

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

There are at least two sides to most things in life and throughout the universe and it is considering the opposites and the contrasts that a better understanding of the wholeness of each action or thing is often accomplished. Within my theatrical training in New York City so many years ago, I was taught that within the ancient Greek tragic plays, the qualities which made heroes of specific individuals were generally the same qualities which when exaggerated became the means of their demise.

If we have perhaps unconsciously developed any sort of tunnel vision which prevents us from seeing where a true center is, then it is time to address that blindness and move toward wholeness once again. Hopefully the thoughts and ideas included within this month's newsletter will help you to do precisely that, finding once again your true spiritual center from which to live.

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

Taking and Never Giving

This is a difficult topic to address for three reasons.

First, there are times when the incidence of taking and never giving is a matter of perception. One may observe another (for whatever reason) only within those times and situations in which the particular person is only receiving from others and not giving anything back. The person may be giving quite generously within other contexts, specifically because of the empowerment that results from what they have received. The person who gives, however, may be located within one social context, while the person to whom they have given may be giving to others within a distinctly different social context.

In a sense, if one was aware of the entire chain of transferred generosity, the overall picture would begin to look like a relay race in which a baton or other object is passed from one person to the next, each person running only a segment of the

entire distance between the starting line and the finish line. The only one who does not give the baton to someone else, therefore, is the one who crosses the finish line--although even that person will surrender the baton to the one who maintains and stores the equipment until it is time for such a race to be run again.

The second reason this topic is difficult to address is that the giving and receiving may occur within very different mediums, such as the person who gives money for a ticket and receives an experience of a musical concert. If awareness is not given to the empowering effect of the experience upon one's life, the exchange will possibly feel unequal and perhaps even a bit victimizing, as if someone has wrongly taken advantage of the giver, momentarily forgetting the empowerment of the experience.

The third reason this topic is difficult to address is that there are times when the incidence of taking and never giving is very real and true, leaving us with the choice of whether to proactively address a problematic relational dynamic or whether to overlook the failing, considering it less important in comparison to other pressing concerns. Confronting one's self or someone else about such short-comings is uncomfortable, difficult to do at all, and saturated with various forms of risk. Failing to do so after the problem is discovered, however, only allows the problem to grow.

To address such a problem with wisdom and love requires humility, compassion, a certain assertiveness, a measure of awareness, and a commitment to ongoing mutually empowering relationship. If we consider ourselves to be the servants (rather than the masters) of each others' spiritual and personal development, many of these challenges become more manageable. In allowing ourselves to give, the blessings we have received can go further through time and into the world, than we ourselves will ever be able to go--so pass the baton, whenever you can.

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

Giving and Never Receiving

There are three aspects of this challenging topic of discussion worthy of careful consideration.

The first is that person who is giving without allowing any awareness of whether his or her own resources are running low, such as the persons who are so concerned with giving food to the hungry that they fail to notice that they have given away their own meal and thereafter begin to starve; or the persons who attempt to save drowning persons and become so enmeshed in the panic-stricken struggle that they drown also.

The second aspect is the person who gives continuously, whom others begin to expect will always give continuously, without any concern for maintaining the person's ability to give continuously. We may want a particular theater or shopping mall to always be available, for example, because of the enjoyable experiences we've had there. If, however, an insufficient number of customers or patrons surrender their financial resources to the particular business, either by buying tickets or by making donations, the business will close. Similarly, if a church or retreat center is unable to pay its electric bill, building maintenance, and so forth, it will at some point no longer be available. Even an individual person, if inadequately supported, may experience a premature demise.

Does this justify hoarding? Not at all. Our security cannot rest with how much we own or possess because Time marches on and there is no volume of resources that is guaranteed to be adequate. Any number of adversarial circumstances may deplete resources previously presumed to be adequate.

Our greatest and most renewable resource, is each other. Quite often it is not what we have individually but rather what we have collectively that allows us to survive and perhaps even thrive. At other times, it is not what we have collectively at this moment, but what a particular and sometimes objectionable individual within our ranks may have, which can be contributed to the group in some way and result in a previously impossible resolution and conclusion to a crisis. One could even wonder at times, why it is that God continues to place necessary resources within individuals we would consider to be unworthy vessels of divine blessing--but it is entirely possible that this is precisely the judgement which others have occasionally made of us.

If I have been labeled an unworthy vessel by someone else's judgement, I can still give whatever blessings God has empowered me to give, but I may not receive from others the blessings which I need to survive. Should I therefore cease from giving so much? That would be a contradiction of some (if not all) of the reasons God created specifically me within this specific time and place. If there is to be a failing, let it be the failure of others rather than of myself. I cannot dictate the choices of others, but I can be responsible for my own and thereby maintain my own integrity.

The third aspect is the possibility that I may not be a gracious receiver of gifts or support from others. Perhaps, at times, I feel unworthy, using my past experiences to define my basic value as a person. Each time someone ignored me, attacked me, devalued me, or rejected me may leap to the forefront of my memory and cause a faulty interpretation of another's generosity: "she's only doing that because she feels sorry for me," "he's only saying that to make himself feel good." The motivations of others words and actions can only define the worthiness of those persons; they do not have the ability to render an accurate measurement of my personal worth--which exists with or without the words and actions of others. Simply because I exist, I can conclude that by creating me at all, God created a portal for limitless positive possibilities.

The real question is how I will serve such possibilities; part of serving such possibilities is accepting responsibility for monetary, emotional psychological, and material resources which I receive from others--not as things which I now own or possess, but as things temporarily entrusted to me, to see what I can make of them; how I can expand the blessing such resources can be to others for many years to come.

In the words of a Native American proverb, "We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." Borrowing means temporarily receiving resources which will be eventually given back.

Just as there has never been a moving trailer hitched to the back of a hearse, we must also live with an understanding and acceptance of concluding our lives by giving back all that we have received and perhaps even a little more. Let us receive specifically so that we can give.

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

Speaking and Never Hearing

I have from time to time heard references to people "talking at" each other instead of "talking to" each other. The obvious challenge of this is that the first does not even consider whether there is a common language; it is a form of giving which ignores what and how the other needs to receive.

The next important point to note is that talking at someone renders them an object rather than a person; a target rather than a participant with whom one may have an interactive relationship; and something upon which to act rather than someone with whom to interact.

This is an arrogant position to occupy within a conversation because it presumes that the answers to the particular challenge or topic reside exclusively within the speaker and, as I often remarked while in graduate school, arrogance is not a virtue and there is no academic degree (or social/governmental position) which will make it so.

Perhaps it seems old-fashioned to speak of personal virtue, but the underlying principles remain very much with us, that in order to have a healthy functioning society and healthy mutually empowering relationships, we must continue to pay attention to those things which empower such positive societal and interpersonal conditions to exist. Honesty, trustworthiness, and truth are as essential to the current generation of humanity as they were to any preceding generation.

The flip side of this discussion is the recognition of undiscovered treasure and insight within the object of one's words. If I only speak and never listen, I will never learn what the other person knows--I cannot even legitimately presume that the other person knows nothing, if I have not asked and been willing to quietly and attentively listen to her or his response.

To the extent that I continue to dominate the conversation and allow the other no voice or moment in which to speak, I discourage, wound, and prevent the blessings of God within that person from ever seeing the light of day. As a result, my life and my world are impoverished--and

*"Apathy is as unacceptable
as violence;
both are destructive to life."*

--Sister Who

I am sadly unaware of what I've missed.

An additional aspect of not hearing is that I may not even hear myself; I may be unaware of how I might sound to others, of whether my words are sufficiently wise or mostly naive. Each of us has been naive at some point, but thankfully it is not generally fatal--if we are willing and able to move beyond this combination of innocence and ignorance.

Are we willing to make such a move? Are we willing to take the action of listening? Talking to someone requires both listening and a certain attentiveness to the characteristics, perspective, language, and past experience of the individual with whom we are conversationally engaged--allowing that person to be an individual, rather than erroneously classifying the person as the embodiment of any demographic classification.

The world within which we live, I believe, relies far too heavily upon its social classifications and the abysmally disappointing contents of human history. Some individuals have even thereby been persuaded to regard themselves as the embodiment of a demographic or historical classification--failing to see the freedom they have to be the exception rather than the rule, to make contrasting rather than conforming choices, and to nudge the world around them in a more recommendable direction. Specifically because tragic mistakes have been made more often than not throughout human history and specifically because we are able to read about the mistakes others have made, we have been released from any obligation to repeat those mistakes. We can create better relationships, more attentive ears, and more inclusive and embracing hearts than those available to previous generations.

In talking to another person--virtually any person--we have the opportunity to discover both our commonalities and our differences with respect to relating to each other, to our life circumstances, and to that which is truly God. In discovering commonalities, we open the door to collaboration. In discovering differences, we open the door to finding both one who has the strengths to compensate for our weaknesses and one whose weaknesses can benefit from our strengths.

In choosing to speak, to listen, and then to seize any opportunities to collaborate, we once again remember that we are all parts of one another and we become healers of humanity.

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

Hearing and Never Speaking

I have experimented with various forms of meditation throughout my life, but have never bound myself to any particular formula of how meditation should be done or to any distinctions between meditation, contemplation, reflection, pondering, musing, brainstorming, or journaling.

All of these denote conscious connection with some invisible, spiritual, immaterial something deep within me which seems to contain the core essence of who and what I am--that core essence that remains constant no matter how often or how much my environment, relationships, or specific outward tasks may change or evolve. At no point, however, did I consider any of this meditation to be the destination or conclusion of any goal or intention. Rather, such inner connection and interaction with myself has always been (and continues to be) simply a tool by which the living of my life can be empowered.

Within graduate school, to the consternation of certain professors, I was fond of remarking that any idea without an application is useless. If no action, thought, or influence is possible, then the particular idea is essentially paralyzed and objectively apathetic to the surrounding unfolding of life. If the particular idea has no manifestation whatsoever, then when the holders of that idea have passed from the earth, there will be no evidence that the idea was ever here at all. Indeed, the idea may as well have never existed.

Rather than allowing what may be a divine insight to remain tragically still-born, however, equal time within my meditations, ponderings, journalings, or personal reflections may be the sometimes uncomfortable wrestling with the question, "so what do I do with this?" Although I cannot recall where I read this particular insight, I do recall reading many years ago that there is something inherent within all creative activity--which includes meditation--that requires that it be shared in order to be complete. To do otherwise has us once again behaving like the Dead Sea, acquiring the naturally preserving and ideally life-enhancing qualities of salt in such excess that we become toxic and unusable.

Let us be faithful to speak what we have heard, even within the silent depths of our hearts, for our words may be precisely the ones which another has been longing to hear.

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

On a Personal Note

It has been a peculiar month. I'm beginning to wonder if I have any other kind. I continue to struggle onward with doctoral writing, but concede that it is progressing much more slowly than I would prefer, mostly due to a myriad of other demands upon my time and energy.

The "reliable" pickup truck I acquired is still running, more or less okay, but has thus far required a new water pump and significant repair to the connection between the engine and the exhaust system. My previous vehicle sits in my backyard, hoping for someone with either the funds or the mechanical expertise to repair its faulty engine to purchase and remove it. The thought of bartering for its repair has crossed my mind, but no trustworthy mechanic willing to negotiate such an agreement has been found.

On a positive note, the episodes of "Sister Who Presents" which can now be viewed (each in four parts) in their entirety on the Internet now numbers six and they can be directly accessed at www.YouTube.com/denvernevaar. Four new episodes with counselor and life coach Egan Sanders were recorded last Saturday and more excellent dialogues with other knowledgeable guests are already scheduled for March. Work on transforming my livingroom into an inclusive retreat center chapel also continues. Here's a photo of the window, mentioned within last month's newsletter.



Your prayers are much appreciated for adequate financial support and income-producing opportunities by which this work can continue. Many of us are facing hard times at present, but if we all work together, our love for each other will become our strength to endure and triumph.

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

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