

On Humility: Smaller and Dumber... and Very OK With It *by David*

I have been finding myself feeling much smaller and aware of being way more ignorant each passing day, and that it feels... *swell*, and *freeing*, to be in the midst of this.

No, this is not some masochistic tendency aimed at satisfying self-loathing on a large, Freudian scale; rather, it feels like I have stumbled on a *precise* way to regain a sense of marveling at the creative force, its process and we as examples of that which has been created. It feels like a *discipline* that can bring us back around the wheel from the jaded, *show me* people we have become (and there is even a whole state reserved for a certain breed of 'em), to the wide-eyed child discoverers we once were.

In my meditations and prayers I continue to ask to be humbled; to know humility; to be shown how wondrous any given bit of creation is and can be; to be broken down from the sense of being a *know-it-all* and being built back up, re-membered, into a being capable of infinitely more gratitude and awareness, with more questions than answers.

I have done this since a kid. Where others wished for ponies, Barbies, G.I. Joe's... this is the sort of thing I asked and prayed for, having come into this world seemingly aware of a few pieces of the puzzle being out of place.

Over time I had come to realize how we worked ourselves, over time, into this spot of *managing* our world by this elaborate naming and filing system that stripped awe and astonishment from the equation, and decided I wanted it back.

This is the path that has brought me back into the mystery and magic of the world; back to the idea of my universe as a living, growing organism; back to chewing and gnawing on words like awe and wonder, magnificence, beauty and many more out there on the high, extreme ends of human experience.

I know how we got this way.

You see, as a survival mechanism we came to name things. Had to. We would experience a given thing, give it a name, file it in our reptile brains as threat or non-threat, and once we felt comfortable with that thing as a non-threat, we could easily scan it the next time we saw it, presumably file it again in the non-threat bin and move on to scanning for other things that might be out there waiting to harm us-- like saber-toothed tigers and multi-national corporations, plagues and telemarketers.

This process of naming for this purpose worked for a good deal of our evolution... but it no longer serves. For now we have come to a place where we have named just about all things, are quick to name the new things, and somehow think that we know all there is, or all we

need know of these things. Done. A handful of facts on a flashcard.

We know... tree, water, Bill in accounting, ladybug, ham sandwich... and there is no surprise there, no magic and very little mystery. And so life has become rather boring and miracle-free. Sterile.

Many continue to try to experience more extreme activities, events and things... but these quickly get named and filed as well... under "been there, done that". Hmmph, what next?

As a race, almost down to the man or woman, we wait for someone to create that next thing to amuse us, for whatever interval it can last. Having lost our way in this respect, we have become eager consumers, and look to feed this beast, this void, at the expense of resources. Empty, we sit as if at the Saturday matinee at the Roman Coliseum, and look to others to perform whatever outrageous acts they might, to fill us, at the expense of their and our own self-respect.

And so it comes back to the quest for humility, the courage to look at that common thing anew... and with an intent and focus to take the process to a level of detail where amazement is undeniable. *To boldly go...* inward... following our way back to our connection to that which is deeper.

Try this with a blade of grass, a penny, a living being, a drop of water. Similar to the trick where you can't take a piece of paper of any type or size and fold it more than 7 times in half (try it)... this quest for understanding of even the smallest and most basic thing cannot be taken more than the first few steps before boggling the mind--discombobulating it with just how much one *can't* know of even the seemingly simplest nature or aspect of it or how it came to be.

Bring yourself to this point with one object... then multiply this humbled state by the millions of drops, blades of grass, leaves, particles of air within your field of vision no matter which way you turn...

... and we understand that, yes, up to this point in time, it would not have been safe to contemplate just how great the Creative Force is...

... but now, we are in a time where we are working our way back to being able to process more and more of that-- wonder, awe, majesty, any of those words that begin to sound of religion and mysticism. And rightly so.

We are working our way down this path, because we are beginning to understand at the same time, that we are extensions of this Creative Force, this Godstuff. *Being with* more of this understanding; processing more of this creation, light, energy; is the way we will work our way back home to more and more of it.

This is the place of richness, and true riches.

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This is where humbleness and humility come in for me. I feel as a grain of sand in a talk entitled "The Precious Garland" given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When asked what it is to be a bodhisattva-- an enlightened one— His Holiness answered, by way of this talk, that if you imagined an immense beach... with every grain of sand comprising that beach... a lifetime lived... and then enough lifetimes to fill an almost endless number of such beaches ... only then could one understand what it might be to be to have the wisdom of a bodhisattva.

On the one hand, this could be a depressing thought-- to think we might have so far to go; but on the other, to me, the sense that I am on this path, headed in the right direction... working toward being able to take in so much more wonder, beauty, all of it in every glance... witnessing myself growing in small increments in this practice... far outweighs the downside that feeling smaller and dumber, with so far to go, could otherwise take me.

Keeping the focus on all there is to appreciate... and all the fun in that-- all the times that shall be spent with so many others who we'll come to know and appreciate, layer by layer; all the nuances and sublime lessons to be taught us by each named thing out there in our world; keeps me very excited about this process, however long it might take.

And I believe it was Kabir who said, "Path presupposes distance." So maybe we, in all humbleness, might not be so far away after all.

*First, a mountain is a mountain. Then, when I open my eye, a mountain is not a mountain. After practicing further, then once again a mountain is a mountain.
~~ Zen Proverb*

Prayer = Spontaneous Healing by Joan

The power of prayer allows the presence of God/Spirit/Goddess/Oneness to be made more visible.

I had often wondered what prayer really does. How does it heal? What is the equation of prayer? Does it work? Where does it go?

This past weekend I *spontaneously* signed up for this workshop on *Spontaneous Healing*, not expecting such a miraculous healing of my own, in the form of a keener awareness in answer to these questions that I ask myself each time I am drawn to sit down and pray, meditate, etc. But an awareness of the alchemy of prayer to this end is just what I received.

Our facilitator Cynthia had spent 11 years as a full time prayer counselor. Each day her work was to meditate, and pray with and for anyone who called-in seeking assistance. She told us that sometimes she would pray for over 70 different people a day, to the tune of having facilitated over thousands and thousands of prayers.

During the workshop I asked her what she now knew about the power of prayer and how praying had changed her life.

Her first response was simply-- it works. Then she shared with us that as we pray we begin to shift our consciousness and our dna, and literally move into a different field of consciousness.

A power greater than ourselves comes forth and we sense beyond the personality. We move from fear to love and our hearts-- that may have been closed to whatever degree-- open; and in the opening to love and its limitless possibilities something shifts and a healing occurs. The spirit of truth that has been waiting to come forth comes through an open heart to generate this healing.

Cynthia obviously recognizes that the "I AM" presence is free from the illusion that we are alone; free from the illusion that anything outside of us is real and has any power over us; free from the illusion that anything is ever really working against us-- because divine love, disguised at times to allow for our own realization, can only be of and for us.

Everything is within us. And that is what prayer allows us to become more aware of.

The presence of God/Spirit/Goddess is within, and we make this presence more visible as we take time to pray, meditate and become quiet. **Our physical dna is thus shifted more into spiritual dna.** And the intent behind this prayer and its element of empty, receiving space-- creating an opening in which an answer can take hold-- is part of this alchemical transformation.

We become more of the "I AM" presence and through that connection we become infused with the energy of love, hope, possibility, faith, trust, peace.

Prayer allows the presence of the God/Goddess/Spirit to be more visible. It allows us to be in the energy field of the presence and in that presence we become more of our own God/Spirit/Goddess Self. In us and through us we are then more visible energies of divine love in action.

As we spend time in our various forms of prayer our hearts are opened and divine love that is our source flows through us, and our words, actions and intentions are more loving, calm, centered and peaceful.

When we are called to meditate we are being asked to allow ourselves to become a sacred vessel, a container of love so that we can be the diffuser of this love in a particular way. We can be the hands of Spirit, the voice of Spirit, the loving actions of Spirit, on behalf of another, the world, the planet, etc.

Prayer is an avenue to allowing the presence of Spirit to become more visible. It is mystical and magical in the way it transforms our internal alchemy to align more with our authentic essence. In this alignment we become more of the living presence of the "I AM" essence. In this presence we emit the spiritual energy of love and as we anoint ourselves with this energy field we create more of its essence in the world around us.

This is the spontaneous healing of awareness I received in the workshop.

Prayer changes us from *waiting for a miracle to becoming the miracle.* For it is the Divine presence that we allow and invite to move through us that allows the miraculous to occur. Blessed Be!

40 Days in the Desert by David

As winter is yielding to spring I bear witness that a number of people in my sphere, myself included, seem to be somewhere in the middle of a bout of *40 days in the desert*, a visionquest, a sundance... whatever equivalent of a time of immense purification and cleansing of all resistance standing between one and their deeper connection to their peace in the world. The committed ones really seem to be laying themselves bare, and having every unnecessary, unwanted thought and bit of resistance stripped from them. The hounds are barking, whispers of doubt are swirling. A time of being tested seems to be at hand, and somehow at a level of intensity beyond "the curve" of what we have becoming used to of-late.

In a more unspoken way than sometimes occurs with Harmonic Convergences and various significant alignments of the stars, it feels like an opening is present that is allowing much interior movement and change for the positive... albeit the kind that is stretching those standing in the fire to their max. No one has put a name on this time of trial and reward that I have yet seen or heard. And I feel it might offer a bit of relief to those going through their particular distress... to know that there are a lot of us in this space wrestling right alongside of you. We truly are in it together.

All I have witnessed are bearing up admirably. And immense grace seems to be the soup du jour.

Every bit of the being, the way of being, the roles, the fears and illusions of each of us... are being laid upon the table. Everything is being offered up for amendment and correction. And piece by piece, inch by inch, sweat-soaked night after night each of us is showing up to reclaim more and more of our authentic selves.

Friends of mine have put their relationships into the hopper and have been rewarded for their dedication and hard work, with richer levels of connection and commitment on the other side of that trust and commitment. Some of us have put fear and hope, money and intimacy issues on the line... and are feeling more openings being breathed into these formerly tight situations.

I don't feel it a coincidence that this time has us bearing down upon Easter and the season of resurrection myths and archetypes across numerous traditions; and as plants, trees, flowers, the Earth herself are being reborn across at least one hemisphere.

As the collective consciousness is embracing more quantum thought, more of the Law of Attraction and self-as-co-creator lines of thought, I feel we are beginning to move well along the way to new possibilities. But I also believe as so many are in the infancy of their time playing with these new theories, the lag between voicing and authentically believing in the prospects they are affirming... is sending small bits of intentionally veiled fear rippling into being as well.

Fear not. For as the first wobbly outings on a two-wheeled bicycle transition into a lifetime mastery and years of smooth riding... so shall these affirmations and resonations with higher frequencies and limitless outcomes come as naturally in short order.

Continue along your path. Continue doing what you are doing, which is only, and always... your best.

Allow this walk through the desert to be as pleasant as possible. Feel the sun on your face. Rest as things get too hot, and then continue the journey by the light of the moon. Allow the mind to trick itself into respites and spates of relief in the form of the occasional oasis. Use whatever of these tricks you need, until you achieve their incorporation and mastery on the other side, and are able to drink and quench from waters beyond illusion.

Feel each footstep as it gently pads the ground and know that one never covers the same ground twice. You are no longer who you were. And you are that much closer to who you are becoming.

What's Working: This New House by David

As we look out our bedroom window we can see an act of loving taking shape. On our television near the window we can see a similar act of love being erected... on the other end of a continuum.

On the rise on the other side of our pond our neighbor John is building a home. On Extreme Makeover: Home Edition they are also building a home.

One entails many people creating a dream, around the clock over the course of a week; the other is coming to life by way of a small number of dedicated family members squeezing in time on weekends, and the odd hour or two between each work day's end and sundown, weather permitting.

Each is reminiscent of the spirit of the old-time barnraising, in which a community comes together in support of others-- each with the knowledge of what it is to have... a place to call their own-- regardless of the size and number of bodies and hammers in that community.

Blessings to these folks and their toils on their way to a dream. And blessings to you and yours, under whatever roof that covers that place you call home.



Portable Altar by Joan

(one of a new series of sacred altars to be found soon at www.joanclark.com)

To carry reminders with us always, of the Spirit inside.

Having a more "curiously strong" effect on us, perhaps, than a tin of mints!

Whatever you do to remind yourself of who you truly are...

... do it often!

Thinking Ahead

An issue of which we are most proud comes to a close.

Much material to digest here on becoming more humble by way of following the path to seeing things for all they are... drawing in healing for ourselves and others as we might not be seeing all as whole... bearing down and shoring up as we commit further to walking through the barrens, allowing ourselves to be stripped clean and clothed in finer mantle... and coming together with friends and loved ones, to build-- daily-- our homes, and to then keep those home fires burning.

As April has showered us with many blessings, May hopes to see some observations on our uniqueness, the idea of a higher benchmark for which to strive, a gentle meditation and other goodies *flower* in the next issue.

See you next month!

About the Authors

David Bartholomew and Joan Clark are married and currently living in Lawrence, Kansas. This publication stems from their commitment that each of us lives from our true calling, and trust that this is possible.

Joan is an artist/painter/natural perfumer/writer/teacher/holistic practitioner bringing forth intuitively and Spirit-driven work. She truly lives from a place that everything is connected and all aspects of her life reflect this.

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*What Would You Do...
If You Knew You Could Not Fail?*