

Forgiving Makes Us Happy

Did you watch the opening ceremony of the Olympics? Gloria and I half-watched all of it as we played a few rounds of a fun card game called Rummy 500. We really did not enjoy any of the ceremony until they finally got to an awesome light show around the Eiffel Tower and then Celine Dion bravely and powerfully sang an incredible Edith Piaf number.

It was only after the ceremony had finished that I realised that one of the scenes along the Seine acted out by a group of drag queens was making a mockery of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. Now as a practising Christian, I see the Last Supper as a central part of Christian theology. The Last Supper took place the night before Christ was crucified and without it, there would be no Eucharist. So the other day, I began to get offended about what the director of the opening ceremony had done and then fed my annoyance by watching videos on You Tube expressing outrage at this mocking of the Christian faith.

But this message is absolutely not any kind of political message or statement. Let us not dwell on whether that scene on the Seine was blasphemous or not, nor whether it was deliberately provocative and offensive or not. What I really want to share with you this month is an exploration of forgiveness as an incredibly liberating practice. The day after I got all self-righteous about the drag queens' Last Supper, I opened my Course in Miracles and the lesson for the day just happened to be lesson 62 *Forgiveness is my function as the light of the world*. This lesson directs students of the Course to close their eyes and say to themselves as often as they can all day long:

Forgiveness is my function as the light of the world.

I would fulfil my function that I may be happy.

Now never mind what the Course means by saying that anyone who studies it is 'the light of the world'. Let us just concentrate on that rather puzzling statement that forgiving the world will make us happy. I don't know about you, but in the past, I have believed that forgiving one's enemies was a virtuous thing to do, but it never occurred to me that forgiving others might be the key to my own lasting happiness.

However, having studied and practised *A Course in Miracles* for over 20 years (how time flies!!), I do now have just a little understanding about the power of the practise of forgiveness which I want to share with you this month.

Whenever we become righteously angry about some new outrage being committed in our world, we are basically confirming that we are a totally separate egoic being that can easily be destroyed by our enemies who are always coming to get us. Sometimes, this perceived threat to our existence may be physical, but most of the

time in our modern world, we feel threatened by attacks on our beliefs or our integrity rather than by actual physical attacks.

For example, a friend may say something really hurtful to us or a political opponent may label our politics as dangerous or insane and we feel truly offended. We may then look for other like-minded souls to join us in our indignation, just as I did on You Tube after the Olympic Opening Ceremony pushed my buttons.

But does getting all riled up about any kind of perceived attack on us in this world make us happy? Well, we may certainly feel a temporary buzz of excitement as the fiery energy of righteous anger pours through us for a while. I certainly did when I watched a You Tube video stating that it was time for Christians all over the world to stand up against the 'evil' forces massed against us. However, I know that in the long run, angry individuals are more likely to suffer from a whole load of chronic diseases than less angry people. Moreover, holding onto anger for any length of time clearly upsets our peace of mind and also separates us from love because anger and love cannot co-exist for long.

The bottom line is that whenever we hang onto angry, upset thoughts and feelings about any particular person, group of people, or situation in our world, we pollute our whole system with a dark energy that does not support our life or the lives of others. On the other hand, whenever we practise letting go of our anger and then truly forgiving those whom we believe have harmed us in some way in this world, we are confirming our deepest safety by avowing that nothing this world may throw at us can really harm our true-self in any way whatsoever.

Now to accept this fundamental truth from *A Course in Miracles*, we do have to come around to the idea that we are not at heart physical beings at all, but eternal beings made of love and nothing but love. Once we begin to accept this incredibly radical idea, we may at least be able to begin to let go of our biologically based instinct to defend ourselves from all kinds of attacks in this world. This letting go process certainly takes a lot of practice, but it is so worth it! If we long to live here in love, peace and joy most of the time instead of fear and anger – and anger is basically a form of fear in disguise – we simply cannot afford to hang on to even one resentment or grievance against the world.

The way I now practise forgiving my 'enemies' is to remind myself that just like me, they long to be happy and just like me they are doing their very best to avoid pain and suffering. Once I remind myself of this basic truth of how similar we all are, I find it much easier to send a wave of compassionate energy out to whoever has upset me as I wish them well from the depths of my heart.

Today, as I practised forgiving the drag queens on the Seine by sending them a wave of unconditional love and compassion, I began to feel a flow of heart-centred love

energy flood my system. I then noticed that this love energy was engendering a deep happiness within me. This quiet joy was so much more life-enhancing than the temporary self-righteous buzz I had experienced when fuelling my anger toward those performers at the Paris Olympics that it became clear to me that being indiscriminately loving is a key to lasting happiness .

So maybe this month you would like to experiment with the idea that forgiveness is the key to happiness. (*A Course in Miracles* lesson 121)

If at some point this month, you notice that you are angrily going over and over something someone has said or done that hurt or annoyed you, maybe you could just pause and take a few deep calming breaths before gently reminding yourself that most people who upset you have no real idea what they are doing. You could then send them compassionate wishes on the grounds that they have far more in common with you than it appears. We all suffer in this world, even the most violent dictators suffer, and so deep down everyone merits our unconditional compassion toward them.

Of course it is true that many human beings speak and act in destructive ways, but I now see such people as damaged or distorted by deep inner pain rather than bad. In fact, we are all pretty insane in this mad, mad, world. We are all basically paranoid because we feel so threatened by endless external threats to our long term safety and well-being and paranoid people can be dangerous, including quite possibly you and me when push comes to shove!

In sum, despite all appearances to the contrary, the strong beliefs and opinions that seem to divide us are not nearly as strong as the basic facts of life that unite us. We are all in the same sinking boat and we are all destined to die quite soon. Meanwhile, we are all doing our very best to find a little happiness in a really scary world, even if most of us are looking in all the wrong places for lasting love and deep joy. On these grounds, can we find it in our hearts to forgive those who trespass against us by sending them our love instead of sending them a wave of anger?

Well thank you for letting me share all of that with you. I feel so much calmer than I did the other day, and I genuinely wish all those involved in the Paris Olympics all the very best for the future, including those whose views and actions go against my own highly subjective and pre-programmed views and values.

Peggy Foster
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