

The Journey of Transformation Raymond L. Fox

Something to reflect on, comment on, and even practice on your journey.



The Gift of Being Known

Have you ever been in a crowd of people and yet felt all alone? We could be with a group of friends whose friendship we have shared for many years and still feel isolated. For some of us, solitude becomes a way of life although constantly surrounded by companions at work or school. Our Father must have created our spirits to distinguish between the feeling of being physically present in our relationships and being emotionally present for each other. To be emotionally present means to be aware and sensitive to the inner, emotional life of another human being to give them the gift of being known: the confidence to reveal who they are on the inside with all their fears, self-doubts, and suffering. This gift is precious not only because of the relief it offers but also because of its rarity.

Our spirits long to escape isolation and be known, yet we may be afraid of being known not just by others but by ourselves. No matter how strong and successful we think we have been, we must admit on a deeper level of consciousness that we are weak and powerless in a world that is way beyond our control. Our mistakes bring feelings of shame for not being who we think we ought to be. We also listen

to the criticisms of people who enjoy telling us we are not enough and fear they might be right. These thoughts are unsettling and can be terrifying.

To hide from ourselves, we create stories that explain who we are—that is, who we would like to think we are—that justify our actions and make us feel superior to others. We tell ourselves stories to remove our guilt and convince ourselves that we are righteous. We also tell ourselves stories about other people, criticizing, assuming motives, judging, and condemning that further help us to hide from ourselves. Our stories blind us from seeing ourselves or others as they really are. Thus, by our stories, we create our own isolation, denying anyone the possibility of knowing us as we are in our inner selves. We should not be surprised when we are in a crowd of friends and feel isolated.

Relief from our isolation comes, either gradually or in a sudden crisis, from releasing our stories. The younger son in Jesus' parable of the man who had two sons (Luke 15:11-32) passed through such a crisis. When he left home, he must have been full of stories he told himself, explaining why he thought he deserved his inheritance before his father had died, why he was going to a far country to spend the inheritance, and why he was not guilty for any hurt his father would suffer. These stories isolated his inner self, prohibiting him from being known even by himself.

Then his tragic experiences in the far country of wasting all his money, feeling intense hunger, and not having reliable friends forced him to "come to his senses," realizing his stories had deceived him. He decided to humble himself, accept his lost condition, and return to the father. He must have been overwhelmed with emotion when he saw his compassionate father running toward him with open arms to receive him. Because of the father's compassion, the young man felt confident to reveal his inner self to his father—"I am no longer worthy to be called your son"—and find acceptance and relief. The father gave him the gift of being known.

Perhaps we have attempted to make ourselves known to another human being in whom we trusted, and then that person judged us for having the weakness or fear that we expressed. Such an experience is painful and convinces us to continue to isolate ourselves, holding on to our stories. But isolation ultimately causes us to stagnate and die emotionally. In contrast, our Father, represented by the father in the parable, is full of grace and acceptance. He gives us the gift of being known and then replaces the old stories with a new story that changes us from the inside out, graciously restoring us to be children whose purpose is to reflect his patience, compassion, and forgiveness.

Once we accept the Father's gift of being known, we discover how to give the same gift to others. Free of our stories, we can listen with compassion and patience as another person reveals their inner life to us and then offer them the healing that comes from the Father. The most valuable relationships we can have with other human beings are those in which we feel safe to be known by each other just as the Father has come to know us. To become known is the beginning of our transformation.

About Raymond

Raymond L. Fox has been teaching about transformation in the image of Jesus for forty-five years, in the U.S. and abroad. He has written two books, *Fruit of the Spirit* and *Love Your Neighbor as Yourself*. His work also includes character counseling and mentoring in juvenile detention facilities. He has degrees in philosophy and education.



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