

# sister who's perspective

*Sister Who's Perspective, Issue 165, March 2013, copyright*

## Overview

People often speak of courage as if it were some sort of rare thing. I suspect this is because they have not considered the ways that courage hides within unexpected places and unlikely people—even within themselves.

This month's essays are offered as a way of at least scratching the surface of the virtually limitless ways that courage helps to keep our world going—even when we don't realize that we're doing it. Perhaps even more would be possible if we did.

## Courage in Conflict

A principle difficulty within times of apparent conflict, is the discernment of whether or not the conflict and corresponding courage are genuine. False conflict and courage are frequent and favored tools of political and social manipulators concerned only for their own egos and careers. It seems generally agreed that courage is only courage if there is also a danger of loss that makes the courageous actions potentially self-sacrificing.

Pretending bravado when there is no danger of loss is, at best, comedic and ridiculous. There are occasions, however, when a hero or heroine is ridiculed only because others are not aware of the danger to which the hero or heroine responds. In between these two extremes, is the genuine belief in a danger that is not genuinely present.

Within the gratitude that is typically (but not always) showered upon heroes and heroines, is a distinct temptation to focus upon the rewards rather than upon the preceding inspiration. What is it, after all, that inspires courage rather than cowering, within situations of actual conflict and danger? Additionally, when the action of cowering is of an internal and therefore basically invisible form, outward expressions may imply that what is actually cowardice is instead courage. Alternatively, it

is astonishing the lengths to which some people will go, to avoid dealing with conflict at all—but that's a bit too complex to address here within this particular essay about courage.

At the heart of the discovery of courage is also a perhaps quiet sort of debate about whether or not one can in fact notice courage within one's self—any more than I could directly view and report an accurate description of the back of my head. There are some aspects of ourselves which it is most difficult to ever know except through each other or through external circumstances rather than direct perception.

It would thus be completely accurate to say that I have never directly viewed the underside of my chin. For perception of that part of my body—literally only inches from my eyes—I must rely upon others or upon mirrors. I may therefore have a certain courage within myself which I do not have the ability to perceive, specifically because within those moments that my courage is most evident, my attention is most focused upon something other than myself; something I value very highly.

Essential to any perception of genuine courage, is the simultaneous occurrence of conflict. Persons who have never known a threat of loss (I've met a few who have made such claims) or faced any sort of conflict, have simply had no opportunity to experience true courage. Those who resort to blame and manipulation the moment any potential conflict rears its head, avoid their own growth and contribute to their own stagnation. To grow, to even just be fully alive, we must respond well to the conflicts which enter our lives, because they are (at least potentially) our teachers.

Courage is not about being great; it's about having absolute faith in principles, values, and people—including one's self and Godde—even or especially when it makes no sense to do so. It is also about the triumph of love over fear of which all of us are capable.

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

## Courage in Peace

The first concern and requirement of courage in peaceful times, is understanding what is required to sustain that peace and taking every possible action to provide all that is required. True peace is neither the absence of conflict nor an accidental event, but rather is an intentional expression of wise and loving spirits, who are aware of the potential of loss and utilize principles, values, and relationships to oppose that potential.

What is most difficult about mustering this specific kind of courage, is that the adversarial possibility is most often invisible—but not for that reason any less real. Those who look only with physical eyes are thus most likely to never see the danger coming. An additional consideration is the challenge of finding an expression of courage that does not embody the very manifestation of conflict and loss that it opposes. Throwing the first punch may defeat a bully within a particular moment, but the presence or absence of a single bully is hardly equivalent in value to the maintenance of peace—especially because the action promotes the belief that violence is an acceptable strategy for dealing with conflict.

How do we face conflict courageously rather than instinctively? It is very human to want to lash out whenever loss or pain is experienced. It is also very human, however, to reach for something beyond the very limited definitions of the moment and embrace better ways than have previously been employed.

Courage within peace is therefore absolutely not a matter of stagnation, but rather of growth. I imagine that in many ways a butterfly within a chrysalis might feel very protected and secure, but there comes a moment when life demands expansion and flight and the myriad of dangers outside of the chrysalis must be faced, in order for the butterfly to be what it truly is. Failing to do so is synonymous with embracing a lie and, consequently, with embracing death.

Blindly presuming that peace is self-maintaining, is also a lie; courage is therefore an unavoidable necessity. In ways very much like those of the butterfly, life has positioned each of us within specific times, places, and

opportunities. Similarly, we must brave the exit from our illusion of security in order to live the height, breadth, width, and depth hidden within our souls from the moment of birth. Just as it is the fact of being a butterfly which calls the insect to emerge from the chrysalis, it is specifically our humanity which calls us to reach beyond our current limitations as well.

Peace which provides a sky within which to fly; courage prevents predatory circumstances and forces from dominating all that the sky encompasses. Potential tyrants and predators are nothing less than ridiculous when they claim, as so many have, that their control is absolute and that they can bestow or remove peace at whim. The truth that remains obvious to anyone with the eyes to see, is that the sky is too vast to ever be the domain of that which lives briefly and cannot reach beyond its own fingertips. Believing this while threatened, however, requires courage and faith.

Peace is often perceived as indicating a lack of movement, a stillness, and perhaps even a restfulness. While peace may indeed be all of these things, it also encompasses dancing in celebration of health and vitality; dynamics which affirm harmonious and complementary life cycles; and developments which create exponentially increasing future opportunities. In order for opportunities to genuinely be what they are, however, they must also include the possibility of failure.

It is specifically because of possibilities of failure, of loss, and of defeat, that courage is so essential to life's ongoing struggle—not just to survive, but to also thrive. While the struggle may be adversarial indeed, if life is at stake in any way at all, the struggle is not meaningless. What is perhaps a bit perplexing to many who understand only the placid side of peace, is that psychological and emotional peace can very much be present even within moments of intense struggle.

If we have confidence, courage, and clarity about what we are doing, peace can indeed rule within our hearts and minds. It is therefore the courage of peace and the peacefulness of courage upon which the peacefulness of mankind ultimately depends.

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

## Courage in Awareness

I have heard the process of growing up described as a movement from narcissism to relationship. Additionally, bringing love to the process of growing up includes becoming as concerned about the life experiences of others as about one's own.

Expanding this even further, an invitation from life itself is to be concerned about those living within other times--an invitation to experience grief and joy for tragedies and celebrations of the past as well as having an emotional stake in the possible and perhaps probable experiences of the future. In expanding one's spirit, one's awareness, and one's prayers to such vast dimensions, one becomes part of a community that extends far beyond the dates of birth and death pertaining to one's own physical life.

Speaking perhaps from such a largeness of spirit, Dwight Eisenhower once remarked, "Controlled universal disarmament is the imperative of our time. The demand for it by the hundreds of millions whose chief concern is the long future of themselves and their children will, I hope, become so universal and so insistent that no man, no government anywhere, can withstand it."

While a certain amount of daring is certainly required for the awareness itself of such interconnectedness throughout time, true courage is more to be found in being inspired by that awareness to make whatever difference one is able, within the activities and affairs of one's life. No act of kindness arising from such awareness is truly meaningless.

Meaningful awareness, however, is never a matter of merely that which is easy, comfortable, or convenient; it encompasses both days and nights, celebrations and sorrows, beginnings and ends. To know it all in

***"Truly living requires being truly awake and truly aware; if you cannot embrace truth, you cannot embrace Godde."***

-- Sister Who

its fullness is to begin to know the heart and mind of Godde. This is perhaps the most painful aspect of awareness and consequently the reason why courage would be required: to know while fully present at a celebration that some are still suffering and to know while suffering that some are living life in celebration.

On days when for me everything was going wrong, I have sometimes encountered people recently blessed with new resources or opportunities. My response to them has occasionally been, "Well I'm glad that someone is having a good day; it would be a rather sad waste of a day if absolutely no one was." It is enough for me within such moments to think that Godde was busy blessing someone else at that point, as a sort of reminder that it would not be appropriate, good, or right for me to be hoarding all of the good days available.

The number of good days which are available is inescapably limited by the fact that the definition of a good day varies from one person to the next. One person wishes for a sunny day with warm temperatures; another wants to build a snowman within a nearby city park. Obviously they're going to have to take turns, because our weather patterns do not allow for such opposite circumstances to occur within the same place. The earth remains now and always a shared space.

Awareness thus requires the courage necessary to accept that one will have to wait while the other gets his or her wish. If we remember the fundamental principle that in some way we are all part of one another, we can rejoice in sympathy with another's joy and offer comfort in response to another's sorrow.

Additionally, when one has worked very hard to accomplish a certain goal, courage is required to embrace the factual occurrence of disappointment. One could almost say that courage is required to embrace honest discovery of one's self, specifically because a thorough search will generally show one's self to be both better and worse than one imagined.

The triumph of courage in awareness is when, aware of all of the duplicities and ironies, we still find sufficient strength to do and be our best and to support others in doing the same.

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

## Courage in Spirit

It is quite easy and perhaps even a common practice for those demonstrating courage in spirit to be labeled crazy or insane by people who do not understand. The current age of humanity does not generally respond well to things that are different in any way whatsoever. Consequently, even just to exist with honesty and integrity can sometimes require great courage and determination.

Although I am certainly not the only one, I noticed while studying various opinions, theories, and sociological explanations that according to what I was reading, I was one who simply was not supposed to exist at all. The texts described circumstances, systems, and historical events that allegedly would result in particular cultural, political, and religious patterns—most of which cannot be found within myself or my personal experiences. How was it that an anomaly such as myself managed to "slip through the cracks"?

Most of the time when this phrase is used, however, it refers to people not getting the help one needs. As a sacred clown, my inclination is to turn the phrase on its head and ask whether it is specifically by divine intention that anomalous inventive people find their ways into even the most rigid and regimented human societies, that dandelion seeds find their ways into the tiniest cracks in the sidewalk, and that life survives even when everything imaginable opposes it. Should I give up simply because I am neither popular nor typical nor approved by any human administrator or entity?

As hesitant as I am to claim for myself anything so wondrous as courage, it seems I would not have made it this far without a certain courage of spirit, a valuing of the unique and creative person Godde has made me to be, and a persistent belief that in spite of adversarial appearances, Godde really does have the final word.

Perhaps in simply being here, is an indication that we already possess at least a minimum of perhaps unnoticed courage and faith in ourselves and in the possibility that—working together—life really will find a way.

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

## On a Personal Note

I persist in my efforts to develop an understanding of what means to be a person with a "disability" named "autism," but the cacophony of divergent voices, opinions, and strategies is frequently bewildering to me—all the more so as I strive in spite of severely limited finances to maintain a home, a furry family of dogs, a personal life, doctoral studies, and ministerial activities as well.

There seems to be a peculiar migration going on; some people abruptly moving out of my life as new ones slowly enter (but alas no new boyfriend). I long for more contact with friends in other places, but generally choose to respect their silence whenever there is no response to my attempts to communicate. May they be blessed within whatever their lives include and in whichever directions their life-paths may lead them. I am glad if even for a brief season I was able to contribute positively.

My PC/Windows-oriented computer is once again working well, although one never knows for how long, considering how old it is already. Attempts to modify and constructively utilize the Apple computer are ongoing, but the experience remains one of emotional, psychological, and financial rape, specifically because of seven different lies for which corporate entities refuse to be responsible.

The pellet stove remains in need of repair, but spring is not far off and the iris in the flowerbed have begun to grow. Perhaps, in time, everything will turn out well after all.

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

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