

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

It has often been said that the more things change, the more they stay the same. What more often changes is simply our awareness—or lack thereof. Drawing from biblical wisdom attributed to Solomon, the allegedly wisest man who ever lived, one finds the statement that "there is nothing new under the sun;" that what we experience as being new actually has a certain kind of eternal timeless quality to it, waiting to be rediscovered. What is new, therefore, is our personal experience of it.

My hope is that the essays within this month's newsletter will similarly empower your experience of life; to begin to perceive and understand whatever blessings have been present but unnoticed within your life and the ways that such blessings provide opportunities for us to live as family and fellow-travellers within life's diverse and abiding spectrum of wondrous possibilities.

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

The Persistence of Truth

Within various religious and educational contexts of my youth, I often encountered insistence by others that truth is constant, universal, and verifiable. The problem, not surprisingly, was that those who championed "the truth" all had different opinions about what specifically was true. Within that confusing and ongoing public argument, however, I discovered the blessed biblical text of "you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." For me, at least, knowing truth therefore became associated with the experience of freedom.

What became apparent after a while, however, is that there are many available imposters. Knowing truth, consequently, became a matter of learning to distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit and one of the ways I learned to perceive this distinction was to pay attention to whether or not the particular point of truth was genuinely liberating.

An additional consideration that was much later in coming to me, was that truth is contextual and that if I were able to change the context, I could

often change the particular truth that ultimately governed any specific experience of life. As true as it is that there will always be bigots and narrow-minded individuals within the human population, for example, it is equally true that they do not possess the divine qualities of omnipresence or omnipotence and thus there are ways to restrict or move out of their reach.

Additionally, however, I noticed that truth that is truly universal truth, remains constant in spite of any and every shift in weather, seasons, or circumstances—whether or not anyone defended that truth. I noticed, for example, that within every action or event of healing, resolution, or genuine empowerment, was some expression of the essence of love. The conclusion I drew from this, is that whenever I am confused and don't know how to respond to a disturbing circumstance, I can always return to infusing love into the situation in any way I am able and find that things start to get better.

I noticed also that following along within love's shadow, wherever love goes, are faith and hope. There is little that is so effective at restoring one's faith and hope in others and in one's self, as experiencing love. Conversely, there is little that is more wounding to faith and hope than the absence of love—and many local and global evils are born within such absence.

Within any experience of such absence, however, truth stands nearby, like an unnoticed guest at a party, waiting for an appropriate and quiet moment within which its voice can finally be heard. One of the most blessed qualities of truth, therefore, is that it doesn't leave the party, just because it is temporarily (sometimes for a very long interval) being ignored.

Although at times the heart may be filled with worrisome words which must be released before the ability to quietly listen becomes real, the capacities of truth to create experiences of love, wisdom, and beauty are among the enduring tools of life by which the best and most beautiful miracles remain absolutely possible.

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

The Perseverance of Love

There seems to be no shortage of voices recommending endless bliss as being the ideal state of life. Within examining what makes such a state possible, however, I quickly noticed that love in some form or another is fairly essential. I also noticed that maintaining the presence of love within all circumstances of life is sometimes a lot of hard work. The weak and restless, consequently, more often miss out on the blessings that love typically brings. What the seekers of bliss seem to forget, however, is how often a holistic embrace of love requires a willingness to deal with struggle, pain, and difficulty as well.

In deciding to attempt participation in bodybuilding for the first time in my life, so many years ago, I immediately recognized that significant accomplishment would only be possible if I also cultivated self-discipline and maintained the daily practice of physical exercise done in ways designed to build muscles. Specifically because a significant investment of time would be required to make such changes in my body, I chose to begin more than a year before the actual competition—exercising daily, abstaining from certain foods, and strictly maintaining these and other aspects of being "in training."

The amusing but persistent absurdity is that all this time and effort is ultimately given only ninety seconds on stage to be measured. In the words of John Merrick, the so-called "Elephant Man," I sometimes found myself thinking, "I feel like my entire life has been a journey to this moment." The miraculous possibilities any such journey may contain, however, usually tend to be invisible simply because one is standing too close.

All that being considered, certain elements of love and of learning to love were essential (whether or not I realized it at the time). I also needed to both perceive and distinguish between that which was truly and that which was only potentially the true essence of myself. On the surface, my initial motivation to register for participation in the 1990 Gay Games in Vancouver was the opportunity to learn more of what it means to be gay (to be a man who's affectional and emotional predisposition is toward other men rather than toward women) and to do this within a multi-cultural context.

One of the ways in which love was subtly evident, was the inherent invitation within participation within this event, of discovering that I really do belong somewhere within the spectrum of

human experiences; that I am not a mistake of nature; that I am "normal" in my own way, and that any and all good things God has hidden within me deserve to be let out. An amazing consideration within such an effort is how long love had to wait before such an opportunity finally arrived. When the moment did arrive, however, it was up to me to do it. Without my choice and decision to act, nothing would have happened and the ongoing creative and spiritual work of Sister Who would never have even begun—a work that thus far has encompassed more than twenty years of time, over two hundred television shows, fifteen mountain ascents, thousands of conversations, hundreds of photographs, three albums of original songs, and nearly a hundred and fifty newsletters. My point, however, is not my own accomplishment, but rather how amazing it is—even to me—how vast and far-reaching the work has become. It is a great honor, to have served such a work.

Yet without love, this would be impossible.

Nonetheless, the perseverance of love does not mean there won't be problems with neighbors, machines that fail to operate correctly, weather that interferes with my plans, financial oppression, and emotionally and psychologically broken people with contrasting agendas. Love simply offers itself as one of the ways that such challenges can be resolved, that also leaves our souls with increased ability to truly live.

In the same way that life might occasionally throw any person into the mud and provide a choice between being spiritually and emotionally larger than the moment or spiritually and emotionally small enough to fit completely within that particular moment (and thereby be victimized by it), even the most developed persons may occasionally forget who they truly are and act with a smallness that is completely out-of-character.

Similarly, those who experience such uncommendable behavior from others may forget to respond with wisdom and love; they may instead be imprisoned by momentary limited perceptions. The ability to respond in a loving, wise, and empowering manner can not exist without the ability to respond in a short-sighted, apathetic, and oppressive manner. What the two possible responses have in common is our ability to choose how we will respond. Sometimes, it is only by my own stubborn perseverance, that the adversary of wrong choices is defeated and that love again—through struggle—prevails.

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

The Maintenance of Communication

It is common to hear people speak of winning arguments, but this is as much of an oxymoron as any notion of winning a war. As much as I must insist upon the ability to have an argument and thus also the possibility of war, wisdom offers much more constructive alternatives to anyone who is ready, willing, and able to listen.

The truth which must be noted, therefore, is that no one wins an argument, wins a war, or wins any other sort of competitive inter-relational conflict. The only time winning occurs within such circumstances is when we all win together.

When the artist is doing whatever he or she truly loves and the engineer is doing whatever he or she truly loves and the farmer is doing whatever he or she loves (and so on), that experience of love creates communication and connection with the transcendent Source of love and wisdom and simultaneously provides the ability for positive connection and contribution to everything else.

An important consideration, however, is whether or to what extent one is doing what one loves in a way that is truly loving. Genuine love is relational rather than narcissistic, is not merely self-serving, and is always bigger than ourselves.

The bridge upon which this inter-relationship with everyone and everything around us depends, is communication. As stated within the biblical text of Proverbs, "better is open rebuke than love that is concealed." Because of countless distractions, frequent reminders of love—of genuine love, not just mindless repetitions of certain words—are essential to healthy relationships.

Keeping the love genuine and the communication meaningful, however, requires more or less constant vigilance. Just as politicians virtually never behave unless they are closely supervised, our own thoughts, feelings, words, and actions need to be closely supervised as well. Similarly, I use a mirror every day to shave my face, brush my hair, and tend to my outward appearance. Without such a resource, it is unlikely I would look my best anymore, after even

as little as one or two days. Habits of personal hygiene are easily among the most obvious and constant reminders of the daily need to tend not only to our own spirits but to the spirits of those around us as well. We may not have all the answers, but hopefully we can nevertheless contribute to constructive ongoing dialogue. More concisely, answers are not essential; ongoing dialogue, however, is essential.

To use a different metaphor, whenever something cuts through our skin and we begin to bleed, the blood of our bodies is equipped to begin clotting around the cut, to discourage the loss of blood. If a blood clot occurs somewhere else within the body without any corresponding injury, however, something begins to die. Similarly, communication is the blood that flows through our relationships, collecting waste, redistributing resources, and so forth. When communication ceases to happen, something begins to die.

Sadly, there are times within each person's life when certain things must also be allowed to die. The choice of another to suspend particular conversations with one's self, for example, leaves no option but to release that person and that relationship to the hands of God and carry on with life as well as one can. The maintenance of communication, after all, is as much concerned with honesty and integrity in communicating with one's self and with God as it is with honesty and integrity in communicating with others. Refusing to discuss a prominent issue or concern, is ultimately a form of attempting to devalue that issue or concern right into invisibility and non-existence—to deny the very energy of life itself. From a different perspective, psychologically or emotionally denying someone the energy of life could be figuratively equated with the dynamics of murder.

Perhaps it is specifically because we seldom look at apathy or disregard from such a perspective, that we consider to be far less of a problem than it generally turns out to be. Expressing apathy may initially be so devoid of blood or violence that we consider it to be a very trivial matter. When we consider the long-term effects of an apathetic world, however, the implications are positively frightening.

The long-term effects of maintaining communication and love, conversely, may give some the impression that the manifestation of heaven here on earth is completely possible.

I am one such person. Are you?

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

*"The specific pursuit of power
is adversarial to the growth
of love, wisdom, and beauty."*

-- Sister Who

The Enduring Presence of Relationship

Among the many ways to name the magic of life is that it is forever filled with paradoxes; the recognition that things which burden us, also bless us within each moment of our life journeys. Among those, of course, are our relationships. The uncle who is an alcoholic part of the time, for example, may be the one with the knowledge to repair our vehicle during a different time. If we exclude him for his alcoholism, he will not be available to help us in our time of need—and vice versa. If he excludes me because of some personal quality of which he does not approve, my contribution will similarly be unavailable to him; by burning a bridge between us, he will have cost himself a valuable future resource.

That we are surrounded by interdependent relationships is undeniable. That we also limit ourselves in various ways and to varying degrees by the choices to relate or to avoid relating, is quite typical. Clearly something needs to change, but intentionally and deliberately attempting to change another person to suit one's one preference is nearly always disastrous. Individual examples of humanity simply do not have either the wisdom or the perspective to "play God" with each others' lives. We may be each others' teachers, but we are definitely not anyone else's final authority nor does God consult any particular minister's opinion in deciding who is or is not allowed into heaven when earthly life finally ends.

If we allow our relationships to teach us, however, our internal resources and potential can grow more wonderful with each passing day—specifically because of the blessing within the burden that has been with us every step of the way. When we finally learn how to be present to and with our relationships in all the ways that are both available and allowed, when we finally learn what it is to be fully present to our inextricably relational selves, and when we finally learn that the creative works that are our individual lives are like jigsaw puzzles with no limiting edge pieces. Perhaps then we will also finally begin to realize that the source of our anger and frustration is not within the object in front of us, but rather within our own longing to more fully understand the multi-dimensional realities of collaboration, of symbiosis, of inter-relational being, and of going beyond what we presently consider to be our limitations.

We are not alone and this too can be good.

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

On a Personal Note

Among the accomplishments of the past month is completion of the meditation labyrinth within the cathedral/sacred circle in the backyard. A new friend helped with the placement of 844 bricks to mark four interwoven paths from four directional gates (north, east, south, and west) to the center where the fire pit is located. Afterward, he noted that the number of bricks numerologically reduces to the number seven ($8+4+4=16$, $1+6=7$), which is frequently associated with spiritual transformation (very appropriate for a meditation labyrinth within an atypical cathedral). Along the way, incidentally, I moved over ten-thousand pounds of fine gray gravel, one five-gallon bucket at a time. A photo of the labyrinth can be seen at www.GodSpaceSanctuary.org/cathedral.html.

Production of yet more episodes of "Sister Who Presents" last Tuesday, however, was far more frustrating. The plan was to record six more episodes, but not a single episode was accomplished due to problems with set and lighting equipment. I am working to resolve challenges in ways that prevent the recurrence of the problems, but limited financial resources have made this quite difficult. Hopefully all of this will be resolved within the next seven to ten days.

With regard to my doctoral writing, I have now finished the third (of six) pre-dissertation papers, which is entitled "The Development of Global Mutual Respect." Please feel free to let me know, if you would like me to send you a copy of this document. In seeking a positive re-alignment of my relationship to Walden University, however, I must once again find an effective faculty mentor to oversee the remainder of my doctoral program. All prayers for finding the best match for me and my doctoral program are very much appreciated.

Once again, as phrased by an unknown author within a poster I saw many years ago, "The race is not necessarily to the swift, but rather to the one who keeps on running."

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

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