

**Flowers on the Mountain
Walking the Path**
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Solana Beach, California
March 22, 2009

I. Background / Intro

Good Morning , One year ago, I did a talk entitled “Flowers in the Desert” that discussed the beginning of a spiritual journey after some adversity and facing some challenges in my life. This is a continuation of that conversation. Last year, I drove into the mountains with Betty Brink. It was a wonderful day, lots of people, fellow travelers, conversation, thinking, breathing in the mountain air, and feeling the warm sunshine

I have seen the flowers blooming in the desert and now I look a little deeper and a little farther out. I have a need to examine my path and look at the bigger picture. Today, I will discuss some steps I have taken on the path of “possibility” to obtain growth and change. I will talk about some personal things, but I have found this necessary to accept myself, and not focus on a need to please others or live in fear. In times when I act with honesty and courage, I have experienced transformational change or growth. I have discovered four parts - four important directions that have been useful in order to grow and to change.

The First Direction is the “What IS”, The Second “Possibilities”, the third “Movement” and the fourth direction I call “Currency” Questions -- “What are my Possibilities for

Movement and Currency?” and “What are the Possibilities for Movement and Currency?”

II. DIRECTION OF THE “WHAT IS”

At times in my life, I have had to experience a place of much pain and brokenness before I wanted change. I have had much fear in the past about sharing personal experiences, but when sharing honestly and for the right reasons, it has empowered myself and others.

At other times things were going so great in my life that I also wanted change. I wanted to be better, to be the best that I could be, to let my light shine.

The direction of the “What IS” means that I must accept things exactly as they are and not try to change anything. I must not magnify or minimize my truths. It is when my body language says “this is it.” When I feel it anchored inside, then I have found my truth.

I had much work to do to accept certain truths about myself and the circumstances in my life. Such as being sexually abused when I was a teenager, of being indifferent to others, of questioning my sexuality, gay, straight, or bisexual, engaging in various addictive behaviors, anger, doing hurtful things, not telling others my truth, and of watching my father suffer from mental illness -- schizophrenia while in an institution.

I had even harder work to do to accept the truths of my goodness, looking at my capacity to love, and ability to serve others, to teach, to work with young people, share all of my gifts, my poetry, my writings, music, to contribute by

volunteer work, working with others, contributing to my church, and to use my professional calling as an attorney to stand up for the less powerful, and to speak out for justice in our world. You may have your own truths – some easier to accept, some more of a challenge.

I have worked with other men and women who were also defining their “What IS” experiences. When working and being with others, I ask “Am I willing to accept you exactly as you are?” If the answer is no at that time I have enormous difficulty seeing this person.

If the answer is yes, then I have no charge, no judgment, and am at peace. At that moment, I realize that I have truly been born free and that you were born free.

Living my life to please others sets me up for failure. Living in fear also attracts failure. When I have been involved in certain relationships, my wanting for things to be different than they actually were, caused me to lose. Those were not “What IS” moments, these were the “what I want moments.” If only I had more money, or a better relationship, if only my family did this, or did that, if only you saw things my way, life would be better.

The “What Is” is not always easy to find out on your own. I have found a small success, in small groups, in talking with family, counselors, and friends in order to help me see through my self induced fog, denial, and judgment.

I know that until I can clearly see that “What Is” then change can not take place. When I find the pure the essential truth, the “What IS” appears with no doubts and the next direction is available to me.

III. DIRECTION OF POSSIBILITIES

This is the direction that gives me a framework of the greater good, of courage, spirit, and the possibilities of life.

I grew up in the UU Church. In the late 60's and early 70's, I had a hunger of wanting direction – of what to believe and how to believe. If there was a message of the possibilities of life, because of my circumstances, at that time I was not able to receive the message.

I have been the subject of so much generosity, at times it is unbelievable to me. My brother, telling me to go to college, my mom working two jobs at times to support the family, her acting towards me with love and compassion, my father when learning that I was sick, left the mental hospital and came to me because he wanted to help. My friend Stephen who shared his message of God's love, my church family, others friends and family who refused to believe in the big lie that I was telling myself that somehow I was a damaged person and not worthy, and continue to show me compassion and love.

I have received great insights from the Bible, A Course in Miracles, teachings of the Buddhas, Lessons from the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz, writings and thoughts and sermons from many UU Ministers. Poetry of Walt Whitman, Rumi, Mary Oliver, and Sheila Fugard.

Once I began to receive and to see these possibilities, I was so relieved. I used to work and believe in a world of self determination, will power, and that the world revolved around me. My thought system was that if you believed in God or Spiritual things, then you were weak minded and

foolish. You were probably a person that did not have it together.

However, once I began to see and to tap into the possibility of greater good and acceptance, then I began to take into my heart that God exists for me and I was filled with much love, a sense of relief, stillness, and much happiness. IN the quiet I listen for the whisper of the Divine.

Now here I make a proclamation that I make no claim on your truth. I can't began to know what your Possibilities are, where your path started, or where it will take you. This is the freedom and gift of being a Unitarian Universalist.

Maybe you have a different belief system. You might be weary and tired of hearing about God, religion and the word spiritual. Perhaps you were betrayed at a young age with lies about your religion or the definition of God and Jesus. Take heart my friends. I have good news for you. The possibilities of life are available to you.

I would submit to you that there is work to be done or not -- it is a choice. You are perfect exactly as you are, there is nothing I would change. The Direction of Possibilities may be of use to show you a different way of looking at the circumstances in your life as you walk along your path.

Let me add another thought here, I consciously did not want to give examples to try to hook you to convince you that something is wrong in your life. I can only speak for myself, but I am thinking about you all of the time. I want you to be at peace. Ideally I practice restraint and refuse to give advice – at times difficult. UU has taught me that we are all interconnected, my actions and thoughts, connect and merge with your actions and thoughts.

News shows have so much talk of economic crises, relationship problems, family troubles, sexual offenses, infidelity, violence, medical issues, drugs and war.

You may have your own list of fears and wants around change. Today, I refuse to engage in the rhetoric of fear – I don't want to give you a list of fear based questions or situations, that may or may not apply to you, and say well "do you want to get some change now?"

Be aware of situations or people that want to hook you with fear, just fill in the blank _____ . But as the Alcohol Anonymous book says "Don't take the bait" "Don't take the bait"

I simply ask the questions, "What are my possibilities?" or "the possibilities"

IV. Direction of Movement

This direction, I think of in three ways. Physical, Just Be, and Spritual.

With all movement, I need to ask, where might this movement take me? ? Am I spinning on the gerbil wheel? Is the critic or judge telling me to move, as explained in the Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz. Or might this movement take me where it is best to go?

Physical Movement

With Physical Movement, I can move myself physically to a new job, a new state, a new relationship.

Movement could be walking with a friend, going to school, taking an self help course, eating differently, physical actions, exercising, stretching, working, volunteering in the community. It could be ministering between two people -- at no charge.

Movement can be praying. I can pray for someone else to find happiness or serenity. At the exact time of prayer I find it is impossible to send them or myself any negativity.

Just Be Movement

There have been times after I did some physical movement, work, and prayers, I expected instant change. I expected others to react to me differently. The possibilities show me that I can be patient and I don't have to do anything. I don't have to expect anyone or anything to be different.

There is a story in the Bible 1 Kings 19 in which Elijah did not see the lord in an earthquake, fire, or wind, but the Lord appeared as a small voice after the silence. This speaks to me.

Alison in her sharing also explained about everyone has a voice. I would encourage you to also find your voice.

Also small periods of meditation and looking at the way found by the Buddha, show me that to "Just Be" can be

exactly what I need at the moment. My movement can be to just breathe and just be.

Spiritual Movement

For the movement of Spiritual, I think this is where things start happening inside, and others may feel something different about you. It may be a shift in perception: “I am not my circumstances,” “I have a gift of music,” “I am a caring soul,” “I am not my career, ” or “No one can hurt me”

I might find myself looking at things differently: not taking things personally, not responding to someone that continues to remind me of some misstep from 5 years ago,

My shift happened and I had a moment where I thought I can do my best, let my light shine, and can look at things from a relationship viewpoint, and see a world of abundance instead of scarcity.

V. Direction of Currency

I know that if I am to see the flowers, then I need to engage in the direction of currency. -- what I call “Spiritual Currency.” This to me means that I must not give up in the face of challenges whatever they are.

There is no guarantee in life, that I cannot take the wrong path and stay on that. I may take many wrong paths but I am grateful for the knowledge that I can reengage and look to be current and find the truth of my good.

Rumi writes “to come whoever you are, even if you have broken your vows 10 thousand times, come yet again come.”

This is comforting. I can lighten up, find joy, and laugh at my mistakes. Welcome whatever comes my way. I don't need to take myself, and others too seriously.

I have previously operated under the illusion, that because I have done work in the past that the vibrations from the work would carry forward. This is true only to the extent that work has allowed a foundation to be built.

I must realize there is no bank account for the past. The teachings of the Buddhas are clear that the present is all that there is – not the past or the future. Recovery work in the past, meditations, retreats, past relationships with others, have their own vibrations and send out energy into the universe, but I am dishonest if I attempt to apply 100% of my past work to my circumstances today and stop.

The lyrics of the song The Valley sung by Susan, talk about the dark, the light, and walking in good company. You listening to me today give me currency. We walk in good company with each other through the dark and the light. You may walk in good company with your higher power, with your family, friends, or even with those with which you have challenges and issues, it is all good.

VI. Closing

This change, this growth, is part of my life's work. These directions, this work is not always easy. However, I suggest these directions are voluntary, always available, and can be done with patience.

To have a momentary awareness of the possibility of change is a true gift. What a powerful gift that has been given to me, to realize that the possibility of change is available. These are the first days of Spring. There are many flowers on the mountain. Amen, Peace, and Namaste.

San Bernadino Mountains, Southern California – August 2008

