

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

All too often, passion is interpreted exclusively in relationship to physical intimacy—perhaps because that is one of the few areas of life within which some people are willing to holistically involve themselves. Within virtually every other area, there is a certain reticence; a hesitation discouraging full, open, and honest participation.

With the dawn of each new day, however, we are again invited to throw off the bowlines and set sail toward greater horizons. Perhaps like Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, the first senior officer of the U.S. Navy, it is time for us to declare, "Damn the torpedoes...full speed!" Specifically because he was willing to accept a great risk, he accomplished a great victory. Perhaps we will be as fortunate, if we give life—and ourselves—the chance it needs when the opportunity arises.

I hope these words will thus empower you.

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

Passion for Stewardship

Although a seldom-used word, stewardship is a timeless concept most rooted in proactive awareness of resources and abilities. More directly, what do I have and what's the best that can be done with it? To do less, in some sense, is to fail in serving that potential—whether the resource is an opportunity, a material resource, ourselves, or someone whom I know or meet on the street. To do less than our best is also (in some way or another) to fail both ourselves and God.

Conversely, to have a passion for stewardship—for making the most of every opportunity, conversation, or resource; not obsessively but enthusiastically—creates numerous possibilities for greater and more wonderful experiences of life, both for one's self and for everyone else around. Few resources within educational settings are as valuable as a teacher with enthusiasm for the subject being presented. People with passionate enthusiasm for whatever projects they've been given to do, do not have to be

commanded to get to work (more likely, it will be necessary to get out of their way in order to avoid being trampled). People who genuinely want to do something, generally do not have to be pressured or given a deadline.

Legitimate pride resulting from a passion for stewardship is not concerned with how much was paid, but rather with how little—how such a small amount was empowered to do much more than anyone imagined it could do. The value of the accomplishment is not truly within the scarcity, the demand, or the popularity of the particular resource, but rather within the ingenuity with which the resource was utilized.

Once again, therefore, what makes something valuable is nothing found within the object itself, but rather what can be found within us. Our ability to imagine, to learn, and to attempt great things is perhaps the greatest magic we possess. We are the ones who assign meaning, who perceive potential, and who can ultimately create success.

From a theological perspective, this may be a primary element within the notion that we are created in the image of God—the embodiment of unconditional love and transcendent wisdom, Who is also the greatest creator of realities, possibilities, and events.

Whether God manifests as spiritual person, scientific principle, or Great Mystery, I can demonstrate godliness by engaging in wise and loving creativity. Within even the smallest and apparently most insignificant moments, a divine spark could shine out through my eyes, my voice, and my hands, making the essential positive difference in my own or another's life.

The passion for stewardship of the resource of each other, therefore, is the challenge of recognizing the treasures within each other and bringing those treasures into the light where everyone (including the person who contributed them) can see them, enjoy them, and be empowered by them. Consequently—working together—everything becomes beautiful.

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

Passion for Learning

Though of unknown authorship, the phrase "the more we know, the more we know how much we don't know" is well known. It is important to note that at (many) other times within human history, a certain confidence prevailed that dismissed awareness of not knowing all of the answers. From another perspective, one might say that people had lost their passion for learning, their curiosity, and their fascination with mystery.

One could even say they'd lost faith.

The line between being a person of faith and being a person interested in learning is very thin indeed. The beginning of faith is the imagination, the speculation, or even just the suggestion that something exists beyond the limits of human knowledge. Initially, the something of which one has become at least a tiny bit aware, is undefinable, mysterious, and consequently incomprehensible. In regard to the most profound discoveries or objects of faith, no matter how much we learn and how many times we sit in silent amazement and awe of the additional piece that has been revealed, there is still more.

I do not reach for that "something more" because I am greedy, because I want to possess it, or because it is the goal and destination of my spiritual or intellectual journey, but rather because the action of doing so is a way of being more fully alive and more fully in relationship to all that is. Consequently, one could say that a passion for learning is a passion for living—to the extent, however, that learning remains the activity and not the idol or the object of my devotion.

I do not pursue learning for learning's own sake, but rather for the relationships that this activity can create. A letter from a friend is not the thing that I love, but rather is a communication from a person whom I love. A sacred text must not become an idol, but rather must remain a tool that testifies to an even more complex, multi-dimensional, and living spiritual reality worthy of greatest devotion and service.

A characteristic of most passions, is that they resist being limited or "put into a box." Consequently, a mystic who has a passion for God may resist the theological boxes created by dogmatic adherence to doctrines or rules. A musical composer may resist the limitations of societally established rules. A mechanical engineer may feel compelled to defy the word "impossible." A scientist may strive for years

against the word, "unknowable." All of these efforts provide an ever-expanding universe within which the rest of us can more fully live.

If we oppose one another's contributions—artistic, ideological, mechanical, or whatever—we limit the world within which our own lives will unfold. If this had been the common practice throughout human history, none of the mechanical or technological tools would exist, which are now common and perhaps even taken for granted. Needless to say, many more of us would be struggling for survival instead of enjoying various other kinds of activity.

If, on the other hand, we blindly accept those contributions without placing upon them any intelligent scrutiny or accountability, we encourage shoddy workmanship and mediocre levels of excellence. As much as discouragement is to be avoided, the dishonesty of patronizing affirmation is equally deplorable. A better goal is the attainment of excellence through collaboration.

Passion for learning, therefore, is generally not something that can be done in isolation, but rather invites communal relationships that are honest, characterized by mutual interest, and empowered by mutual respect. I would not be who, what, and where I am without the contributions of hundreds (if not thousands) of others. The same could be said of everyone.

It seems like this should be obvious, because of how common learning is within daily life. Do you disagree? Try to get through a single day without (mentally or verbally) asking or answering a single question. Every question targets the acquisition of new information (e.g. learning). Every acquisition of new information automatically creates change, making it impossible for us to truly return to being one who did not know that particular piece of information. Once I have learned, however, I can never truly return to being one who does not know.

An important distinction at this point is the difference between knowing and remembering. There are a great many things that I have for whatever reason forgotten, only to find them jumping back into my awareness abruptly within specific contexts (which indicates a persistence of knowledge, even in the presence of forgetfulness).

Within the passion for learning, therefore, perhaps there should also be a passion for learning how to remember.

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

Passion for Growing

Why some are given lives of frequent struggle while others are given lives of frequent leisure, I can only speculate. One of the greatest saving graces from the negative consequences of either experience, however, is that we are not in any way required to be nothing more than merely the sum of our past experiences. More directly, our past experiences do not have the power to ultimately determine how we can respond within future incidents.

Central to a passion for growing is a regularly occurring interest in letting go of stuff that no longer serves any constructive or essential purpose. Just as (from time to time) the snake peels out of its skin, the lobster splits its shell, and my dogs leave their winter fur all over the house and yard; letting go is as essential to growth and ongoing life as is acquiring new understandings, stronger muscles, and nutritious food. Refusing to let go of anything at all would soon have me dragging such a pile of worn-out stuff behind me that all forward movement would come to a halt.

Refusing to grow, ultimately, is synonymous with choosing to be paralyzed, enslaved, and dead. Choosing to grow or to have a passion for growing, is a central element of being alive—of being more than a mere mechanical robot, going through the motions without any genuine spirit or consciousness motivating, directing, and encouraging dreams to come true. To the extent that sacred texts, cinematic creations, or even just the compassionate touch of another person empowers that growth, we become part of a vast web of life stretching through Time and beyond the farthest horizons we can see.

Having a passion for growing is also another form of having a passion for stewardship, because passionately growing is an activity that maximizes the resource of the human life we have each been given to live. Growing may in fact be

*"In being fair and acting justly
toward each other,
we can show ourselves
to be better than
mere cause and effect."*

-- Sister Who

the greatest way of expressing gratitude for the gift of life itself. In much the same way that I honor the gift of a beautiful sweater by wearing it (especially within times and places within which the giver will see me wearing the sweater), growing through each experience of life brings honor to all persons concerned. Viewing life's experiences as adversarial rather than potentially constructive, conversely, denies me whatever empowerment would otherwise be available to me. I am reminded again of a quote attributed to Corrie Ten Boom, which, if I remember correctly, basically expressed, "I try to hold things loosely because it hurts when God has to pry my fingers open."

Central to the challenge of growing is the character virtue of adaptability, which can also be widely seen within the persistence of life within nature: the coyotes and raccoons finding new urban sources of food when their natural habitats are destroyed, the dandelion squeezing itself through a crack in the sidewalk to reach the sunlight and rain occasionally available above, and the river carving a new course when a mud-slide or volcanic eruption dumps too much debris in its former path. None of these are content to give up on living; all of them must accept significant change in order to continue. We too have the abilities to adapt, to change, and to grow.

A passion for growth may pause momentarily (if necessary) to mourn a particular loss, but it wastes no more time than necessary to embrace whatever transition or reconstruction is essential to continuing. As much as the biblical psalmist lamented misfortune, allowing any of these to prevent the composition of psalms of praise and jubilation would have reduced life to a shadow, rather than empowering it to rise up again and bloom even more brilliantly.

A passion for growth is ultimately not a question of being strong enough to overcome adversity, but rather of being aware or in relationship with the explosive power of the sun that every living spirit contains. As easy as it is to say that all we have to do is let it out, daily life is the process by which we can learn what that means and how it looks in actual practice.

There are many ways to describe what growing is and how to do it—all of which may be partly right but never a complete answer—but what is ultimately most important is to embrace that process, in whatever ways we can.

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

Passion for Living

Having grown up within a world that revolved around work, I do have a certain understanding of why vacations and entertainments would seem attractive, but I remain a bit baffled at the prevalence of people needing to be entertained. Considering the excessive levels to which this need for entertainment has apparently risen, I have to ask, is there some awareness from which we are fleeing?

Addictions of any sort are generally ways in which consciousness seeks a refuge from something with which it feels unable to cope. Anything—television, narcotic drugs, alcoholic beverages, work, social interaction—can be done obsessively in order to create complete distraction from some question, characteristic, or circumstance with which one feels otherwise unable to cope.

All of this prompted my question to a class within my masters degree program which focused upon addictions, of whether teaching people better coping skills would eliminate many addictions before they even had a chance to start. Apparently this is an approach that has not often been considered, since silence was the only answer I received that day.

What must be remembered is that in removing awareness of certain challenges, addictions also remove the ability to live life fully, exuberantly, and triumphantly. This does not mean, however, that all such persons will be millionaires, famous, envied, or admired. In some cases, it is simply that at the end of the day, I can look at myself in the mirror, consider everything that happened that day, and conclude that it's absolutely okay; that today was a good day.

What is most at the heart of living life passionately, is complete involvement and awareness in whatever is in fact happening. Within a sports game, far too many strive for safety and security by watching life from the sidelines and never getting involved. All too soon they find the game is over and they never even got to play.

When we bring all that we have and are to the moment within which we find ourselves to be, infusing as much love and wisdom as we possibly can, what happens is as much spiritual as it is physical or material. It could even be considered an act of worshipping what is truly divine.

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

On a Personal Note

As usual, life during the past four weeks has been a peculiar and frequently perplexing mix.

Celebrations of the past month include the recording of material for seven more episodes of "Sister Who Presents," the completion of the first third of the next doctoral paper, and a reconfiguration of my relationship with Walden University that allows for much more effective collaboration with a most exceptional professor.

Challenges (which were mostly overcome) included bureaucratic screw-ups in the financial aid office of the university, adversarial professorial personalities, and numerous interactions with dishonest persons.

Wondrous blessings included a new hardtop and trailer hitch for my Geo Tracker, significant but unexpected financial assistance from a "guardian angel," and encouraging developments with a particular friend who has remarkable potential to become a lifepartner.

A challenge associated with having recorded material for seven more episodes, of course, is that there is a considerable amount of video editing which must now be done. The dialogues which were recorded were nonetheless quite inspiring even to me while we were recording them, so I look forward to sharing them with others within the relatively near future.

Of increasing importance during the coming months, will be preparations for celebrating twenty years of doing this unconventional ministry. (Has it really been that long already?) Although I was initially considering a visit to the place of original manifestation in Paris, France, attempts to collaborate with locals there were unfortunately unsuccessful. As an alternative, I am currently seeking a collaborator willing to facilitate a live call-in show on public access cable television here in the Denver-metro area. Your prayers and positive thoughts are of course very much appreciated.

The 2011 calendar is also now available.

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

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