

Spiritual Soup

By Kurt Venables

The Leaves of Autumn

I was sitting out in the backyard this past weekend (it is now late October). My little girl was coloring at the table on our patio, and our puppy was playing in the yard. The pup was chasing leaves as they fell off the trees, pouncing on them as they approached the ground. He got excited going after a bunch of them and bounded into the woods. I yelled after him, “Stay out of the woods, pup.” Gold looked at me in amazement with a mouth full of leaves and sticks and said, “Out of the woods? But that’s where all the good stuff is.” OK, he didn’t really say it (he’s too polite to talk with his mouth full), but he looked like he wanted to say it.

Samantha was drawing a picture of the trees with crayons. She had trees with leaves of all colors- red, orange, yellow, purple, green. That’s just how it looks around our house right now. Just beautiful. This time of year reminds me that overcoming limitations is key to spiritual development. How so? The trees lose their leaves and go dormant in preparation for the darkness and cold of winter. Yet humans have evolved past this limitation; some of us barely noticing the passing seasons as we live, work, and drive around in various heated and air conditioned spaces. Spiritually, those who fail to overcome their limitations also fail to develop, to evolve. In hearts that grow cold and dark, the beautiful leaves of the human soul fall to the ground and crumple into dust. These unfortunate souls are not dead; for life remains within, dormant. And this life can spring forward at any time, once the sun returns.

To keep our spiritual leaves from falling, or to quicken a rebirth, we must strive to overcome our limitations. One of the greatest of these is the arrogance of thinking that we already know everything and have no real limitations to work on. We can begin the journey of spiritual development only by accepting we are not perfect and by realizing that we always have much to learn. The fundamental limitation in human nature that dims the Light is selfishness. To progress spiritually, we must overcome selfishness; we must break down the boundaries that confine our love. Some care only for themselves, or their family, or their friends, etc. Spiritual development is coextensive with the development of love without boundaries, with the freeing of love. We must simply free our hearts of our mentally imposed limitations and our hearts will naturally love. Some have the attitude that life is too hard, that they have barely enough energy to worry about themselves, let alone others- others must take care of themselves. But such people short change only themselves by failing to progress spiritually. For others, selfishness is the product of arrogance, a need to feel “better” than others. This psychological game is designed to provide a sense of self-esteem (albeit corrupt), security (albeit false), and perhaps justify the hoarding of resources (although the arrogant often have far less than they imagine). Regardless, selfishness blackens the heart and shuts out the light. We should not feel bad about ourselves because we are not perfect. Life is a precious gift, and we should regard our own consciousness as profoundly wonderful.

And that wonder is easier to see the further down the spiritual road we travel. And there are many good things ahead.

Only by overcoming our limitations and learning to love can we evolve spiritually, free the Light to shine bright within our souls, and experience its joy and fulfillment. I wonder if there's a little girl and her puppy in some netherworld watching the leaves fall from human souls. Is she as sweet as my little princess? Does she see the beauty in the leaves, even with all their limitations, yet hope that they return again in spring?

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