

GROWING A THRIVING GARDEN

PULSE OF SPIRIT
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We are designed to receive and bring blessing. Recently we spoke of this as welcoming the rain and bringing the rain.

We also spoke about the potential that all things can be a window to heaven. Here is the way the blessing can enter us and be delivered by us into the world. Additionally, we recently mentioned the experience of the hardpan on the soil. This is not uncommon in Colorado, where the heat is high, and the rain is sparse. This happens especially when the soil is not aerated and cared for with manure and organic matter. Hard-pan results in the inability of the rain to penetrate. This is true for the soil and can also be a reference for a hardened heart.

All these references create within me the vision of a garden: rain, soil, giving and receiving, and the experience of heaven.

I have been to many places where the garden's beauty invokes an experience of heaven—Sunrise Ranch, Cape Town, South Africa, sacred places in England, Hawaii, Italy, and where I grew up in Western New York. Some of these places are beautiful because they haven't been violated. Others because there has been care and a desire to manifest that beauty. These places are physical representations of earthly beauty. As a result, I have had my breath taken away countless times.

Something else that has taken my breath away is the living garden within a human being. The flow of love and the honoring of Truth moving through a person is glorious. The result is life-giving to the person and the observer. As in a physical garden, safety and care provide an opportunity for thriving. It brings the living garden. The exchange of gifts

amongst people creates a fertile community where the seeds that are shared grow into healthy and holy relationships, vibrant homes, thriving businesses, and inviting opportunities.

When there is hardpan upon the human heart, the opposite experience is known—fear, sorrow, loneliness, and depletion. When we want to change the hardpan in the earth, we bring in compost, manure, and water. We make sure there is air moving through the soil. We plant things that will go deep and stay strong. We plant things that fit the climate and do not demand more than the environment can provide. What about the hardpan over the human heart?

What is the nutrient-rich substance needed to change the hardpan in the human heart? Blessing, encouragement, support, and appreciation. And what makes this go deep? Consistency, honesty, and time.

The beauty of this formula is we all have nutrient-rich substance to bring. We have blessings or rain to bring. We need each other's nutritional support. Together we create a healthy, vibrant, growing, and expanding family.

I participate in a men's group every Friday morning. That's right, a men's group! It's a breakfast meeting where we discuss a chosen book. I was invited by a

friend who has been part of the group for at least ten years. The first time I went, I introduced myself to each man that entered, "Hi, my name is Jane, and I am not a man." It was an icebreaker. After a few weeks, I thought, *This is not a group for me*. There was too much dogma and little openness to think together. The book we were considering had a religious theme. That was fine, but certain individuals defended aggressive religious behavior that I found unsettling. I didn't particularly appreciate being preached at, and the book's topic was lost in the dust. I decided to stop going.

After a few weeks, my friend texted me and shared that some of the guys were missing me. That seemed like a good reason to return. They were beginning a new book, and I thought it would be good timing to return, so I did.

This past Friday at the meeting, I was talking to one of the men who I know is in physical pain. I asked him how it was going. After sharing his struggle with me, I hugged him. The men across the table said, "Hey, how come he gets a hug?!" I then proceeded to go all around the table and hugged each man there. Some-thing magical happened. The atmosphere was sparkling. Joy was at the table. It was my blessing, my rain to bring.

This is not a blanket recommendation. It could cause problems! My recommen-

ation is to pay attention. The world and the people in it are starved for the blessing of love and starved for your blessing.

When we bring our blessings, the thriving garden returns.

Bring your rain. Bring the air of your spirit. Bring your warmth. Things don't grow without the warmth of the sun. People don't thrive without the warmth of your love. What we bring is unique for each of us. I have often watched magic happen because a friend brought their gift into the room.

I wrote this poem years ago. I think it fits with what I am speaking of here.

The Essence of You

*The sweet, nourishing essence of you brings life,
Brings joy!
Brings the crucible for creative magic.*

*So often, this essence is manipulated...
even tortured into shapes and voices that try
to fit into the beliefs and distractions of this
distorted world.*

*As a result, the world suffers... I suffer.
I suffer from malnutrition, longing for the
nutrient-rich essence of you.
I can live without it.*

*I can manage...but who wants to manage
when there is so much life to be experienced
with you?*

*You are the salt on the rim
You are the perfect avocado
You are the cool morning air
You are the starlit night
You are the finest bourbon
You are the buttered toast, the melted
cheese, the warm cookie in every child's
dream.*

*Serve yourself up to me...to the world.
We are hungry for you and undernourished
because you have spent too much time
torturing yourself out of joy.*

*Serve yourself up to me...to the world!
You are the perfection needed wherever you
find yourself.*

There is a design manifested when love and truth are welcomed and honored. And we are all learning. It has always been my desire to be teachable. To be humble and hungry for another's gifts.

When I stepped away from this men's meeting, it was because I felt there was no desire to listen to each other. "What do *you* think?" was not being asked or genuinely answered.

Quoting chapter and verse left things flat. The conversation went nowhere. There was no thought backed up by a person's authority and ownership. It is important

to own what you say and to welcome the fertility of another's thinking.

When I heard some of them were missing me, I realized those certain ones were interested in my thoughts and perceptions. And I was interested in theirs. They wanted to grow something with me.

We know every group is a mix. Just like a garden, some things will thrive, and some will barely survive.

Others may wither and die. I say bring the rain and trust. It is worth it. Let us be open to what wants to grow. Let us bless and grow a garden together.

You and what you bring matters.

We matter.

This world in our hands matters. Let it thrive.

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Sunrise Ranch

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