



# *Of Seeds and Flowers*

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Volume 32 Issue 1 – Founded in 1982

January 2015

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## AMERICA - 2015, IN NEED OF TRUTH, FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION

In the village of Laken in innermost Friesland there lived a long thin baker named Fouke, a righteous man, with a long thin chin and a long thin nose. Fouke was so upright that he seemed to spray righteousness from his thin lips over everyone who came near him; so the people of Laken preferred to stay away.

Fouke's wife, Hilda, was short and round, her arms were round, her bosom was round, her rump was round. Hilda did not keep people at bay with righteousness; her soft roundness seem to invite them instead to come close to her in order to share the warm cheer of her open heart.

Hilda respected her righteous husband, and loved him too, as much as he allowed her; but her heart ached for something more from him than his worthy righteousness. And there, in the bed of her need, lay the seed of sadness.

One morning, having worked since dawn to knead his dough for the ovens, Fouke came home and found a stranger in his bedroom lying with Hilda.

Hilda's adultery soon became the talk of the tavern and the scandal of the Laken congregation. Everyone assumed that Fouke would cast Hilda out of his house, so righteous was he. But he surprised everyone by keeping Hilda as his wife, saying

he forgave her as the Good Book said he should. In his heart of hearts, however, Fouke could not forgive Hilda for bringing shame to his name. Whenever he thought about her, his feelings toward her were angry and hard; he despised her as if she were a common whore. When it came right down to it, he hated her for betraying him after he had been so good and so faithful a husband to her. He only pretended to forgive Hilda so that he could punish her with his righteous mercy. But Fouke's fakery did not sit well in heaven.



So each time that Fouke would feel his secret hate toward Hilda, an angel came to him and dropped a small pebble, hardly the size of a shirt button into Fouke's heart. Each time a pebble dropped, Fouke would feel a stab of pain like the pain he felt when he saw Hilda with the stranger. And so he hated her the more; his hate brought him pain and his pain made him hate.

The pebbles multiplied. And Fouke's heart grew very heavy with the weight of them, so heavy that the top half of his body bent forward so far that he had to strain his neck upward in order to see straight ahead. Weary with hurt, Fouke

began to wish he were dead.

The angel who dropped the pebbles into his heart came to Fouke one night and told him how he could be healed of his hurt. There was one remedy, he said, only one, for the hurt of a wounded heart. Fouke would need the miracle of the magic eyes. He would need eyes that could look back to the beginning of his hurt and see his Hilda, not as a wife who betrayed him, but as a weak woman who needed him. Only a new way of looking at things through the magic eyes could heal the hurt flowing from the wounds of yesterday.

Fouke protested. "Nothing can change the past," he said. "Hilda is guilty; a fact that not even an angel can change."

"Yes, poor hurting man, you are right," the angel said, "You cannot change the past, you can only heal the hurt that came to you from the past. And you can heal it only with the vision of the magic eyes."

"And how can I get your magic eyes?" pouted Fouke.

"Only ask, and they will be given you. Each time you see Hilda through your new eyes, one pebble will be lifted from your aching heart."

Fouke could not ask at once, for he had grown to love his hatred. But the pain of his heart finally drove him to want and to ask for the magic eyes that the angel had promised. So he asked. And the angel gave.

Soon Hilda began to change in front of Fouke's eyes, wonderfully and mysteriously. He began to see her as a needy woman who loved him, instead of a wicked woman who betrayed him.

The angel kept his promise; he lifted the pebbles from Fouke's heart,

one by one, though it took a long time to take them all away. Fouke gradually felt his heart grow lighter; he began to walk straight again, and somehow his nose and his chin seemed less thin and sharp than before. He invited Hilda to come into his heart again, and she came, and

together they began again a journey into their second season of humble joy.

"Forgive & Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve" SMEDES

## Reconciliation 2015

Each time Martin Luther King went to jail he would not eat or drink for 24 hours as an act of redemptive sacrifice and healing for the people who put him in jail. What power and wisdom!! Godly wisdom! Ghandi wisdom! Gospel wisdom! "Not by might, not by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord." Jeremiah

It is a time for prophets and poets, philosophers and theologians, a time for saints, a time for holy people. It is a time for people with vision; a time for people who know how to pray. It is a time for **transformed people** to transform people. It is a time for all people who speak to have all of their words flow from a prayed heart *or NOT to speak at all. Not one word!!* "Whoever speaks on his own is bent on **self glorification.**" Mt.7, 18.

We all need to remember that all acts of violence and even thoughts of violence must **first pass through our own heart** and thus make us a part of the problem and not a part of any lasting solution. TRUTH AND LOVE ONLY!! GIVE IN!!

Healing and forgiveness and reconciliation are acts of the human spirit and are not to be found at the end of more disrespect, violence, a bigger gun or political gain. All of the problems in our failing culture are people problems. I marched with Martin Luther King in the 1960's with the hope that 50 years later our country would be a place of peace and brotherhood. Dr. King, with his refined spirit, would be appalled at the present state of affairs.

"COURAGE IS AN INNER RESOLUTION TO GO FORWARD DESPITE OBSTACLES; COWARDICE IS SUBMISSIVE SURRENDER TO CIRCUMSTANCES. COURAGE BREEDS CREATIVE SELF-AFFIRMATION; COWARDICE PRODUCES DESTRUCTIVE SELF-ABNEGATION. COURAGE FACES FEAR AND MASTERS IT; COWARDICE REPRESSES FEAR AND IS MASTERED BY IT ... COWARDICE ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT SAFE? EXPEDIENCY ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT POLITIC? VANITY ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT POPULAR? BUT **CONSCIENCE ASKS THE QUESTION, IS IT RIGHT?** AND THERE COMES A TIME WHEN ONE MUST TAKE A POSITION THAT IS NEITHER SAFE, NOT POLITIC, NOR POPULAR, BUT ONE MUST TAKE IT **BECAUSE IT IS RIGHT.**" - Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains only a grain of wheat but if it dies (to, pride, anger, violence, the need to be right etc.) it produces much fruit."

- Jesus

A person in a state of passion is just the same as a man asleep, drunk or insane."

- Aristotle

Now, NOW is the time to plant the trees under which we will we want our children to one day sit.

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"I sought for the greatness of the United States in her commodious harbors, her ample rivers, her fertile fields, and boundless forests – and it was not there. I sought for it in her rich mines, her vast world commerce, her public school system, and in her institutions of higher learning - and it was not there. I looked for it in her Democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution - and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with the truth did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great!" - Alexis de Tocqueville 1831

# Vision and Reality

## OVER-IDENTIFICATION AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

One of the serious obstacles to our spiritual growth (and human maturity) is **over**-identification with various groups and institutions and causes. We need to deliberately dismantle **excessive** group identification. We can **over-identify** with a school, a culture, a race, a nation, a church, a political group, a family etc..

We need to let go of cultural conditioning, pre-conceived ideas, and **over**-identification with the values of our particular group. It means openness to change in ourselves, to spiritual development beyond group loyalties and to whatever the future may hold. It demands a brutal commitment to the truth and ridding ourselves from all prejudices. Beware of the people with CAUSES!

When reason, research, the truth contradicts the values of the group to which we adhere we have to ADMIT IT, and in humility, with courage and honesty move on.

ONLY THE TRUTH FREES. It is always about truth and love. How many people in political elections vote against their own self interest because of **over**-identification with a political group? How many people because of their **over**-identification with a particular racial group, nationality or institution justify violence in the name of the group? The list and examples goes on and on. *Happiness tomorrow depends on doing the truth TODAY.* There is no right way to do the wrong thing!! Check your beautiful and honest heart.

“If Jesus had taken a poll, He would never have preached the Gospel.” - *Congressman Hyde*

### **FORGIVENESS: The Measurement of Growth**

St. Teresa of Avila used to tell her nuns that they could judge the quality of their prayer life and their spiritual growth by the way they handled hurts and rejection from others.

If you were a beginner in the spiritual life, she said, when someone hurts you it is like taking a sharp steel stylus and making a deep scratch in marble. - Very, very difficult to smooth out a deep gouge in marble.

If you were further along in your spiritual life and were injured by someone, it was like taking a stylus and making a deep scratch in wood. - a bit easier but still difficult to sand out.

If you were more advanced still, being hurt by someone was like running the stylus through sand. The sand can be smoothed out rather easily.

If you were well prayed and far advanced in the spiritual life and someone hurt you, being hurt would be like running the stylus through water. As soon as the hurt came, it was soon forgiven and forgotten like the water quickly filling in the ripples made by the stylus. Wise teaching from a wise and holy woman!



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# *Speaking Softly*

A story tells of two friends who were walking through the desert. During some point of the journey they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other one in the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand: TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE. They kept on walking until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath.

The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning but his friend saved him. After he recovered from the near drowning, he wrote on a stone: TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SAVED MY LIFE.

The friend who had slapped and then saved his best friend from drowning asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now, you write on a stone, why?" His friend replied: 'When someone hurts us we should write it down in sand where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it.'

## **Billy Graham's Prayer for Our Nation**

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, 'Woe to those who call evil good,' but that' is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self esteem. We have abused power and called it politics. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!

