



Of Seeds and Flowers



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GOD IS UNDER THE BED

My brother Kevin thinks God lives under his bed. At least that's what I heard him say one night. He was praying out loud in his dark bedroom, and I stopped outside his closed door to listen.

"Are you there, God?" he said. "Where are you? Oh, I see, under the bed." I giggled softly and tiptoed off to my own room. Kevin's unique perspectives are often a source of amusement. But that night something else lingered long after the humor.

I realized for the first time the very different world Kevin lives in. He was born 30 years ago, mentally disabled as a result of difficulties during labor. Apart from his size (he's 6'2"), there are few ways in which he is an adult. He reasons and communicates with the capabilities of a 7 year old, and he always will.

He will probably always believe that God lives under his bed, that Santa Claus is the one who fills the space under our tree every Christmas, and that airplanes stay up in the sky because angels carry them.

I remember wondering If Kevin realizes he is different. Is he ever dissatisfied with his monotonous life? Up before dawn each day, off to work at a workshop for the disabled, home to walk our cocker spaniel, return to eat his favorite macaroni and –cheese for dinner, and later to bed. The only variation in the entire scheme is laundry, when he hovers

excitedly over the washing machine like a mother with her newborn child.

He does not seem dissatisfied. He lopes out to the bus every morning at 7:05, eager for a day of simple work. He wrings his hands excitedly while the water boils on the stove before dinner, and he stays up late twice a week to gather our dirty laundry for his next day's laundry chores.



And Saturdays, oh the bliss of Saturday! That's the day my Dad takes Kevin to the airport to have a soft drink, watch the planes land, and speculate loudly on the destination of each passenger. "That one's goin' to Chi-car-go!" Kevin shouts, as he claps his hands. His anticipation is so great he can hardly sleep on Friday nights. And so goes his world of daily rituals and weekend field trips. He doesn't know what it means to be discontent. His life is simple. He will never know the entanglements of wealth or power, and he does not care what brand of clothing he wears or what kind of food he eats.

His needs have always been met, and he never worries that one day they may not be. His hands are diligent. Kevin is never so happy as

when he is working. When he unloads the dishwasher or vacuums the carpet, his heart is completely in it. He does not shrink from a job when it is begun, and he does not leave a job until it is finished.

But when his tasks are done, Kevin knows how to relax. He is not obsessed with his work or the work of others. His heart is pure. He still believes everyone tells the truth, promises must be kept, and when you are wrong, you apologize instead of argue. Free from pride and unconcerned with appearances, Kevin is not afraid to cry when he is hurt, angry or sorry. He is always transparent, always sincere. And he trusts God. Not confined by intellectual reasoning, when he comes to Jesus, he comes as a child. Kevin knows that God is really his friend in a way that is difficult for an "educated" person to grasp.

God seems like his closest companion. In my moments of doubt and frustrations with my Christianity, I envy the security Kevin has in his simple faith. It is then that I am most willing to admit that he has some divine knowledge that rises above my mortal questions. It is then I realize that perhaps he is not the one with the handicap - I am. My obligations, my fears, my pride, my selfishness, my circumstances - they all become disabilities when I do not submit them to the Lord.

A Drop of Rain... A Bit of Sun...

The Cracked Pot

A water bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfections, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house."

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."



Just For Today

Just for today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle all my problems at once.

Just for today I will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said, that "Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Just for today I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my "luck" as it comes, and fit myself to it.

Just for today I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do - just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress fault with anything, nor try to improve or regulate anybody but myself.



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Vision and Reality

SIX STORIES

{1} Once all villagers decided to pray for rain, on the day of prayer all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella.

That's FAITH

{2} When you throw a baby in the air, she laughs because she knows you will catch her.

That's TRUST

{3} Every night we go to bed, without any assurance of being alive the next morning

but still we set the alarms to wake up.

That's HOPE

{4} We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.

That's CONFIDENCE

{5} We see the world suffering, but still we get married and have children.

That's LOVE

{6} On an old man's shirt was written a sentence "I am not 80 years old....

I am sweet 16 with 64 years experience"

That's WISDOM

Have a happy day and live your life like these six stories!

God Behind the Counter

A woman dreamed she walked into a brand new shop in the marketplace and, to her surprise, found God behind the counter.

"What do you sell here?" she asked.

"Everything your heart desires," said God.

Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human being could wish for.

"I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom from fear," she said. Then as an afterthought, she added, "Not just for me. For everyone on earth."



God smiled. "I think you've got me wrong my dear."

"We don't sell fruits here. Only seeds."

Quest for the Divine

The master was in an expansive mood, so his disciples sought to learn from him the stages he had passed through in his quest for the divine.

God first led me by the hand," he said, "into the Land of Action, and there I dwelt for several years. Then He returned and led me to the Land of Sorrows; there I lived until my heart was purged of every inordinate attachment That is when I found myself in the Land of Love, whose burning flames consumed whatever was left in me of self This brought me to the Land of Silence, where the mysteries of life and death were bared before my wondering eyes."

"Was that the final stage of your quest?" they asked.

"No," the Master said. "One day God said, 'Today I shall take you to the innermost sanctuary of the Temple, to the heart of God himself'

And I was led to the Land of Laughter.



Speaking Softly

There is a great breakthrough in the spiritual life when you accept and honor the divine image and presence within yourself and then, cannot help but see it in everybody else, and then, you come to know it is just as undeserved and unmerited as it is in you. This helps us to stop judging and to start loving unconditionally and without asking whether someone is worthy or not. The breakthrough occurs at once, although the realization deepens and takes on greater conviction and reality over time.

We mend and renew the world by strengthening inside ourselves what we seek outside ourselves, and not by demanding it of others or trying to force it on others.

- If you want others to be more loving, choose to love first.
- If you want a reconciled outer world, reconcile your own inner world.
- If you are working for peace out there, create it inside as well.
- If you notice other people's irritability, let go of your own.
- If you wish to find some outer stillness, find it within yourself first.
- If you are working for justice, treat yourself justly, too.
- If you find yourself resenting the faults of others, stop resenting your own.
- If the world seems desperate, let go of your own despair.
- If your situation feels hopeless, honor the one spot of hope inside you.
- If you want to find God, then honor God within you, and you will always see God beyond you. For it is only God within you that knows where and how to look for God.



What you SEE is what you get. What you SEEK is also what you get. The fact that you understand and can appropriate the above wisdom and that you spent time reading this newsletter means that the GREAT WORK has already begun in you! "Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you." Mt.7:8."Be the change you want to see in the world." Ghandi Most of the above is from a spectacular book by Richard Rohr, "The Naked Now" It will change your life.

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