

# *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*

## Tenaciously Letting Go

I have often heard people speak of "not being attached to outcomes" and I more often phrase the same idea as "not getting trapped within a web of expectations." The challenge of this relational and mental attitude is simply that life often takes unpredictable turns, as it unfolds through time with each passing day. Times of prosperity and need come and go in almost random fashion and when I listen to the various explanations of why each season came and left when it did, I notice that the explanations seem almost as arbitrary and personally chosen as any statement of theology.

I do believe that there is something that is truly divine, to which I refer most often by the simple three-letter word "God." I have found, however, that God is too big to fit within one religion. Similarly, life is too big to fit within one interpretation of its cycles and evolutions.

To return specifically to the challenge of detachment, however, I continue to seek a way to be always doing my best while allowing life to give whatever answer it will give. Because life is so much bigger than I, my anger and disappointment at not getting what I wanted, most often hurt only myself. Such feelings are quite legitimate and I do not condemn myself for having them, but they are nevertheless usually not helpful to any forward momentum.

It is true, however, that a significant amount of motivation, enthusiasm, energy, and even strength come from the anticipation of a desired outcome. The problem of course is that if the desired outcome does not materialize, we then experience to some degree the corresponding contrast of a moment or season of stagnation, depression, weariness, or weakness.

Perhaps we should simply expect to alternately experience both, within the greater unfolding of our individual lives.

Within the greater expanse of space beyond earth's atmosphere, planets and other celestial objects are suspended in relative harmony with each other by perfectly balanced centrifugal and gravitational forces. Similarly, we seek a balance of

centrifugal and gravitational forces within our relationships to people, environments, and all other things around us. Love pulls us toward each other. Emotional pain pushes us away. If the balance of forces did not create the perfect amount of distance between the earth and the sun, there would be no physical life on earth (or at least not as we generally understand it to be).

Similarly for us, being too close together can be suffocating, like a hot summer day when excessive heat and humidity cause most people to hide within air-conditioned spaces. Being too far apart can be chilling, like a winter night when excessive cold and ice move us to hide within heated spaces--once again reaching for a balance which might be difficult to find within such environmental circumstances. Surprising to no one, therefore, is that those geographical areas which naturally have the most balance between the extremes, have generally been described for thousands of years as the most desirable places in which to live.

Though of course there are always a few individuals like myself, who for whatever reason prefer one of the extremes over standing exactly in the middle (Hey, someone has to keep things going at the North Pole).

For the moment, however, I will leave the discussion of all the other examples of this pattern for another time. What seems most pertinent right now, is to empower ourselves for whatever challenges lie ahead, by reminding ourselves--daily, if necessary--that a specific outcome does not necessarily indicate what it might seem to indicate at first glance. Life is bigger than any one of the events or seasons which it includes.

If a particular political candidate wins or loses an election, life goes on and invites us to continue to help with its moment-by-moment shaping and development. If I do or do not get hired for a particular position of employment (in my case, a day-job which helps to support the on-going work of Sister Who), life goes on and invites me to continue to help with its moment-by-moment shaping and development. If I win the

lottery, lose my house to a bank foreclosure, or because of a severe auto accident am rendered a paraplegic for the rest of my life on earth, life goes on and invites me to continue to help with its moment-by-moment shaping and development.

The point of this idea of detachment, therefore, seems to be retaining the ability to move on with one's life in a positive direction, no matter what happens.

The actual doing of that, of course, is rather complicated, considering the range and intensity of emotion and change which may accompany any particular moment.

In reaching beyond my present moment's experience to the greater picture of life, however, I find that I more resemble and relate to that wondrous mystery I call God. When I am able to do that, I also find that the problems, pain, and undesired outcomes somehow just aren't as important as they seemed at first to be. I suppose another way of phrasing this is to say that the more I identify with that which is truly God, the more I find myself to be larger and greater than any adversarial person or circumstance.

Are the challenges (okay, problems, but I'm trying to use less adversarial language here) any less real? No, of course not. I like to think, however, that by my identification or interaction with God, they are less able to exert a decisive influence upon the unfolding of my life.

So perhaps the greatest irony of this idea of detachment from things, outcomes, and environments is that it is accomplished by drawing closer and becoming more bonded to something greater than any specific challenge could ever be.

I will continue to hold onto my dreams and work relentlessly toward every one of them coming true, but I have already chosen to allow them to find their own unique and mostly unanticipated path to manifestation. I do believe that dreams do sometimes come true, but have noticed that this often, or perhaps even usually, does not happen in the ways that anyone would have imagined.

These dreams, however, are not the images which often fill times of sleep, but rather are the dreams of how life can grow to be more than it is.

These dreams are yet another suggestion of our divine heritage and, therefore, it is an affirmation of life and of that which is truly divine, to hold on to such dreams, just as one might hold on to some form of faith during times of great doubt.

No one, it seems to me, has ever regretted doing so. May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

## Gliding Gently Homeward

The leaves of the sumac bush in the backyard have nearly all turned red and the purple ash tree in front of my house is well on its way to embodying its name. The pumpkin vine in the garden never grew quickly enough to produce any fruit, though its golden flower has been there for many weeks by now. I decided to experiment by trying to maintain the pumpkin vine as a houseplant all winter so that it might have yet another chance when spring returns again.

The dogs are running a figure-8 across the backyard, growling at each other playfully as they wrestle and tear across the grass faster than most would think a dachshund could run.

As the morning sunlight fills my living room and dining room, it seems somehow less important that twice within the last three days it was necessary to pump eight inches of water out of my basement, relight the pilot light of the natural gas water heater, and nudge the furnace once again into working more or less as it should.

If the world were to end today, I could honestly say that I have found many more moments of happiness here than I've found within the past several years in other residences. I guess that means that from a certain perspective, this has been a successful year so far, though hopefully it will get even better before the last day of December fades into the mists of time.

This has been a successful year--in spite of losing my day-job in May and thus far not being able to find another, in spite of digging a massive hole (approximately fifteen feet long, five feet deep, and three feet wide) next to my house to keep the clay soil from pushing the basement wall in any more than it already has, and in spite of leaving behind a home high in the mountains which had reached the limits of its ability to meet my needs, even though I put more work and more of my soul into that place than I'd ever put into any place I'd lived before moving there nearly three years earlier.

It's okay. I'm glad to be here.

As to my attempts at a vegetable garden here, I gave the winter onions to a friend in Wyoming so that he could expand his small "farmers' market" style of business and only one carrot grew to a modest size (the others didn't even sprout). I did get a couple dozen large radishes, which were good, but it seemed somehow peculiar

that if one calculates the amount of time and effort it took to produce them, the radishes from my garden were ten times as expensive as any available at a local grocery store.

When I moved out of my home high in the mountains, I left behind my portable dishwasher, in spite of the countless times I remarked to friends how much I hated washing dishes. I do it nearly every day here and think nothing of it, though I do expect to get a new built-in dishwasher at some point in the future.

The old piano cast-off piano stands next to my front door, waiting to be restored when I'm finally able to find the money or ability to do so, but there's something special just the same, about actually having my own piano for the first time in my life. I look forward to the day when I actually get to play it.

I really like my office, just off the living room, where I spend countless hours with my antiquated computer, hammering out words to songs, newsletters, and book manuscripts.

My little "boom-box" sits on the far side of the living room and fills the whole house with soft music, except of course when I'm working on some song or manuscript, in which case I need quietness so that I can concentrate.

I suppose it is very helpful to be able to notice and focus upon such things, rather than to be continuously distracted (as I sometimes am) by what the space does not include or by what is not happening within my life at the moment.

Perhaps it is the magic that comes from being able to notice a beautiful time while it is still happening, which reminds of the profound exchange within the final act of Thornton Wilder's play, "Our Town," which wonders at the fact that most people do not live especially conscious lives.

If we do not even see the seasons passing all around us or remember how our close friend's face looked when we walked into his or her house, how shall we grasp the precious things of the heart, which cannot be touched by hands or seen with eyes? How shall we know that we were not asleep the entire time that anything was happening?

Two days ago, a friend and I went out to take photographs of Sister Who at various locations in the foothills northwest of the city, to use in calendars, greeting cards, and such during the coming months and years. When the day had passed, we'd accomplished both more than we expected and less than we'd hoped.

I say "less than we hoped" because a wet storm last week had stripped most of the fall leaves from the trees covering the hillsides and toward the end of the day, we found ourselves moving ahead of yet more rain clouds. At one location, rain would begin to fall and we would run for the car and drive a few miles further south to a new location. A short time later the rain would begin to fall there as well and we would repeat our previous actions, fleeing to another location yet a little further south. After a half dozen recurrences, however, we decided we had as many good photos as we would probably be able to get and decided to head home.

I say "more than we expected" because we actually considered canceling the photo shoot altogether. My friend was confident, however, that through somewhat more aggressive photo editing, he would be able to achieve good quality photos in spite of the unhelpful turn of events in the weather.

All of which reminds me of a phrase I received within an email about a great violinist (with a significant physical disability no less) a number of years ago.

The musician's strings kept breaking until he had only one or two strings left, but he refused to stop. The audience's applause was deafening, when he finally concluded the piece and commented to them, "Sometimes it's not a question of how much you've got, but of how much you make out of what you still have left."

May you find peace, love, and happiness within whatever you have left today and make of it more than anyone would ever imagine you could.

*"We must live  
for something  
greater  
than ourselves  
if we are to avoid  
becoming small  
and petty."*

*--Sister Who*

## "The Sister Who Holiday Special"

I am thrilled that a new friend and I are working together to get Sister Who back into active television production and to also raise my shows to a higher level of quality and public distribution.

The current tentative date for production is Saturday, November 13 and so far things seem to be slowly falling into place, through persistent and careful planning and effort. Our hope is as follows.

The show is to begin with a very brief introduction by myself, recognizing the fundamental change in late December, when the days grow longer and the nights grow shorter. The common element of December holidays, therefore, is the increase of literal and figurative light within our lives.

During the first third of the hour-long show immediately following this introduction, each of five guests will individually share a brief story, anecdote, or meditation which reflects or illustrates the particular spiritual perspective.

During the second third of the show, a friendly round-table discussion including myself and the five guests, will offer the beauty of each spiritual perspective and path, as a sort of potluck, to which everyone brings a favorite dish and invites all others there to share in the enjoyment of dining together.

During the final third of the show, an exchange of gifts in front of a decorated tree, will provide an example of spiritual diversity interacting with mutual respect, peacefulness, and a certain perhaps subtle enjoyment of each others' company.

In selecting five guests to feature within the show, the initial idea was to attempt to mostly span the spectrum of human spirituality by including a monotheist, a polytheist, a non-theist, an atheist, and also allow for a fifth perspective that might not fall conveniently into any of those categories.

How close we are able to come to this initial idea depends of course on whether such guests can be found within production time constraints. The final mix of guests will probably thus "lean" in this or that direction, but it is my intention that regardless of the specific mix of spiritual perspectives, a show will be created which affirms life in all of its diversity.

Thus far the perspectives represented by confirmed guests include Judaism, Paganism, and an interesting monotheistic earth-oriented spirituality of which I'd previously not been aware.

I've been unable to find an atheist but am hoping to make contact with a Buddhist, which in my very basic understanding is a system for nurturing spiritual health without including a specific named deity.

I also wanted to include a Muslim, considering the political and military events of the past year, as a gesture of healing and a hope for moving towards non-violence between people of faith, but have been so far unable to find a potential guest of that spiritual perspective who is willing to be on a show hosted by a gay nun.

Mostly I would just like very much for all perspectives to be (literally or by implication) included within the celebration of the upcoming holiday season. Life is after all, something which includes all of us, regardless of our ways of understanding or interacting with its unfolding.

It is my hope that every person, regardless of experience or opinion, will be able to find ways of celebrating and of living, which bring love, peace, and joy to their individual experiences of life.

Yes, life does include a lot of struggle. Just as any birth process also includes a lot of struggle, however, something good can come out of the experience.

I sometimes wonder whether I am on the right track in living my life so openly, sharing details with people I barely know, but I am reminded of something I said to a dear friend who's life path has included a transgenderal journey.

I cannot accept that she is an unintended mistake, that God lost control of the universe for a moment while she was being initially created with a male body, nor can I accept the notion that she is supposed to spend her entire life in a mismatched body, if a constructive alternative is available.

Therefore, as I said to her, it seems there is something the human race will only learn by watching her struggle of transformation enacted right where everyone can see, something so important for us to learn that God would choose or allow for this struggle of transformation to occur.

Recognizing this degree of importance, it seems all the more important to me to pay attention. The lessons being presented are not occurring without great cost to someone and therefore demand as great a respect as any other fragile treasure.

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

### *Subscription Information:*

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