

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

It is so easy to forget within the busy-ness of each day, just how very interconnected and inter-related every person and thing in life is. It is when we forget, however, that we also begin to lose touch with the basic humanity within each of us, which ideally makes life worth living. To lose our humanity is, for example, to lose our ability to love.

As real and as inescapable as inter-relationship may be, however, there are multiple dimensions to this as well. This month's newsletter offers a few possibilities to ponder, perhaps even empowering us to live more consciously and thus more deeply appreciate and utilize the precious gift that our brief lives on earth inherently are.

No matter how much suffering or how much joy any particular life may include, every life is an opportunity for us to reach out and spread the joy and love around, until a miraculous wholeness becomes the universal experience.

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

Ideas of Relationship

It seems that ever since the psychologist Carl Jung wrote the words, "what you resist, persists," countless numbers of people have been reinterpreting this quote to support their own narcissism--rather than applying the deeper wisdom of these words to the development of better relationships. I often find myself at odds with authors, philosophers, and ministers on this point, because I continue to insist upon wholeness, multi-dimensional integration, and honesty, while remaining--as always--firmly opposed to psychological projection and denial. What makes the discussion divisive, however, is the insistence upon polarized discussion: that it is either this or that, right or wrong, good or bad, one or the other--that there are no degrees of gray in between.

To my observation, nearly all of life is lived within various shades of gray and nearly everything and everyone I've ever encountered has been some unique combination of good and bad qualities.

What I have also all too often observed within

practitioners of this new variant of positive thinking (the thinking that one must think, speak, and act exclusively in accordance with one's preferences) is a dramatic drop in such individuals' availability to assisting people in need--even if these individuals were also once people in need who were helped by others.

It is not difficult to build a case against exclusively using the word "don't" without ever discussing what one should in fact do. I suggest, however, that it is equally ineffective to focus exclusively on the word "do" without ever discussing what falls under the heading of "don't" and that if one's focus upon the word "do" and upon being always positive has created blindness, apathy, and unresponsiveness to people who are suffering, then the new ideology and approach has become an idol which prevents genuinely godly living and appropriate and healthy interconnection with all living things.

Do we in fact empower negative things by talking about them or negative situations by focusing upon them? My loud and emphatic response is "NO!" I would hasten to add, however, that we would do well to examine *how* we talk about them. Most especially, are we seeking to understand these negative things in order to understand the combination of events and circumstances of which the particular negative thing is constituted and do we patiently persist in the discussion until we are able to formulate a proactive response (by which the particular thing will begin to be transformed)?

I have been to anti-war demonstrations because I am in fact opposed to war, but while there I have made a point of including within my conversations equal discussion of prevention, of maintaining one's sanity during the insanity of war, and of post-war healing. All three are vital to the survival of any godly human spirit.

More concisely, it is not effective to rid the world of hate, if one does not fill the resulting voids with unconditional love and wisdom.

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

Words of Relationship

As a child, blessed or cursed (depending upon one's perspective) with clear, quick, and deep perception of details, relationships, and values, I often heard references to English is as being a common language between all (or nearly all) people within the United States (obviously a dubious assumption). What I noticed almost immediately, however, was that even the most common of words were used in very different ways by various people. The more I heard people insist upon the existence of a common language, therefore, the less I believed them.

The more I realized how many personal versions of language surrounded me, the more obvious it became that interpersonal conflicts would most likely follow. Attempts to create a genuinely and truly common language, however, were generally opposed by individuals' commitment to continuing to speak in whatever manner they had spoken (apparently) throughout their lives. Ultimately, there were as many "right" ways to use English vocabulary as there were people, but having this many definitions of the "right" way to use language was very confusing.

Specifically because there were so many possibilities, unintentional offenses caused by nothing more than poor word choice, were quite common (and still are). What seems unfortunately quite rare, is our knowledge of words that heal relationships, inspire minds, and nurture souls. This is further exacerbated by ingrained assumptions that only highly trained professionals are able to speak without causing offense. Those who might know a helpful answer to a particular problem, therefore, refrain from speaking, if they do not also have the corresponding appropriate professional or academic credentials. When wisdom is silenced by mere societal hierarchy, the wisest possible decisions cannot be made.

Just as words can create conflict, however, words can also create healing and it is not always necessary to have advanced training and professional credentials if one is able to refrain from being judgmental. What does this mean in practice? A number of possibilities come to mind, but this is obviously part of a larger discussion.

First of all, there is no "should be" or "supposed to" which must at all costs be satisfied. Instead there are simply alternative methods, some of which may be more effective and some less. One of the ways I addressed this in

childhood was to conclude out-loud whenever a disagreement would arise that "there are at least a hundred different ways to do any particular thing."

Another point to bear in mind is that one does not need complete understanding of a particular problem in order to respond with compassion and love. "I may not understand, but I am willing to stand by your side throughout the struggle" may be all a particular person needs, in order to find the strength to persevere through difficulty and pain.

Sometimes it is better to let the person most affected by the struggle, remain "in the driver's seat" by asking questions such as "Is there anything I can do to help?" and "what would be most helpful to you right now?" and "We've heard what the experts recommend; what do you want to do?". It may also be that as one bears witness to a particular struggle, an opportunity to speak truth or provide a very specific transforming insight might occur (i.e. "I may not know much about _____, but I know what it feels like to be the recipient of a lie.").

Another important aspect of words of relationship is any sort of validation of inclusion; perhaps something like "That solution works well for most of us, but what about _____? He/she is a member of our group too and I for one am not willing to allow his/her needs to be ignored." To the extent that every individual is non-judgmentally included, every individuals potential known and yet-to-be-discovered contributions retain the ability to bless the entire surrounding community. To the extent that anyone's potential contributions are censored, the community impoverishes itself.

Considering the diversity which must be somehow brought into relatively effective harmony, it is perhaps inevitable that disagreements will occur and hard choices will have to be made. A community which has educated its members in ways to disagree agreeably and ways to also take responsibility for any negative effects of the communal decisions, will find itself equipped to deal with greater challenges than less-educated communities would be able to handle. There must always be a way to deal constructively with anomalies and exceptions, if a community is to avoid losing the blessings which only anomalies and exceptions can deliver.

The essential dynamic, more concisely, is unconditional and all-encompassing love.

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

Actions of Relationship

I've been pondering, for perhaps a couple of years now, the basic question, "What kind of person will you show yourself to be?" Regardless of good or ill fortune, positive or negative response from others, times of abundant or limited resources, emotions of happiness or sadness--what kind of person will I show myself to be? Additionally, how will such expressions limit or empower me and can I live within the corresponding consequences?

Sometimes within the diversity of life's experiences, others may intentionally or unintentionally hurt us and later want to return to the dynamics of the time which preceded the hurtful action--but we can't. We cannot unwrite any terrible thing once it is done. The actions have redined ourselves to others or they have redefined themselves to us and the most for which we can hope is to build something new which integrates the knowledge and awareness of the particular hurtful action (as well as any new insight that was thereby gained). Even such rebuilding, however, is only possible if there is agreement that rebuilding should happen--agreement enough to do the essential corresponding work, that is.

Relationships are inherently living things, which consequently change in some way with each passing day--growing, expanding, stagnating, contracting, mutating, or evolving in a perhaps a hundred different ways, many of which are almost too subtle to notice at the time they occur. What we each individually become, however, will be the product of these thousands of combined influences. Each and every tragic loss or joyous accomplishment will similarly reflect this over-abundance of combined influences.

This is perhaps one of the reasons why the insight was offered so long ago that "he who is faithful in little will be faithful in much." Phrased in a different and perhaps more concise way: the details matter.

*"If I am to be bigger
than life's problems,
I will need to be small enough
to accept divine solutions."*

--Sister Who

The details matter specifically because they are the grains of sand which ultimately give substance to the mountain. The details matter because they are inescapably related to all of the other details around them and the combination of all of these details can move like a tidal wave or a hurricane--altering the condition, pose, and location of everything in its path.

Often we do not wish to be such a tidal wave; to have the influence and effect upon those around us that we do. We do not wish to be responsible to even a tiny degree for alterations in the condition, pose, or location of whatever or whomever we encounter. By the grace of that which is truly God, however, we are.

Why? Specifically because it is by struggling with such potentiality and personal power that we grow to be better forms of ourselves. Without struggle, there is no growth and ultimately there is no life. Without action, there is no outcome upon which to afterwards reflect. Without relationship, there is no reason for any particular outcome to matter.

Specifically because we love and inescapably exist within relationships of some sort to every person and thing around us, we have the ability to make the relationships productive, to make our contributions to the welfare of others something for which others can be thankful, and to plant seeds of greater possibilities within generations yet to come. Specifically because we have received resources and abilities from previous generations, there is a foundation upon which the innovations and additions of our individual lives can be built. Specifically because our communities are composed of many individuals' actions brought into harmony, we can--like an orchestra--collectively make more beautiful music than any of us would ever be able to make while playing our respective instrument all alone.

Humanity is an orchestra; this we cannot avoid. What sort of music this orchestra makes, however, varies from one moment to the next, according to the contributions of whichever musicians are not only present but also ready to play with their greatest passion and skill.

Ultimately it may also be that the actions of relationship which most embody the divine healing power of love, are those which seek a person willing to do them, rather than a technician interested in controlling them.

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

Presence of Relationship

The presence of the mountains in Colorado continuously and dramatically affects the weather patterns and conditions with which local populations must contend. The mountains, however, neither move nor project any intentions; they are just there, forcing the wind, rain, snow, and sun to go around them rather than through them. Sometimes they hold the effects of rain and snow for a while; at other times they relinquish what has been received in order to participate in Mother Nature's own kind of recycling.

In a similar way, simply by our presence or absence, certain winds blow around us, creating a sort of regional weather pattern. Being happy in a way that is not genuine or pretending that everything is nice when any embrace of truth would instead recommend intentions of proactive healing or educational tutoring, works against the continuance of life itself. Being sad in order to illegitimately draw out contributions of others' time, energy, or resources, steals healing and empowerment from those who genuinely need it.

Standing in balance, however, honestly disclosing need and sharing abundance according to one's abilities and resources, resonates with Mother Nature to ensure that everyone and everything has enough of whatever is needed. Truthful perception is that perception which integrates everything, excludes nothing, and remains saturated in love throughout every moment. For humanity, this is quite difficult to do, specifically because of how close we stand to our own individual experience and of how intensely we consequently feel that experience.

Perception is a very big part, however, of being human. As much as certain religious perspectives would like to deify detachment, I am appalled at how those who have done so and thereafter describe themselves as being in some sense spiritually superior, are less engaged in loving and healing everything and everyone else which crosses their paths.

Perhaps a different way of understanding detachment is the recognition that we would do well to pay attention to what presence we bring to each moment that we live. If by our presence within the world people are truthfully loved, healed, equipped, and empowered, the presence of a relationship with the Divine may be close at hand.

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

On a Personal Note

It's been a rough month and for the moment continues to be so. Conflicts between a couple of my dogs escalated to a terrifying extreme recently and I'm currently up to my neck in attempts to adjust and cope while maintaining an overwhelming volume of more or less required work in at least four different areas of my life's activity. Most days I feel completely overwhelmed, but somehow I have avoided collapsing under the strain and I continue to persist in doing whatever I can in whatever ways I can. I feel like my little family here is being ripped apart and I don't know whether or not I will be able to find a way to put it back together again.

In the meantime, here is finally the monthly newsletter (I apologize for its tardiness) and approximately two-thirds to three-fourths of the photos and video recordings for the 2010 and 2011 calendars and the updated version of the introduction to the ongoing cable-access television show "Sister Who Presents" have been completed. Hopefully by the middle of October, the remaining photos and video recordings will be done also.

The inclusion of the portable chapel within the bi-annual Metaphysical Fair at the Denver Merchandise Mart seems to have been a complete success, judging by the constructive conversations and restful visitations which occurred within its canvas walls. One person even slipped into the chapel undetected and left a single white rose in a small bud vase on the altar. I have no idea whom to thank, but I sent up many prayers of gratitude for during the following week, as I took the time to briefly smell the rose every time I passed its subsequent place on my dining room table.

My doctoral studies continue, but not with ideal synchronicity since financial aid disbursements do not coincide with the beginning of each quarter when expenses for books occur. Somehow, I intend to nevertheless prevail until this too has passed and I move on to better things.

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

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