

# sister who's perspective

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## Overview

Life is persistently a falling row of dominoes, as one thing inspires or provokes actions or changes within another and the end result is far greater than any single piece is ever able to see. There is a common tendency within humanity to reach for plateaus, perhaps because of how exhausting upward climbs can be, but that which ultimately makes us who we are, is not the plateaus, but the upward steps.

So also may these words be helpful.

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

## Until the Length is Run

Whether running, walking, strolling, skating, skiing, hiking, skipping, limping, or plodding and regardless of whether the path is a race course, a hiking trail, a dirt road, a cow path, a meandering riverbank, a sidewalk, or the shoulder of a four-lane highway, what is most important is that one keeps going. I recall a poster I saw many years ago that displayed the caption, "The race is not to the swift, but rather to the one who keeps on running." A similar sentiment is expressed by the notation that the one thing all winners have in common, is that they never gave up and quit.

The first major engagement with this idea that I personally had, was when I decided the summer of my fifteenth birthday to visit a friend in a town sixty miles away, using only my bicycle to get there. I generally rode my bicycle between five and ten miles each day to get wherever I needed to go anyway, so the only thing that was significantly different about this trip, was the overall scale and size of it.

I quickly discovered that even the idea of bicycling sixty miles was impossible to comprehend. Riding from where I stood to the top of the next hill, however, was absolutely manageable. Some people would consider this to be an example of "living one day at a

time," but this expression seems too vague and unfocused to me. The challenge of traveling to the next bend in the road, however, was something I had no doubt I could do--as well as choosing to continue the journey whenever I got there.

No road, path, trail, or course is infinite in length. The more of it one puts behind, the less of it there is still ahead to do. Additionally, the content, components, and companions of each mile of travel are specifically defined and limited also; they are not infinite in number or capabilities. As I respond to each in the ways that my own resources and abilities allow, the challenges each presents are resolved.

In all such cases, when one is uncertain of what to do, the primary task remains that of continuing until the destination is reached. An important consideration, however, is that one's intended destination may change many times as one traverses the journey, specifically because new information shifts the level of personal motivation to reach that destination.

At some times I've had to accept the loss of dreams due to adversity, but at others I am surprised that my dream has changed; that I am no longer drawn to the things which previously gave enthusiasm to each step. In either case, it is not my particular emotion or attitude that matters, but rather the essential question is whether and/or how I continue.

Specifically because I am so close to the current particular moment of my path, I often have little understanding of how the various pieces of the journey (in a sense) hold hands with one another--drawing ability, strength and resources from each other, without which completion of the journey would be impossible.

Specifically because I am currently experiencing life as human, however, I must also retain awareness of my limitations and smallness and allow Life itself to suggest even greater possibilities than I've thus far imagined.

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

## Until the Chance is Won

It has occasionally been asked, "how many second chances do you want?" to which one could respond either "as many as I can get" or "as many as I need," but both refer to an infinite amount, because at the time of questioning one does not know how many will be needed before a satisfactory degree of success is accomplished.

What is at stake within this discussion, however, is the notion that chances are earned rather than given. If one is given a chance one did not earn, it is generally difficult to regard it seriously and in some cases it winds up being altogether ignored. Conversely, if one is denied a chance one has nonetheless earned, resentment is the logical and legitimate (but probably ineffective) emotional reaction.

My being awarded a silver medal in an amateur bodybuilding competition in Montreal in 2006 only occurred after eighteen months of exercising two to three hours per day, six days per week. Additionally, it was necessary for me to purchase travel and accommodations in order to be physically present within the event at all. Making one's self available is one important consideration, but relevant and appropriate preparation is another, which could be interpreted as earning any particular opportunity. Unfortunately, not everyone who was available and prepared, was rewarded.

Speaking of a chance having been won, therefore, suggests the inescapable reality of a competition, the outcome of which lies in the hands of something or someone beyond one's own control. Among the difficult realities of cumulative and collective human experience, are that some efforts are noticed and rewarded, some noticed but dismissed, and others not even noticed at all.

The words which have been persistently offered to those experiencing the second and third categories, are frequently something such as "Better to have tried and failed than to have not tried at all" or perhaps "The Divine notices the good you have done, even when no one else does" (which suggests a heavenly reward when an earthly one is absent). A variant I have offered to myself and others involved in some sort of creativity, is that, within a larger

view of human experience, the audience for which one creates may be a future generation rather than the immediately present one.

The point of such words is that the particular creative or ministerial contribution is not without value, even if it seems to be initially without positive effect--which is supposed to be encouraging and sometimes is, but not always.

The additional consideration I am now attempting to weave into this complex ongoing discussion, is the desirability of ever greater awareness of life's unfolding while we wait for the determination to be made, of whose preparation and availability will be rewarded and whose will be dismissed or ignored. If I have anything to say about it, my wish is that everyone's efforts and presence be rewarded--or perhaps more directly: that they be loved.

If we fill the time between then and now with increasing our abilities to love, we become co-creators of an ever-better tomorrow as it transforms itself into today. As co-creators, we specifically shift from being only objects that are affected by life, to being occasionally those by whom life is affected. It is unwise, however, to be exclusively one or the other.

Sometimes life is wiser than I am and brings to me better possibilities than I ever imagined. At other times, life waits for me to make choices that decide which of multiple possibilities will blossom into shared human experience. It has been said, however, that "life is not a destination but rather a journey," and this recommends that our focus remain upon the creative development instead of upon the outcome. I cannot say for certain what my efforts will produce, but I can be reasonably certain what will be missing if I do not even try.

From one perspective, the existence of life is the existence of every possibility that life can ever include. Within particular contexts, however, the range of possibilities is rendered much more limited by the resources which are immediately available. What many overlook is that we ourselves are an extremely significant part of those available resources.

All that we are able to communicate, do, or become can serve and constructively alter the unfolding of that moment of life.

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

## Until the Dream is Spun

I wonder how much longer humanity will generally understand the metaphors of spinning and weaving, since these activities are most often found within pre-industrial contexts. Within the long process of having the fur from my Old English Sheepdog, Gareth, spun into yarn, I learned just a tiny bit of how complex and involved the process is; that it is at least as complex and involved as holistically and comprehensively creating a dream of a new artistic work, innovation, or endeavor.

Any particular step within the overall process seems simple enough at a glance, but becomes much more complicated when one begins asking what distinguishes doing the particular task well from doing it poorly. As tedious as certain steps are, they must be done well, because every step that follows will reflect the quality previously invested. A house with a poor foundation, for example, will be forever plagued by problems of shifting and settling as environmental conditions fluctuate.

It is not terribly difficult to envision a dream. Where the challenge gets much more complicated, is in trying to envision a truly good one. Innumerable relationships must be taken into consideration and dynamics of effective collaboration must be both discovered and implemented. It's long been said that "the essence of writing is rewriting," referring to long process of mentally and emotionally measuring the choice of each particular word and phrase--considering whether a different word or an alternative phrasing would more effectively communicate the inner vision, intention, and experience of the author.

In a similar way, spinning a dream is very much a process of skillful handling and manipulation of the fibers of which the dream is composed, for as long as those fibers need, to become the finished dream. It is also imperative that the spinner recognize what is missing and consequently needs to be added to the particular blend, since no dream is

entirely composed of only a single kind of fiber.

So until the dream is spun, I notice that I am also discovering and learning about new and different fibers of which I was previously unaware. From time to time, more experienced spinners may call out, "Try adding some..." As many times as I've read and even said that diversity is what makes us stronger, I was impressed to discover that this is true of natural yarns also. Each type of fiber brings a unique kind of strength, such that the finished yarn will be a combination of the strengths of all of them, in ways that minimize or perhaps even cancel out their weaknesses.

Within the journey of spinning is thus also the task of weaving together diverse kinds of strength, to compensate for diverse kinds of weakness. If we were to simply eliminate all of the weaknesses, there would be nothing left from which to draw diverse kinds of strength, specifically because each piece contains both.

It is within the discovery of both, that complementarity rises into view. Within my first lifepartner relationship, he was the cook and I was the decorator / organizer: together, we each had twice as much. In respecting that plants put oxygen into the air while humans breathe carbon dioxide, many offices and congested work spaces now include plants.

Scientifically, the relationship of each providing what the other needs, is described as symbiotic and I continue to be impressed by more and more discoveries of how I have been unknowingly surrounded by such relationships throughout my life. It seems reasonable that such relationships exist on psychological, emotional, and social levels as well, in varying degrees of effectiveness. In the same way that tending to the needs of live plants within office work spaces provides us with more oxygen to breathe and consequently healthier bodies and clear-thinking minds, tending to components that support psychological, emotional, and social health are essential to the weaving of a beautiful dream also.

Like Newton's apple teaching about gravity, however, the individual experience must be woven and spun into the collective understanding in order to manifest the dream.

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

*"If I run from the questions,  
I will never find the answers."*

-- Sister Who

## Until the Job is Done

I've been told that I'm remarkably dedicated to tasks, which may be partially due to my autism, but I also came to the conclusion early in life that leaving a work unfinished was a form of failure. Within the world around us, it seems far too many jobs left unfinished, could explain many societal problems.

In applying this to the unique creative work of my own life, I am often challenged within difficult seasons by the question of whether or not this unique ministerial work is finished. "Have I done everything You wanted me to do?" I pray, listening for a response.

In some cases, the answer rises into view slowly, in the form of resources either being provided or taken away. If the latter, then I watch for new work to do in other places, to which I aspire to be as committed as to anything accomplished thus far.

In other cases, however, I am left with only my question and a lingering silence--sometimes so long that I wrestle with doubt, wondering if I made a mistake. Yet from that wrestling, new insights emerge and I grow in unexpected ways and directions.

The first thing that all such growth makes clear, is that the work is not done; that there is still much more to do, but that it may be quite different from whatever work I have done in the past, perhaps because the world around me is changing too.

The first (and perhaps longest) part of entering a new world of work, is taking inventory of what and who is there and, perhaps consequently, what my abilities and limitations within that context are. When I first donned my ritual garb and offered myself in service to the world around me, in spite of all of my best efforts, more than a year passed before the reality of my calling and service became clear to me. To Godde, it was less than the blink of an eye; to me, it was an eternity of intense soul-searching.

Such seasons have returned twice since those early days and they are no easier to endure than at the first, but at least now I know better than to presume that nothing will follow.

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

## On a Personal Note

In some ways, I feel like I'm working on putting down roots in a new place, if also a place in which I never expected to be. There is so much to do here that there is a constant danger of feeling overwhelmed, but I am being as industrious as I'm able and hoping that the Divine will make up the difference. Financial resources have been mostly exhausted so I must now devise some sort of balance for surviving on a small monthly disability check while squeezing out as much as possible for innumerable home repairs (including essential electrical upgrades)--praying that adequate progress will be made before winter returns to this mountainous and mostly rural area.

The dogs and I will hopefully resume a daily jogging routine soon, but they seem nonetheless quite happy as long as they can be with me--so I guess one could say that with all of the major upheavals of the past eight months, I was blessed with the ability to keep my family together. Let's hope this continues.

The house we now occupy does have a first floor apartment (We live in the second and third floors, the latter of which is three small rooms), but extensive renovation is necessary before the space will be legitimately and ethically rentable. An old weather-beaten shed in the backyard will be removed to allow for reconstruction of the cathedral and meditation labyrinth. The largest room on the second floor is slowly being prepared for video production.

In spite of struggles, the work will go on.

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

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