

# 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

Efficiency is a challenging idea, suggesting both a wise use of resources as well as a degree of awareness that resources are not infinite in number or amount. In defiance of such awareness, however, within numerous human sub-cultures, being inefficient has not only been widely tolerated but has also even been interpreted as a sign of wealth and/or power.

The unfortunate corollary of this is that those aspiring to positions of wealth and power have also pursued less efficient ways of living and of managing personal and financial resources--specifically in order to prove their accomplishment of wealth and power.

If only genuine intelligence and unconditional love were similarly valued, resulting in a wide-spread desire to demonstrate one's intelligence and one's compassion throughout one's geographical and social communities.

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

## Economic Efficiency

I suppose life has always been a rather intense struggle for survival for me--at least thus far. In discussing current challenges with a friend a month or two ago, he very much wanted to help but was uncertain of how much help or personal sacrifice was warranted. My answer was that his responsibility as a person of faith was not to solve whatever problems might be present within my life, but rather to accomplish the most good that he could, with the resources which had been entrusted to him. Similarly, considering again the quote from Miriam Slade that "he who has more than he needs for efficient work is a thief," the definition of what is needed for efficient work is elusive.

Is it economically efficient to live on the least expensive food available if doing so also assists in the creation of future health problems? Obviously not. Similarly, is it economically efficient to live without beauty and creativity, if doing so creates psychological and emotional disturbance sufficient

to disrupt my ability to socially function?

Maintaining the numerous balances necessary for physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual health is the ongoing tension within which we all live. If we can address this overall challenge with more self-awareness, however, we can also begin to consider and perhaps even develop, more efficient ways of getting our needs met.

Buying new clothes consistent with the most current fashions may be one way of creating positive self-esteem. Associating socially with only economically wealthy persons by dining in expensive restaurants may also be a way of creating positive self-esteem. Taking a half hour to journal one's own thoughts or develop one's own creativity, however, may also be an effective way to create positive self-esteem. This third possibility, in contrast to the first two, does not depend upon anyone else's approval or participation, nor are substantial financial resources required.

Because this solution requires fewer resources to accomplish an equally effective outcome, this solution can legitimately be described as being a more efficient solution. Similarly, a well-insulated house is also less-expensive both to heat during winter months and to cool during summer months.

The central point of economic efficiency, which is completely consistent with virtually every moral and/or spiritual system of belief, is the accomplishing of the maximum good with whatever resources are available. To do less is to waste in some way or another, the capabilities and potential of the blessings we have received. Because everything in life and in the universe is somehow interconnected, wasting blessings is simply wrong. In every instance, someone or something must suffer in some way, doing without its needs being met because the blessings which would meet these needs is being wasted somewhere else. Unconditional and inclusive love opposes wastefulness.

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## Spiritual Efficiency

Following on the definition included within the first article of this newsletter, that efficiency is "the accomplishing of the maximum good with whatever resources are available," an evaluation of spiritual efficiency within our lives asks us to first consider whether or not (or to what degree) our actual living of life is consistent with the beliefs we espouse; more concisely phrased, whether or not (or to what degree) we "walk [our] talk." The second question such an evaluation poses is whether or not we are doing this in a way that utilizes the maximum capabilities available, also sharing or redistributing anything over and above our needs to others.

Some very basic examples might be donating extra copies of sacred texts from my personal library, to a particular church or Sunday School program; maintaining a welcoming, open, and affirming attitude toward any and all persons within one's immediate community, within any religious group or congregation of which one is a member; being willing and ready to openly discuss and share with others any insights or blessings of understanding which might come during times of prayer or meditation; and valuing the struggles and needs of others enough to genuinely and consistently remember to pray for these, when for whatever reason we are not able to provide any more direct assistance.

Following on the additional recognition within the previous article that certain balances are wise to maintain, an evaluation of spiritual efficiency also asks us to consider whether or not the practice of our individual approaches to human-Divine relationship are as effective as they can be.

Attempting a relationship of unconditional love with a Deity who is predominantly viewed as judgemental and fearful, for example, is problematic at best. It may be, however, that what is required is not a change of Deity but rather a change of perspective. First impressions of those we meet are often displaced by more complete understanding as friendships develop and knowledge is gained. Why should it be any less so with God?

In the same way that we sometimes slip into talking at each other rather than truly communicating, it is very easy within institutionalized religious practices to slip into going through the motions even though mental

attention and emotional involvement have gone elsewhere. Just as an actor within a long-running production must go onstage and re-experience familiar spoken lines as if it were the first time these words were being spoken, we need to maintain connection with awareness that each repetition of a prayer or song may be similar to countless previous repetitions, but no two repetitions are precisely identical--if for no other reason than that they do not occupy the same place within time.

In a way very similar to maintaining certain expenses (such as eating a healthy diet) in order to prevent future problems, there is much greater efficiency to be found in maintaining an efficient daily spiritual practice than in attempting to compensate on Sunday morning (or whenever) for every other thing one did not do during the previous week. The result of maintaining such a daily practice, as is the case with physical body, is the maintenance of spiritual health by which we are prepared for unexpected new challenges, less susceptible to spiritual disease or dysfunction, and able to experience life in a much deeper, more meaningful, and ultimately more rewarding way--all the while experiencing profound growth within our souls and relationships.

If forms of stagnation have developed, if we have slipped into merely "going through the motions," or if we have ceased to aspire to be, learn, or experience anything new, awareness of this subtle negative change within us is a divine wake-up call to reach beyond ourselves, to oppose pathological narcissism, and to renew a commitment to living for something greater than ourselves--to resist becoming small and instead be as big within our experience of life as we are able to be.

Within virtually ever circumstance throughout life, fear and apathy contract; love expands. If we allow our worlds to contract too much, we may find that there is no longer sufficient air for all of us to breath, no longer sufficient space for all of us to live, and--even worse--no longer sufficient reason to even exist.

Spiritual efficiency, when all is said and done, is about being in loving, peaceful, and growth-oriented harmony with everything and everyone around us; being willing to truly see everything and everyone around us and to commit ourselvse to genuinely loving them in whatever ways we are able.

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

## Mental Efficiency

Within my studies of interpersonal communication a number of years ago, one source suggested that if someone asks, "How are you?", a number of possible outcomes may result.

The first possibility is that you will say "Fine" and then immediately return to whatever whatever one was doing the moment before, essentially communicating absolutely nothing about one's true emotional, physical, mental, or spiritual state.

A second possibility is to simply pause. If at the end of that pause the speaker is still present, one may provide an answer. Quite often, however, the person will already be down a hallway, across a room, or out of a door.

A third possibility, rendering a truthful and accurate answer, risks discovering that the speaker really didn't want to know, perhaps due to too many concerns already in mind.

A fourth possibility, slyly giving a mysterious but understated description, essentially "fishes" for genuine concern.

A fifth possibility, not so much for a response as for a way of handling the situation, is to avoid it altogether by never being physically present where this question might be asked. If there is also a problem or need which really does need the attention of others to be resolved, I reminded of something I read many, many years ago, which described emotional withdrawal as an adult form of "hide and seek." The basic problem with this adult version, however, is that the majority of humanity is not particularly proficient at mind-reading and although genuinely compassionate, therefore not able to guess a need which has in no way been announced.

What does all of this have to do with mental efficiency? It all points to fundamental need to be interconnected and in communication with the rest of the human species. That we are interrelated is inescapable; communicating efficiently and effectively, however, is purely optional. Communication and interaction with ourselves and with persons and things within our immediate

*"Arrogance has never been a virtue  
and there is no academic degree  
which will make it so."*

--Sister Who

environment are the two most essential activities of our minds.

To be a healthy individual, I need to figure out what brings healthy revitalization to my mind, because there are so many things which wear me down within any particular's days events and encounters. To have or practice mental efficiency, I need to figure out ways which accomplish this psychological refreshment which cost as little as possible, no matter what the particular currency (money, time, energy, etc.) winds up being.

Once again, the best resource we have to address any such circumstance, is each other.

As much as we may be capable of independent thought and vision, all such abilities are generally sustained by mentally efficient relationships with the world around us. A listening ear of a sincerely compassionate person may do more good than a trained physician. As one poster phrased it, "a puppy licking your face" may be a more effective remedy to depression than anything pharmaceutical companies have formulated. A civilization or society which provides genuinely effective means to satisfy basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, may be a better foundation than vast quantities of higher education which are ultimately not valued by potential employers.

Once all of the above have been addressed, I then find that minds are as individual as the people with whom they reside. Some need enormous quantities of stimulation and unstructured freedom. Others need various levels of organization, routine, and structure to be the containers for creative substance and poetic expression.

For every single one of these instances, however, there are both efficient potential answers as well as wasteful ones. When we choose the more efficient ones, more resources remain available to meet the needs of others around us. The more everyone's needs are met, the more the world in which we live, is truly a place in which we would actually want to live.

Ultimately, living according to principles of mental efficiency moves us toward living in harmony with everything and everyone around us. When we succeed in doing that, everybody wins and it is my contention that the job of making humanity beautiful and life worthwhile is simply not over until everybody wins--everybody.

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

## Relational Efficiency

I recognize that I am an idealist. That being said, I believe that relationships ideally practiced would never leave any of us feeling burned out, wounded, or negatively depleted. Being weary after good work which was in any way successful, also leaves a sort of contented satisfaction and gratitude for successful accomplishment. Working ourselves to exhaustion for no better reason than the payment of various expenses, more often leaves us feeling used up and devalued--essentially a state of woundedness from which we then need to recover, hopefully doing so before we are obligated to return to the work situation.

For myself at present, doing ministerial activities brings me great joy, peace, and healthy feelings of self-worth--especially when others describe the ways in which my words and actions have been helpful to them. I do want to include an apology that this month's newsletter is so late, but would also like to explain that I have been accepting every odd job presented to me in an attempt to keep a mortgage company happy.

I prayerfully and eagerly anticipate the day when there will be no more such day-jobs, but rather that this ministry will have finally succeeded in becoming a financially self-supporting activity. That day has obviously not arrived, however, necessitating a wide range of other (usually physically and mentally exhausting) activities.

Because it is so important to continue to serve this ministry, I am more or less constantly engaged in making my relationships as efficient as possible. Without devaluing any persons involved, I do my best therefore to select those interactions which are most beneficial and in harmony with the larger work my life is apparently designed to serve. I choose to be honest and direct within many situations within which the societal norm is to spend large amounts of time making small talk and easing into challenges gradually.

Much of what I understand of relational efficiency I learned from various friends who have since died of AIDS-related complications. They more than most others understood that they did not have a more or less infinite number of tomorrows to do whatever good they could do. When all is said and done, we really have only the moment before us to make whatever positive difference we wish to make, in the most efficient and effective way possible.

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

## On a Personal Note

For anyone living within the city of Denver, Colorado, episodes of "Sister Who Presents" are being cablecast on channel 58 on Saturday evenings at 8pm, from now through the end of May. At that time, the day and time will change. Anyone outside of this viewing area is able to purchase DVD copies of these episodes through my website located at [www.sisterwho.com](http://www.sisterwho.com) or by contacting me directly.

With regard to automotive transportation, shortly after last month's newsletter was published, my vehicle once again required expensive repairs. In that necessary repairs exceeded the cost of a monthly auto loan payment, it was decided that the time had come to purchase a new vehicle--so I am now driving a 2003 Chevrolet Blazer and working hard to be certain that all related payments are in fact made on time. As nice as it is to have reliable transportation which is also in good condition, for the first time in years, I am nervous about accepting this new financial responsibility.

With regard to my friend who committed suicide at the beginning of last month, I was honored to facilitate (in full ritual garb) a memorial service which was much-appreciated by those in attendance.

With regard to the recording of audio to use for presentations of "A Circuitous Journey," all other voices have been successfully recorded and the necessary CD will be completed within the next week. Work on songs for the album, "Prayers" continues.

With regard to Michael, certain changes in his personal circumstances have persuaded him to accept a much earlier move to Colorado than previously anticipated. Yes, I am eagerly looking forward to having him here with me, even though there will obviously be some employment challenges and household adjustments to resolve as he and I begin to more directly integrate our lives into a new example of family.

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

### Subscription Information:

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