

# FRIENDSHIP— WHERE BEAUTY MIGHT BE BORN

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT  
NOVEMBER 22, 2017



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I would like to give further consideration to the presence of the One Who Dwells in the midst of the dwelling place. Things change when you offer yourself into the world, knowing you are both the dwelling place and the one dwelling. I was considering this morning the experience of friendship. Friendship with God is supposed to be an equal relationship. And when I look at the state of the world right now, I could say we have got that majorly messed up. We are living in a world where people either believe God is something much more special, much larger than them, to be only appeased through groveling; or we have decided that we as human beings have a better idea. We have tried to manipulate the world and the earth in a way that we think works a whole lot better than the way the design works. Do you see that imbalance in your life? I certainly do. We

are playing a game of one-upmanship at the same time as trying to be friends.

Last week reference was made to this hymn, whose lyrics present the possibility of beauty being born in the womb of the earth—both this earth, our bodies and this planet, Earth. I would like to read the lyrics of this hymn as a poem rather than singing it:

*Our God did make the earth a place of  
beauty, love and light,  
Where skies and seas and all of life  
reveal Him with delight.*

*For God did make the earth a womb  
Where beauty might be born.*

*The flowers drink the rain and sun  
above the good brown earth,*

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*And do not seem to have to try to fill  
their life with worth.*

*For God did make the earth a womb  
Where beauty might be born.*

*And man He made with crowning care  
to share His majesty, [friendship!]*

*To let His gifts of life appear, His glory  
ever be.*

*For God did make the earth a womb  
Where beauty might be born.*

*(words by Christopher Joseph Foster, music by  
G. W. Thompson)*

“And man He made with crowning care to share His majesty. . . .” As I look at the world and the situation on the planet as it is right now, it’s clear we are not having that experience. Friendship with God and sharing His majesty is what we are designed to do. I see a lot of things that are not very majestic. Just yesterday there was a constant repetition of things on the news about a man who is running for the senate who allegedly had inappropriate exchanges with young women. I know that this is a topic that is really up, considering our president has said things that at another time would have been considered indictable, and there is the prominent story about a movie producer and his alleged years and years of abuse. In both these

stories it is the sense of inequality that has allowed the pattern to exist.

If we, as human beings, are designed to be friends with God, I think men and women are also designed to be friends. I have read many things where it is said it’s impossible for men and women to be friends, that one will always want something from the other—women wanting security or position, men wanting pleasure of some kind or to be taken care of. I am presenting a different reality that I know: that we are designed to be friends, equals—equals and different. *We* have been made with “crowning care” to allow something beautiful to be born. In this reality the manipulation and use of power is seen for what it is, destructive and unholy, and very unsatisfying.

As I look at almost all the stories with women, there is the imbalance of power. Why would someone ever give away their dignity? There could be an imposition of physical force, as most men are stronger—I am not talking about that. Sacrificing your dignity and the possibility of friendship happens a lot because of power—a power differential between two people, where one has more power and the other one wants more. And that goes both ways: Who wants what and who is willing to give away what to get what they want? I know a lot of men and women who have made decisions to be in relationships because they

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really wanted something out of the situation. If a person is interested in being in integrity and in true friendship with someone, why would they ever do that? It's clear to me that the person making that decision believes the relationship will make them feel special or valued or important. They are not feeling equal to God or the other person and they don't feel worthy of friendship just as they are. Do I need to lower myself to be loved? Do I need to appease this person to be loved? Do I have to do things that I would not normally do so that I will feel of value and feel like I am worthy or wanted? Is that what God would want me to do?

Most of you who have known me for any length of time know I grew up in the Catholic Church, and I grew up knowing or feeling or believing that I had to constantly prove that I was worthy. To be worthy of God's love, I had to keep doing good things. I had to keep being a good girl in every circumstance so that when I died I could go to heaven—not so that I could know friendship with God while I was alive. And then there was always the fear that once you died, maybe you did not do such a good job. You wouldn't know until it was too late. You may have to hang out in purgatory for a while, and your relatives might have to pay money and say prayers to get you out. Now, that might sound crazy, but that was part of the Church. I donated money as a child to get my dead friends and

relatives out of purgatory. What a holy experience! I had a relationship with God that said I had to pay Him, pay the priest (the representation of God in my life), to get my relatives out of the suffering of purgatory. Tricky business, and you didn't know where you'd end up or how long you'd be there. Even more bizarre, how do the living know where the deceased are? I could be buying indulgences (that's what they were called) for people already through the Pearly Gates. How do I get a refund?

Do you think that is a pattern I might have to get over? Do you think I have any feeling about that? Sometimes saying it out loud, I finally realize the ridiculousness that still lives in some of the cells of my being. When you say it out loud you realize, "Oh, yeah, I did that." We also collected money so we could baptize pagan babies. I didn't even know what that meant, but I do now. And then, when we had up to fifty cents, we could give them a name. No manipulation of love and friendship with God there!

Okay, so a lot of you were not raised Catholic. But I invite you to review the things you thought were true about what is possible in the divine revelation of yourself on Earth. What were the things you believed necessary to have a relationship with the sacred? To have a relationship with another person? What is preventing what

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wants to be born now? Do you still have some ideas about the way it works that you have not reviewed in a while? As Beings, allowing the holiness, the divinity of ourselves, to dwell within us, we become wise. We do not sell our soul to have power in a world that has gone amiss.

I know men and women who have manipulated each other a great deal because of the power they thought they might get out of the relationship. And why would they do that? Why do we create and settle for these kinds of relationships? In this world there is such a lack of connection to what real power and real friendship is about, so we go searching everywhere to try and find it, trying to have something of value.

I know last week I used the hymn “I Need Thee Every Hour” (words by Annie S. Hawks, music by Robert Lowry) to invite communion with the sacred. I need to have communion in the dwelling place and with the One Who Dwells, every hour. I need to know this intimacy so that I might know what it is like to have friendship with God. Jerry Kvasnicka shared with me that he was hearing the song from the heart of the divine point of view singing to me, “I need you, Jane, every hour, to be there so we might know communion,” so that we might know what it is like to share the beauty being revealed through human beings on earth.

But this week I heard a hymn sung on a television singing competition. I find at times the contestants will choose a hymn because it carries a lot of passion for people and it moves their hearts. While there was passionate response to his singing, the words of this hymn were unsatisfying to me. I thought, *really?* I want to read some of the words. The title of the song is “I Can Only Imagine,” by Bart Millard. To me, it is a perpetuation of the illusion that we cannot know God now and we are only going to imagine and hope someday to know.

*I can only imagine what it will be like  
When I walk by your side  
I can only imagine what my eyes will see  
When your face is before me  
I can only imagine*

*Surrounded by your glory  
What will my heart feel?  
Will I dance for you, Jesus,  
Or in awe of you be still?  
Will I stand in your presence  
Or to my knees will I fall?...*

I am not living my life waiting. I just want to be clear to anyone who is listening to me: I am not waiting to have this experience. When Jacqueline Alvine plays the piano, I might fall to my knees in awe, but it is not because it is imagination. It is because of the beauty of the communion with her. It was happening God-being to

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God-being, angel to angel, beloved to beloved. I am not waiting to be in some other sphere of reality to know this kind of communion. And I know that when this song was sung there was passion in the man's voice, and passion in the judges and the people in the audience. There is such a longing to know this experience. I am not imagining it, I know it now and "I can only imagine" there's more

How do we do it? How do we invite it and intensify it? How do we have a wholesome relationship with the Divine within ourselves and then with another person, so that you would never have to violate any part of your Being to know the power of that kind of communion? Here is the place "where beauty might be born" because of your friendship.

I understand the power dynamics in a lot of the things that are in the news. And believe me, it is tricky to even talk about it, because I am not taking sides here. I am talking about the invitation to be in your power and to stand there in the glory of it. We live in a world where people want things—people want to be famous. People want to be rich or seen as beautiful. And in the world as it is, these things are valued and make a person feel they have worth. There is a passion to feel valued and belong. That passion could be focused creatively. "I want to reveal my beauty, have peace in my life and invite people to

*know this with me*"—that kind of passion is what I am interested in. But I have to have a passionate desire to provide a dwelling place for the One Who Dwells. There is the place of true friendship with the Divine, true friendship with God, and equality. Not trying to be *as* God, but being with God as a friend. A friendship where beauty might be born.

I would say, if we looked at the whole masculine-feminine dynamic on earth, it is a system that has mostly gone amiss, because men and women are designed to love one another and be friends, to enjoy each other, to create and share the pleasure of being alive. We have so many rules about how it should go. Let's face our limited understanding and vision. And why? So that you might know there is another way. I know there is another way. Living into it requires me to be a true friend to myself first, and then a true friend to every man and woman, because men and women are not doing a great job either. They are competing; men are competing. We are all competing—for what? Clean, loving friendship? That sounds silly to me—doesn't it to you?

I have had a long list of experiences in my life where people I thought were my friends turned and walked away, and I was shocked. Sometimes I have not been paying attention, and some of that is shame on me, but I have a great desire to be in

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communion with other people and learn how to be a true friend in that.

There is a need to surrender to the design, the Divine Design of how things work, so that I can increasingly become loving and wise, a better friend, a better representation of what it is like to be a woman who loves another woman and loves another man, and what friendship can really be about. Because, more than anything, I believe what will change this world is friendship—friendship with God and friendship with each other, which is a matter of the heart.

I have been designed to be the revelation of beauty, and so have you, so that beauty might be born. “I can only imagine” what it will be like! In some ways that is a true statement, because I know there is more. But I am not living into the waiting. I am living into the creating.

I am thankful for my friends who understand these words, because you cannot be a victim in this kind of reality. You cannot be waiting for somebody else; you cannot be waiting for another day.

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