

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

One of the challenges of being (at least partially) material beings within a material world, is that we sometimes fail to recognize when we are holding onto immaterial things in ways that are disempowering and limiting. Human beings are inherently far more than merely the sum of their physical parts. Like the iceberg, failing to consider what is below the surface leaves us drifting without any clear sense of where we are going or why—or how we could positively influence our movements throughout life.

A certain amount of the collective work of human reality will always be beyond our control. Nonetheless, there is still much effect that we can have upon ourselves, others, and the world around us, that could ultimately even be considered miraculous—especially when we all work together. I hope this month's words will help you to do that.

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

Releasing the Future

I continue to shy away from predictions that provoke fear and add to life's already abundant uncertainty, perhaps because I persist in believing in a God who embodies ultimate wisdom and love even while also remaining very mysterious and incomprehensible to me. Specifically because of such faith, a myriad of contrasting positive possibilities are as available as any of the more negative ones. I continue to meet people, however, who are so fervent in their commitment to predictions of violence, destruction, and horrendous judgment that I wonder whether they have the ability to rejoice when bad things don't actually happen.

Can bad things happen? Of course they can, but they are not the only things that can happen—specifically because of the presence of wisdom and love. Most especially during times of difficulty, it is vital that we remember that it is not only God's wisdom and love which are available within each moment to whomever desires such things, but it is also our wisdom and love which are available within

each moment, to the extent that we let that inner light shine and do not in any way "hide it under a bushel," as described by the popular children's Sunday School song.

Within far too many circumstances and events, the ever-unfolding future is partially or completely enslaved by negative expectations and consequently is not free to create more desirable and beautiful alternatives. In far too many such instances, we ourselves are responsible for the enslavement. The wondrous blessing, however, is that if we have the ability to enslave, we also have the ability to liberate.

The oft-quoted greeting card slogan advises, "If you love something, set it free; if it comes back to you, it's yours forever; if it doesn't, it never was." This applies to our individual and collective future as much as to anything else. When we nurture the future instead of attempting to control it—whether by theological predictions, business projections, or intellectual constructions—we grant the possibility that a collaboration of God's presence, our complete involvement, and particular environmental circumstances can create a reality more wonderful than anything we've ever imagined.

More concisely, releasing the future is not about no longer having a future, but rather about once again making life worth living. Failing to release the future reduces humanity to being robots and slaves to expectations and systems; to being nothing more than a battery within an enormous machine, as depicted within the movie, "Matrix."

Releasing the future is like butterfly wings being released from a chrysalis; like a small bird pecking its way out of a shell; and like a sprout emerging from a seed, forcing the dirt aside, and sending new leaves up into the sunlight. In the weeks and months ahead, this new year can be our birthing ground as well—where butterflies, birds, and flowers do whatever they can to make the garden beautiful; where we also do whatever we can to create beauty, wisdom, and love.

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

Releasing the Past

As much as one could argue that humans are bound by time, locked forever into the present moment we are experiencing, it is just as true that we transcend time by remembering the past and envisioning possible futures. Considering the limits of human perception and reasoning, however, it is never wise to assume that we fully know what any past moment has been. When we remain open to the possibility that the past has in fact been more than we know, we have once again moved into a realm of greater freedom for learning and development.

Within this realm, we may suddenly realize the meaning of things which previously made no sense. Why did someone behave a certain way within a particular past circumstance? What good can I derive from having been rejected in a particular way by this or that person? How have I been shaped by experiencing the particular accomplishments and difficulties of various past moments? Even basic things can sometimes take years to understand, but this doesn't necessarily indicate any lack of intelligence. Sometimes the most important information simply isn't available.

One of the basic qualities of human perception is that our eyes are both positioned on a single side of our heads—leaving three other directions basically unobserved. As much as such a quality would logically recommend humility rather than arrogance, there seems to be plenty of the latter to go around. Analogous to the acknowledgment of our eyes being on only one side of our heads, arrogance also has disturbingly effective ways of creating perceptual blindness. It is unfortunately a common occurrence to see even less, when one believes that nothing beyond one's expectations is possible.

To release the past, we must first find a way to fully acknowledge that there was much information within whichever particular past moment, of which we were not aware. Thereafter we must understand that each moment is multi-dimensional, encompassing a variety of contrasting truths. Within the occurrence of a traffic accident, for example, what one person saw is no less true, just because another person saw something different. To understand (as much as possible) what truly happened, one must integrate all available perspectives.

To hide within a dogmatic attitude of "I know what happened" is in truth very cowardly and quite often indicates a retreat from some aspect of

personal and/or spiritual growth, which quite legitimately needs to be faced and truly resolved. Choosing to avoid such growth is irrational and self-sabotaging because it is an act of choosing weakness, disempowerment, and future victimization. If, for example, I move to an area where spring floods are common and fail to learn about coping with such occurrences, any devastating losses I experience when the next flood occurs are as much my fault as the fault of natural forces; it would be quite understandable for my neighbors there to be unsympathetic and unresponsive to my grief at experiencing such loss. In truth, the loss began when I failed to learn and adapt to my new environment, rather than when the flood waters arrived.

Even within this hypothetical example, however, beginning life anew once the flood waters have again receded, requires first that I forgive myself for having neglected essential personal empowerment and release that past mistake from having any more influence within my life. I do not need to remain the one who is uneducated and unprepared for similar future occurrences, nor do I need to over-prepare and live in paranoia and fear. By speaking with my neighbors and gathering helpful information from a variety of sources, I can prepare in ways that are appropriate, effective, well-targeted, and an efficient use of available resources.

This is the distinction between knowledge and wisdom: knowledge is available information; wisdom is good use of that information.

Ideally, the past and all of the mistakes, accomplishments, and experiences it includes are libraries of information which can empower us. To the extent that the books are not removed from the shelves and read, however, the knowledge and wisdom the books contain is imprisoned and prevented from ever contributing anything good to life. Obviously, time is required to check out a book from a library, read it, and begin to utilize the wisdom and knowledge it contains.

Utilizing one's library of experiences also requires taking time out of our busy days to reflect on who we have been, what has happened to us, what responses we have given, and how we can come to terms with innumerable profound questions of social, personal, and spiritual life. Allowing a moment each day to release the past, is a beginning. If we do this together, the world becomes an even better place.

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

Releasing the Present

There are few dynamics more problematic within the present than having expectations, but there are few things that are more universally encouraged, rewarded, and perhaps even required than expectations—even within religious and spiritual discussions. I've completely lost track of the number of times someone has corrected my speech or word-choice when speaking of possibilities, that I am to speak the "truth" that I wish to manifest. The problem, of course, is that what ultimately manifests is a product of far more than just my own personal will.

It is certainly possible to attempt to imprison the present within a narcissistic cage of personal expectations, as if life somehow owed me the more-or-less perfect visualization I have chosen for my own life experience. Since there are a number of examples within which individuals have anticipated life blessings and stated them publicly in advance, a common phrase within current popular psychology is that "words have power." The errors I find within common interpretation of this phrase are the assumptions that are made (in advance) about what sort of power the particular words have, instead of asking, measuring, and being attentive to whatever power the words have, as that power is being expressed.

In some cases, the power is not within the words themselves, but rather within others' responsive choices, who may or may not be persuaded by the particular words. What makes words effective in persuading others? The list is long and includes many things beyond one's own control—which leads me back to my conclusion many years ago that the world is a shared space.

To release the present, we must first

"If life cannot be more than we have imagined or believe, then life cannot be greater than current human perception and understanding. Within my experience, however, life is most certainly both—waiting to be discovered.."

--Sister Who

recognize that the world is indeed a shared space, that reality is a collective construction beyond anyone's individual control, and that within every such moment are a myriad of unseen spiritual, emotional, psychological, and even historical influences. Ultimately, we just do the best we can.

A significant part of doing the best we can, however, is remembering that the world is indeed a shared space and consequently that an unknown but obviously vast storehouse of possibilities is available. My resources are little more than a single drop of water within a virtually infinite ocean of resources around me. Constructively accessing those resources is one of the great ongoing struggles of human societal evolution. In far too many cases, however, the waves are crashing into each other instead of rising and falling in harmony—but harmony remains eternally possible.

To insist that waves will always crash into each other and never evolve toward harmony, is to eternally damn humanity's future. While this is an understandable expression of a wounded and broken soul beaten into hopelessness and cynicism, such an attitude also closes every door to more empowering discoveries.

If such cynicism were a call for help, steps could be taken to reclaim faith in others, in self, in life's goodness, and perhaps even in some conception of God. The first such step, of course, would be a letting go or a release of whatever constitutes the bars of that personal prison.

Astonishing as it may be, however, some have become so acclimated to their personal prisons that they have no interest in freeing their souls to explore the larger universe outside. Using Plato's metaphor of the cave, they have become quite content with the familiarity of shadows and dim torch-light. I respect their right to make that choice. I do not, however, respect any action to force others to make the same choice.

I continue to find that life is primarily about the growth of the soul—individually and collectively. What ultimately matters is not what happens to me, but rather how my soul grows by its experiences, interpretations, and response to whatever happens to me. Some things are quite difficult; others are blissfully easy. If either were enough, we'd have a recipe for life. Because struggles and blessings are complimentary, however, in ways we are only beginning to understand, it is vital that we release life within this moment to be whatever it can be and respond with all the wisdom and love we possess.

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

Releasing Life

I don't remember the exact phrasing, but I recall within the movie, "Star Trek: First Contact," that the bridge crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise had journeyed backwards in time to ensure that history was unaltered by a particular adversary and a particularly important historical figure made a comment that one must do one's best and allow history to make of one's life whatever it will. More concisely, there is no way to ensure or dictate precisely how one will be remembered or what effect one's work will ultimately have.

That being the case, we are again confronted with a certain imperative to trust, to have faith, and to give our best, since doing any less would only make us complicit in being remembered badly or not at all. Perhaps there are those who are not concerned with being remembered at all. For myself, however, I find that viewing my life as a particular experiential segment within a larger timeline, provides meaning and purpose that make certain struggles somehow more tolerable.

By integrating a larger spiritual reality with my much smaller material one, the latter has much less power to judge my efforts and ultimately my life negatively—even within the smallest moments of playing with my dogs or tending the meditation garden which I hope will be an effective place of prayer for others long after I'm gone. If things turn out otherwise, my temporary hope would be no less beautiful and at the very least it helps me to persist in doing whatever good I can do.

None of this, however, recommends dismissing accountability, calls for justice, or the requirement of mutual respect and inclusivity. These are simply the natural expressions of a genuinely godly (some might even say Christ-like) spirit. Within every moment, we have opportunity to demonstrate what sort of persons we are. Understanding one's self and others a little more each day is thus a matter of paying attention to how someone does whatever is done just as much as to what is in fact done.

Releasing life is therefore a matter of respecting what a vast and sacred thing the gift of consciousness, self-awareness, and being is and expressing this respect by utilizing the gift toward its very best possibilities—most of which we have only begun to discover. Guided by love and wisdom, everything can only get better.

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

On a Personal Note

This has been a difficult month for me, emotionally and relationally, providing numerous reminders of how difficult uniqueness and individuality can sometimes be. I found myself once again giving thanks for the encouragement of Albert Einstein's words, "I attempted to live a normal life, but found it was quite impossible for me." Perhaps normal is just not what I was ever intended to be, but it would certainly have been helpful to have been given a little more insight about survival within the current somewhat chaotic time of transition, for anomalous persons such as myself. In any case, I persist and strive to trust that at some future time, this will all make sense.

With regard to doctoral writing, it seems to be common sense that there is a sort of spiritual hunger inherent within every individual since the beginning of time, but I am still trying to find scholarly sources that have validated this and discussed responses to it, in order to begin work on my next pre-dissertation paper, "The Essential Contribution of Spiritual Vocation." Included within the discussion, of course, will also be how this contribution must be satisfied when no one of any particular spiritual vocation is available. Ah, well, I never asked for any of this to be easy. My hope is simply that this writing will produce some insights upon which others can build.

With regard to the ongoing cable television show "Sister Who Presents," completed episodes now number up to 241, many of which can be viewed through the Internet website of www.YouTube.com/DenverNeVaar. The possibility also exists of making DVD copies for those without Internet access, to play on a DVD player connected to a television.

For anyone who missed the earlier notice, the 2012 calendar is available for printing at www.SisterWho.com/calendar.html or I can also print a copy and send it by postal mail, if necessary. Please let me know how I can help.

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

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