

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



EMISSARIES
OF DIVINE LIGHT

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS NOT SMOOTH

4 MARCH 2008

*The place where you are right now
God circled on a map for you.*

*Wherever your eyes and arms and heart can move
Against the earth and sky,
The Beloved has bowed there—*

*Our Beloved has bowed there knowing
You were coming.*

*I could tell you a priceless secret about
Your real worth, dear pilgrim,*

*But any unkindness to yourself,
Any confusion about others,*

*Will keep one
From accepting the grace, the love,*

*The sublime freedom
Divine knowledge always offers to you....*

—Hafiz

There's a certain pressure that comes when you say yes to letting life move through you. How often do we avoid a situation because we are feeling the pressure and wanting to bow out? I've been thinking a lot about what Ted Black and David Karchere offered last week about the amount of pressure I let off myself by finding people who will agree with me that that's the best thing to do.

How often do we try to eliminate the pressure we feel to live a truly creative life by finding someone who will agree with something in us that is less than creative? How often do I look for people who have vision and know where they're going, as opposed to the ones who will agree

with settling for where we have already arrived? “Isn’t this a great place? Let’s stay here for a while.” I want to know where *you’re* going. I want to find the people who are going where I want to be going.

Back along the way, I used to be a tennis player and it was a lot of fun to play people who didn’t play as well as me. I would win, but my game never improved. The coach of the Loveland Tennis Club said, “Well, you’re a 3.0, and I’m going to put you in the 3.5 level.” It was terrifying to play someone who was so much better than me. It was demanding and pushed me into a higher level of play. People who can show you how to go where you want to go can help you develop perception. I have discovered that sometimes I don’t really know how to get where I want to go. So, as Ted has suggested, I find somebody who knows what they’re doing, and learn from them.

Many of the things I’m speaking about go right back to what we choose to be doing with our lives. What are we doing? Who are we serving? Who’s teaching us things? Who do we play tennis with? Where is our growing edge?

Years ago I read a research paper about children growing. I don’t know a parent that hasn’t had the experience of seeing their child waking up one morning and believing that he or she has grown two inches in the night! And you know what? The research says it’s true—it happens. I want to read a paragraph from Dr. Emory’s research on growth:

“In children, we often view growth as a long continuous arc, especially if we look at annual growth measurements like the charts you might find in your pediatrician’s office. However, growth is not so smooth, and occurs in spurts, as first shown some years ago among our studies of infants. . . . This is the first animal model to show that growth—at the level of the bone—is not a continuum.”

There are moments when the pressure is on and growth is happening, and we don’t feel like we’re in an easy, smooth continuum. We don’t feel that “I can just handle it all; I’ll just be thankful; it’s all wonderful; I give thanks in all things. Thank you for being mean to me; thank you for this awful circumstance. . . .” There are times when it’s really hard, when it feels more like “I don’t think I could handle one more thing.” Have you ever had a week like that?

At times like that it is helpful to know how pressure works in your own experience. It’s helpful to understand the physiology of pressure patterns and to know what it means to hold and bring the pressure of the creative process, for which you are responsible. Bring it to the place in yourself where you can hold it. It didn’t come to you happenstance. “The place where you are right now / God circled on the map for you.” Who is going to let the pressure build so the patterns can change? Who will say in their living, “Keep coming, blessed ones”? Sometimes we think of the “blessed ones” as the people in our lives, but what about the circumstances that make us feel this uncomfortable? Keep coming, blessed things. I have the capacity; I will take it.

In many religious circles this would be labeled martyrdom or sainthood. I call it being alive, being the temple of the living God.

If a person doesn't do that, they settle for something else. And if a person is settling for something less, they will look for others who will support them in that. People who will say, "Isn't life really hard? Isn't that person really a _____?" What lovely word would we fill in there?

What is the stance of the person who is the temple of the living God? "Thank you. Welcome. Here am I." Sometimes we may have to find someone to whom we can say, "Whew, I don't think I can take another one! But here am I; stand with me—let's go, let's move. Let's go *there*. Let's go there. Help me up."

There is a difference between loving, and condoning destructive behavior. Have you ever been in a situation where someone was so totally out of their true character that they even surprised themselves with what came out of their mouth, only to have someone say afterwards, "You were great; thank you for just being yourself"? Here was a missed opportunity to hold a place of wholeness for the person. The opportunity is to say, "I will stand with you while you stand in what you just created, what you just did. And it could be wonderful and it could be awful, but I will love you, and you will deal with that. I will be here for you, my friend." It's not a stance of judgment. If you love the person in the midst, you let them feel the pressure.

The pressure to be new in the midst of the familiar is the greatest joy of being alive. That's what makes the temple a living place. It's not just the temple of God—it's the temple of the *living* God. If it were just a building, that would be the temple. But human beings are the living temple, and we get the chance to be transformed, to be new on this day, to face what it is that comes in these moments of pressure and being alive.

Sometimes these issues are all part of an internal conversation. Nobody else is even in the room. Perhaps I'm frustrated with the way I've been, and it doesn't work anymore. Who am I going to blame then? Who can I commiserate with then? Have you had the experience of going to a friend and they say, "Yeah, you've been like that all along. That's right. Thank God—all of us have been aware of it, loving you anyway"? "Thank God, you finally see it, Jane!"

Sometimes it's the people who love you, yet don't tell you what to do, who allow you to see those things. Whether or not they love you is not the issue—they already love you. But they know they want to go somewhere more, somewhere higher, somewhere beautiful with you. If you value being the living temple, you hold them and they hold you, and together you are on a journey.

We get to declare that love for each other by the way we live. People are afraid to declare this kind of thing in their living, for fear of making a mistake, for fear of hurting someone. It's worth the risk of making a mistake. Surround yourself with people who are going there and say, you will still be loved, and it will move this body of the living God forward. Are we stagnant? Are we settling? Are we deteriorating? Or are we growing?

All the situations that have come to you this week got you here. Sometimes you might think you're here in spite of your life. I'd like to say you're here because of your life. The truth, the beauty of who you are, may be seen by those who are living where you want to be going, more than you see it yourself. They see the capacity. They see what's just hovering, ready to pour through you. They see your majesty. I see it. I see your majesty. I don't have to search to see the potential. And I know I'm not alone in that.

If at any given time you don't realize that you are right where you need to be, find someone who knows they are right where they need to be and move with them, stay in the pressure of agreement with them. Hover; cling if you must; let them love you into the remembrance that you've got all you need and you've got places to go.

Jane Anetrini
jane_anetrini@emnet.org
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100 Sunrise Ranch Road ♦ Loveland, CO 80538
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