

# 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

In the ongoing rush of earning income, paying bills, meeting demands, and running to keep up, it is easy to forget basics of relationship and that because of the interconnectedness of all life, these basics must be applied to ourselves just as much as to everyone around us.

As essential as unconditional love is to the healing and wholeness of ourselves and the world within which we live, we cannot love that which we do not see and we also cannot love if we are unaware of the attitudes, actions, and understandings of which love is composed. A complete understanding is vast indeed; here are some initial thoughts which I hope will be helpful to you throughout the weeks ahead. Once again, those around us may be a mirror of ourselves; so much so that it is difficult to say which is the real face and which is the reflection of the other.

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

## Acknowledging Imperfect People

What is the current population of humanity on the planet Earth, according to objective reality? 6.6 billion? Now, what is the current population of humanity on the planet Earth, according to subjective reality? In most cases, it seems to be one or two or the number of members contained within one's church, place of employment, social club, or small town. Each time I drive anywhere, it seems that almost every other driver imagines his or her vehicle to be the only one on the road.

It's as if we are all invisible to each other, until or unless we are described by membership within this or that specific category. More than invisible, countless numbers of people seem unwilling to even acknowledge the existence of any dissenting opinion, different perspective, divergent life path, disagreeable contrast, or anomalous individual whose needs will not be effectively met by the responses which the majority provides. The inescapable truth against which these countless

numbers of people spend perhaps their entire lives struggling, however, is that everything is intricately and inextricably interconnected.

Everything is also imperfect, specifically because everything is growing, trying out first this approach and then that one, trying to find "the shoes that truly fit." If we do not collectively create a world in which this is possible, if we do not give each other the place, opportunity, and confidence to continue a search for "the shoes that truly fit," we will have no hope of ever walking together in peace; we will continue to stumble over each other rather than to march forward as only a united effort can.

There is also a sense in which we cannot ever truly know God if we are unwilling to ever truly know ourselves. Understanding that each of us is also an imperfect, unfinished person journeying toward some more evolved and accomplished form, is essential to being able to truly see and nurture this same sort of process within others. To the extent that we refuse to see imperfection in others, we refuse to see it within ourselves, and the world thus remains populated by spiritually blind and unfeeling people. A curious irony in this statement, for me at least, is that I have friends who are physically visually impaired who experience (to the best of my observation) no such spiritual blindness, thereby confirming that perception has more to do with one's psychological, spiritual, and emotional choices than with the senses of one's body.

To acknowledge an imperfect person, therefore, is to give one's self and every one else room to actively explore, experience, and positively add to whatever life has to offer. To acknowledge an imperfect person is to understand that there are reasons such a person does what he or she does, most of which originate within some memory or thing much more deeply planted than your or my presence in his or her life. To acknowledge an imperfect person is to agree that even with its many imperfections, life should indeed go on.

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

## Tolerating Imperfect People

Tolerance has been rather misunderstood throughout history, sometimes being interpreted as a lack of response to anything disagreeable. A true understanding of tolerance, however, is more accurately an openness to whatever God would like to teach us, through the unusual person or experience we've just encountered.

Even more than just unusual, every now and then, God seems content to use those I have identified as enemies to move me to where I need to be. If God truly has the final word, then even those who intend evil toward me may find themselves inadvertently stumbling into subconscious cooperation with God's ability to transform bad into good and to move servants of good from areas that have been well-served to areas in need of much more attention.

Because I know who I am, I know that I can go on being myself no matter where I find myself to be. Because I know who I am, you are free to be who you are as well and both of us are free to be imperfect explorers of experience and relationship, learning more and more about life with each passing day. If we do not define ourselves by means of established categories, there is much life between the categories to discover and to integrate, resulting in a greater wholeness than all the categories put together could ever accomplish.

Tolerance, from one perspective, is a sort of honesty that begins within each person as a search for being at peace with all the disparate parts of one's self. Only after finding peace with one's self, can one reasonably expect to find peace with everyone else. That being the case, where one finds people at war with each other, one finds people at war with themselves, erroneously punishing others for their own inner conflicts, hungers, and imbalances.

Seeking to isolate one's self from others' inner conflicts, hungers, and imbalances, however, is about as possible as a finger separating itself from a hand because the hand was scarred by poison ivy or broken when the body stumbled and fell. Without the body and the hand, the finger would quickly die. Collaboration is essential, but collaboration cannot effectively grow within a climate of ignorance; we must hear one another's stories and proactively respond AFTER listening.

Curiously, with the hearing and telling of one another's stories and without any direct

coercion, tolerance grows. As we learn to love unconditionally, we learn that the world would be incomplete without the inclusion of every person. Like the classic movie starring Jimmy Stewart, "It's a Wonderful Life," a vision of the world with the contributions of one particular person subtracted can be a nightmare. Even quiet and unassuming moments can be those upon which the positive development of the universe turns.

One of the main points of that movie, of course, is that the protagonist was standing far too close to his own life to see the significance of its impact. Similarly, we are often standing too close to our own lives, to see the significance of our lives' impact. Tolerating an imperfect person, expressing love toward the unlovely, and defending an unpopular voice's right to speak, are thus acts of faith which insist that even this person can grow into something better. For such growth to happen, however, the garden of this individual must be loved rather than ignored or only allowed.

To provide space without nurturance is very much like depositing someone in outer space where there is neither air to breathe nor food to eat nor any protection from heat or cold or weather. Tolerating an imperfect person is thus not an action done only at a specific point in time, but rather a relational dynamic we give to each other each and every day, to draw out the very best contributions any of us have to give--even though we have no idea what those contributions will be.

To nurture unknown contributions can therefore be seen as faith not only in each other's ability to grow and improve, but also as faith in divine intention and choice--that because God created this person, this person has the ability to make a beautiful, positive contribution to the larger picture of what humanity is and is becoming.

So if we join hands and move toward our horizons together, conscious that the persons on either side of us may be moving faster, slower, or with a rhythm quite peculiar in relation to our own, we can nevertheless rejoice in the pursuit of the horizon and perhaps even glimpse things along the way which we would not have seen at all--except for the availability of others' eyes right next to us. We may even hear of glimpses of God which our own eyes were for whatever reason unable to see. In pursuit of the truth of ourselves and the truth of God, tolerance is just another word for dynamically empowering relationship.

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

## Loving Imperfect People

It is very difficult for me to separate loving from nurturing. It seems unavoidable to me, that if one loves someone or something, one will do whatever is possible to nurture that person or thing also. This is difficult, however, if time which must be dedicated to surviving is the chief competitor to time which one would rather dedicate to nurturing.

Dedicating one's self to training a pet or raising a child, for example, is most challenged by required dedication to maintaining adequate shelter and food supply. Pursuing a graduate school education may require the sacrifice (albeit temporary, although it doesn't feel like it at the time) of personal entertainments, social involvements, and even usual daily habits.

Unfortunately, "social involvements" may also include regularly occurring times (such as Sunday dinners, vacations, etc.) previously dedicated to familial interaction. The basic maintenance of one's physical home may also be negatively affected. All that being said, loving still (in my opinion) includes nurturing, in whatever ways one is able to do. What loving does not include, however, is enabling.

Enabling is the actions and attitudes which rather than effectively addressing and hopefully resolving the particular problem, instead empower the problem to continue to be a real, unresolved, and unavoidably present problem. Like the farmer who thought he would drown the weeds in his field by pouring excessive amounts of water onto them, the problem receives what it needs to both remain and quite possibly even expand. Instead of freeing one's self from the weeds, the result is further enslavement.

*"I do not cease to pursue it,  
simply because the horizon recedes before me.  
Rather, I am thankful each moment  
that I live within  
a fascinating and expanding world."*

*--Sister Who*

Ideally, we could all be each others' best reasons for growth, for self-development, and for striving to be the best that we can individually (and thus collectively) be. Like the flowers in my garden, however, there are some which do best if I give them what they need and then go away, allowing them to do what they need to do without my well-intentioned but hopelessly naive and ignorant meddling.

In the case of imperfect people, however, loving becomes all the more difficult because the natural tendency of brokenness to reproduce itself frequently also serves as persuasion to stay far enough away that we ourselves are in no way at risk. We don't want to be negatively affected by whichever adversarial circumstance is present.

Similarly, the line between honest evaluation and being judgemental is very thin, the primary difference between the two being that honest evaluation can empower love whereas judgement generally only empowers apathy, anger, or hatred; one pulls us together, the other pushes us apart, creating schisms and denying the inescapable interconnectedness of all things.

This is where peripheral vision within our self-awareness can be so very helpful, allowing us to remember times when we too were broken, ignorant, apathetic, wounded, insecure, fearful, unintentionally arrogant, or negatively self-centered and someone else graciously and wisely reached past all of that to draw out better aspects of who we are and what we could be. It is entirely possible that the person or persons who helped us, were not entirely unscarred by doing so. Initial negative responses from us may have in some way cost them or hurt them, as they waited for us to learn, to grow, and to develop into better persons than we ever imagined ourselves being.

In this sense, loving imperfect people is also about forgiving ourselves for hurting those who genuinely helped us and forgiving those who out of fear may have responded badly to our genuinely loving encouragement and support. Tolerance may in such cases be the simple (but not easy) task of allowing time for others to find what we already perceive. Each person has a unique and most effective approach to every challenge, which is what it is by God's design. Quite exasperating, however, is God's common preference for defying humanity's rules of how things are "supposed to be."

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

## On a Personal Note

A second album of sixteen of my songs, entitled *Prayers*, was successfully recorded on May 24 and is now available for online purchase (using Paypal) through my website, located at [www.sisterwho.com](http://www.sisterwho.com). This album can also be directly purchased from me by sending \$15 (per CD) plus \$3 for shipping expenses. Once again, lyrics are included within the CD case inserts and singing along is very much encouraged.

The songs selected within this album include a number of very special ones. "Lily" was written within the week following the discovery of my transgenderal friend's body, who had committed suicide, and was also sung at her memorial service. "Sacred Dreams" was written by request of a dear friend of mine who envisions the creation of an "Art Sanctuary" in which participation in specifically artistic activities will become a means to move toward healing and wholeness within one's life. The first verse alludes to her future place of ministry; the second verse alludes to the interfaith spiritual retreat and conference center I have envisioned. My personal favorite (although I am very happy with every song included) is "Holy Mystery," which offers a small glimpse of the paradoxes, ironies, and challenges of being on a mystical spiritual path. Referring to myself as a mystic indicates a relationship of love with divine mystery, embracing questions and times of deep reflection more than answers or superficial doctrines, trusting that God will teach each seeking heart whatever it needs to know.

With two albums done, I anticipated taking a break from songwriting for a while, but this morning was blessed with the choruses of two new songs and the title for a third album.

A generous donation pledged toward the construction of the portable chapel-tent means the design must be finalized and the cost quote updated. This will allow for an appropriate and effective presence at festivals, expos, and fairs, as opportunity allows, as well as being a suitable space within which to record more episodes of "Sister Who Presents." DVD copies of past episodes of this television series are available for purchase online through my website ([www.sisterwho.com](http://www.sisterwho.com)). The content and opening music remains as originally recorded, but the introduction has been updated.

Brochures promoting a traveling production of "A Circuitous Journey," are being sent out as

postage funds become available. Hopefully requests for performances of this worshipful and inspiring theatrical presentation will begin to open new doors of ministerial opportunity and collaboration.

Work has also begun on the manuscript for a second production, inspired by the biblical parable of the talents, the primary focus of this second production being the question, "What sort of person will you prove yourself to be?"

Additionally, I am hoping to climb (in complete ritual garb) a few more fourteen-thousand-foot mountains here in Colorado this coming summer and to also make more progress on a book manuscript which takes a much deeper look at some of Sister Who's origination, evolution, experiences, and ongoing adventures. Also, before long, is the task of creating new photos for the 2008 calendar, "Being One with Spirit."

In addition to all of the above, of course, is the receipt of a Masters degree in Theological Studies from Iliff School of Theology on June 1, while dressed in complete ritual garb, since Sister Who is, after all, the reason I wound up a student there in the first place. This event was made all the more special by the presence of my lifepartner-to-be, Michael (who will be moving from Washington, DC to Denver, Colorado to live with me and the dogs, in about three more weeks). I had anticipated facing the day alone, but received a phone call on Thursday evening informing me that "I'll be at your house in five minutes." Apparently a mischievous conspiracy with a friend and fellow-student at Iliff had been underway for a few weeks and was obviously quite successful.

Finally, your continued prayers are much appreciated, that financial adequacy and even abundance will find its way to my house so that this ministry may effectively continue and even expand. Current struggles are abundant and specific outcomes are hidden within the mists of the future. While I am doing everything I can, it often seems that nothing is ever enough.

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

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