Specifically because of the possibility that every individual carries such hidden potential, the future is able to hold opportunities for miraculous transformation, waiting to be discovered.

Within the present are nonetheless abundant moments when expressions of love can make an essential difference between whether a particular path bends toward success or failure--any one of which innumerable and even unlikely individuals can bring into being. Choosing to love when it is profoundly inconvenient, may be the clearest indication of that moment's miraculous potential, to those willing to truly be family to everyone therein present. Yet innumerable such moments pass undetected and inadequately utilized.

So from a certain perspective, doing "family" is a matter of giving each one a chance to shine with a personal light the world has thus far never seen. If such opportunity is not extended, it may happen later within a different context, but it will do so without the inclusion of those who chose to refrain from actively being family.

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

## Doing Community

Among the first challenges of community is moving beyond judgmental attitudes related to whom one thinks should or should not be present. To make any such determination, one would have to be wiser than the situation. Since each individual is an untapped and unmeasured package of unknown potential, such knowledge transcends any current human capacity.

Having established the required openness, the next task is establishing truly productive ongoing dialogue--which may include learning each others' personal languages. Reflecting what I learned within German language classes in high school, more than merely learning correct vocabulary and pronunciation, this means understanding how and why a native speaker expresses meaning and organizes mental and emotional relationships.

If language is adequately established, one then moves to symbiotic relationship and helpful routines, so that the needs of each participant are fully satisfied. What this combination then produces will seem both effortless and perhaps even miraculous. Additionally, effects are likely that others will eventually want to emulate.

Yet they may be so challenged by those effects initially, that a bit of time will be required before they see the wisdom within them. This is perhaps one of the reasons that Albert Einstein noted, "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. I don't mean to sound like a snob, because I'm simply trying to be insightful, but I seriously question whether mediocre minds are actually capable of engaging in truly healthy community.

It is consequently everyone's calling and vocation within community to be continually developing one's mind in such empowering directions, rather than lackadaisically choosing only the responses that require the least effort and intelligence. Mediocrity avoids any such exertion or personal investment. One cannot be more than one has ever been while refusing to do things one has never previously done.

This does not, however, involve denying one's limitations or in any way acting in defiance of them. I respect the fact that there are certain things I cannot do, but I never presume that there is only one way to get any particular job done. The existence of the challenge may

actually be a reason and opportunity to employ ingenuity.

A primary but often unstated characteristic of community is that it is a group of people who are continuously growing, specifically due to the new challenges and persons encountered. Whether provided by Godde or the universe, these can be viewed as steps by which to reach a higher level of development. At the core of community is focusing upon not only what each one can do, but additionally considering what is possible specifically by working together.

Narcissistic isolation is obviously pointed in a very opposite direction, which is part of why it consistently can only result in some form of death. What continues to boggle my mind is that so many aggressively pursue that and will not listen to contrary or constructive discussion. The negative outcomes are never unavoidable.

Yet rather than slip into self-condemnation or some form of "I should have known better," one must be willing to forgive one's self for simply not having had sufficient information--often because others refused to provide it or were intentionally or unintentionally dishonest. Virtually everyone whom one will ever meet is engaged in a journey toward ever greater understanding of self, the surrounding world, and even honesty itself. It is both something to forgive and for which to also give thanks, if one is engaged in becoming more than one currently is.

The ultimate effect of true community is that challenges are truly resolved in empowering ways that are impossible within narcissistic isolation. Many appear to find resolution to be so difficult that they instead opt for avoidance that only maintains the particular challenge. The reason that every challenge what was ever resolved was in fact resolved, was that someone refused to stop looking for alternatives until one was actually found and implemented.

A failed attempt doesn't need to be endlessly regretted and mourned. It needs to left behind as one moves toward constructive alternatives it was not able to embrace. Yet it should not be forgotten, because it contains valuable insight and information about what didn't work.

What most distinguishes true community may ultimately be simply the courage to try again to do what was previously considered impossible.

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



## Doing Friendship

The first thing one must understand about true friendship is that it is impossible within contexts that require complete safety. I am continually challenged by Helen Keller's observation that "Security is a fiction and does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men generally experience it. Avoiding danger is ultimately no safer than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."

As much as this does not conversely infer a recommendation to be reckless, it does mean being very stubborn about continuing to try. I cannot truly be anyone's friend, however, if my primary concern is for my own safety. What needs to be applied, is all the wisdom available.

Included within that wisdom is that such collaborative relationships can occur even between the most unlikely combinations. So if commonality is not a basis for true friendship, what is? Among the possibilities I suggest is mutual respect--not only for another's wisdom, perspective, and insight, but also for the other's story, experiences, and struggles.

Empathy of some sort creates opportunity for the development of relationships that would not otherwise exist, that are often symbiotic and empowering when put into actual practice. If, conversely, one's concern is more focused upon extending one's experiences at the expense of all others, it is probable that in relation to survival, competition instead of collaboration is keeping individuals apart. True friendship is unwilling to allow such dynamics to define any potentially empowering relationship.

If one is concerned about nothing beyond one's own survival--which will end at some point anyway--all one truly accomplishes is ensuring that one's life is meaningless. Truly being anyone's friend, radically expands the possibilities. To the extent that one's wisdom and love are not only shared but even invested in others, the effects of one's life may very well echo into eternity long after one is gone.

***"Competition will never be capable of miracles of collaboration."***

– Sister Who

What is even more interesting is that true friendship often does not need to passively wait for opportunities to be "dumped into one's lap," but rather by choosing to love especially when it is inconvenient to do so, creates new places to begin. All that is needed is a person in need--who may not even realize that a need exists, but the fact that one sees the need, may be a sort of divine invitation to be the one who somehow meets that need. Among the framed quotes I have hung on my walls is one by N. R. Hart stating, "And if you cannot find your way out of the darkness, I will sit there with you and show you the stars."

Ultimately, as a person of faith and love, I insist that no adversity should ever be faced alone. A frequently unnoticed blessing upon humanity, is that adversity is so abundant that love has more opportunities than it will ever be able to satisfy. The greatest obstacle to any incidence of friendship is any absence of love.

Being unable to love is consequently a more debilitating mental and emotional illness than any physical malady humanity has ever encountered. Very close to the inability to love is being untruthful, which is why the biblical Jesus held hypocrisy as the worst sin of all. If love and truth are not defining qualities within one's self, anything truly good is unlikely at best.

In the words of Oscar Hammerstein II, "Love isn't put in your heart there to stay. Love isn't love 'till you give it away." A basic truth I find within those words is that love is always relational and cannot tolerate isolation. More directly, love requires relationship.

If any particular method of communication is ever lost, true friendship will not stop until another is found. Far too many seem to presume that current methods will always be available. If only that were true.

A current challenge is thus to use current methods and resources as long as they are available to accomplish the most good one can, and not presume that any relationship or resource is eternal. It may even be that wise use of current resources and relationships will create opportunity for new future ones. Truly doing friendship maximizes such possibilities.

Part of wisdom includes not treating anything as if it were worth less than it actually is.

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

## Doing True Connection

I often remind myself that the ability to create and distribute video recordings will not always be available, so doing all that I can remains very important. Even the ability to apply face-paint and dress in ritual garb, are not abilities I can promise will always be within reach. Ultimately, in doing all the good that I can, I cannot even promise myself that my efforts will always be rewarded with true connection with the heart and mind of another.

Yet more than enough connections have already occurred that I need no convincing that innumerable others are still possible. Yet within every such incidence, love and wisdom can be found. If there is anything to lament, it is that they are never infinite in their dimensions.

An amusing button I once read, stated "I'd love to help, but unfortunately my magic wand is broken." What this erroneously presumes is that what would be most helpful is immediately and complete eradication of any particular need. The opportunity within every need is for creation of empowering relationship--which may be far more valuable than any easy resolution.

When the fairy godmother waved her wand and created a beautiful carriage and gown for Cinderella to go to the ball at the palace and meet the prince, these were simply stage props for a story that was far more valuable than any of the objects it encompassed. The primary concern of that fairy tale was ultimately not the glass slipper, the pumpkin carriage, or even the events described, but rather the evolution of relationships in empowering directions. Without true connection between the hearts and minds of the two protagonists, none of the rest would be even remembered, much less inspirational.

Specifically by pursuing love and truth, each and every person has the ability to become the fairy godmother within the myriad of stories encountered every day. Each of us has the ability to be hands of healing to a broken and confused surrounding world. Being willing to love and be truthful, however, is a daunting task that only a few ever choose to embrace.

Doing true connection can make a miraculous difference, but is ideally an ongoing relationship and not merely a moment or two.

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

## On a Personal Note

Well, I am now a member of one more minority, although I'm uncertain of the percentage of the larger population it is: those who have traveled three thousand miles by motorcycle in a single trip. It was a difficult trip in many respects, but resulted in acquiring the puppy who will be the next service dog. He is clearly very intelligent, but of course that means Dunstan will be difficult to train as well.

Gawain continues to decline and financial resources available for response have mostly been exhausted. My conclusion based upon numerous experiences of the past two years remains that the primary difficult-to-document cause is the high-voltage power lines above my current residence, which have also had terrible effects upon my own neurological system. I have requested relocation for over a year, but been bureaucratically blocked each time a solution became available.

Nonetheless, a number of exceptional songs have been created for a fifth album, but my fingers are not working correctly to make the necessary instrumental recordings at the present time. My hope is that my fingers will significantly improve once a new residence becomes a reality. I've even considered using other musicians, but found none available.

A primary recent focus has been completing a book manuscript in process for more than two decades, telling more of the story of becoming Sister Who. I earnestly hope it will be published in two languages before the end of this year.

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

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Sister Who a.k.a. Rev. Denver NeVaar, PhD  
POB 16074, Golden, CO 80402  
E-Mail: [dn@SisterWho.com](mailto:dn@SisterWho.com)  
Internet-Website: [www.SisterWho.com](http://www.SisterWho.com)

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