

## Adam and Eve Were Innocent!

Have you ever wondered about the story of Adam and Eve? As a small girl, this Bible story just did not make sense to me. If God did not want Adam or Eve to eat apples, why on earth did he plant an apple tree in his Garden of Eden? The story reminds me of those modern psychological experiments where toddlers are left all alone in a room with chocolates sitting right in front of them and told not to eat any of them until the adult returns. Evidently, if a toddler can resist eating the forbidden chocolates for several minutes they are more likely to go on to be academically successful in later life. Oh for goodness sake!

Sadly, we have all been programmed to believe that we have to get everything right in our life, and if we get something wrong, there will be dire consequences. Evidently, one reason why a lot of girls hate maths is that they are so scared of getting the answers wrong. Now you may be wondering where I am going with all of this – well, what if it is absolutely fine to get things wrong in life? What if making a big mistake in your life has no eternal consequences whatsoever, despite what you may have been told about heaven and hell as a child? What if ultimately only love is real (*A Course in Miracles*) and all the mistakes any of us have ever made out of fear and ignorance are simply passing nightmares with no lasting effects at all?

This thought came to me most strongly whilst I was doing yet another wonderful free online meditation with the Mindfulness Association. For some reason, in the middle of the meditation, I began to think about dying and then got lost in a story inside my head about how I needed to die in the 'right way'. Then all of a sudden, I saw how absurd that was. A voice in my head said, 'Would you really say to a dear friend who was dying, 'Make sure you die in the right way or something terrible will happen to you after you are dead!'

After this 'Ah Ha' moment, I kept thinking about how we are all so programmed to fear getting stuff wrong in life. Yet I have got loads of things terribly wrong over the course of my life, particularly certain romantic relationships, and I am still fine. In fact, my life has even turned out pretty well in the long run. I also love how toddlers learn so well through their innocent mistakes. I once teased a toddler that the plural of sheep was 'sheeps' as in 'one sheep, two sheeps.' I loved how funny it sounded every time I said it, although for some reason it annoyed the heck out of Gloria.

Imagine if parents punished their small children every time they made a grammatical error whilst learning their mother tongue? They would probably end up with a dreadful stutter or tortured by acute anxiety if they ever had to make a public speech. What if every time a baby was learning to walk he/she was punished for toppling over? Yet we all tell ourselves that we deserve to be punished for our worst mistakes in life and some of us even keep on and on punishing ourselves with our guilt-ridden thoughts for something that we did many years ago. We beat ourselves up over and over again and yet our mistakes go on happening don't they?

For some reason, we all have this crazy belief, whether conscious or subconscious, that we are supposed to get everything in life right the first time, time after time. Yet when we were born, none of us was handed a manual showing us exactly how our life was supposed to unfold. We believe that we were not supposed to marry the wrong person, buy the wrong house, accept the wrong job offer etc. etc. But what if it is absolutely fine to make as many mistakes as we like throughout our life?

What if this is the best way to really learn all sorts of important life lessons? What if we are always given a do-over, or a thousand do-overs, until the penny finally drops?

For example, we marry the wrong person, but eventually we part from them whilst doing our best to forgive them for being Mr/Ms Wrong rather than Ms/Mr Right. Are we supposed to feel a total failure for the rest of our life for having one major 'failed' relationship? What if it is perfectly fine to be with someone for a while and then to decide it is time to move apart with no hard feelings?

Then again, if we do harbour resentment about someone for years and years, maybe we need to go through that miserable time before we are finally ready to learn the life-saving art of true forgiveness? I certainly remember how miserable I was as a young woman when I bitterly resented my adoptive father for being so clingy and needy around me. But I now also remember the incredible love and joy I felt when I finally let go of all that resentment and got back in touch of all the beautiful loving moments between my kind, caring adoptive father and myself as a sweet, innocent little girl.

Now some of us may be wise enough and compassionate enough to forgive ourselves for one-off mistakes, but what about those areas of our life that may have been a bit of a mess for a long, long time? Can we forgive ourselves for going on so many diets but then always putting the weight back on? Can we forgive ourselves for shouting angrily at our partner not once but over and over again?

Who says it is OK to make a mistake once, but if you make the same mistake over and over again, you are irredeemable? Would a loving God really shove his prodigal son into an everlasting, roasting hot hell just because he had made the same mistake over and over again for a very long time? I don't believe for one moment that he would.

So during the beautiful month of July, maybe you could gently focus on letting go of any self-criticism that arises as you go through your daily life. Maybe you could keep reminding yourself that human beings are not meant to be perfect nor to get everything perfectly right all of the time. We are all work in progress. We are all a terrible mess, but we are all also a totally loveable mess. At heart, we are all pure, innocent, eternally beautiful souls. We just probably have a *lot* more mistakes to make before we fully manifest this highest version of ourselves.

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