

Written by Rev. Debra Faulk
Delivered at Unitarian Church of Calgary, April 25th, 2010

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" Actually who are you not to be?

You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's in everyone, and, as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

This service uses this quote as it's inspirational diving board. The quote comes from Marianne Williamson's, [A Return to Love](#), though it has often been credited to Nelson Mandela's as he used it in his inaugural speech.

What is it that we fear about our own light and power. What are the culturally mandated biases, social pressures and even denominational confines that have us withhold from true expression of our unique and universal greatness.

One of the confines emerges through the language of the quote in its entirety. I do hope that hearing the word God did not terminate attention to the intention of the quote. For some the term God elicits the involuntary reaction of rejection.

We definitely were not "born to make manifest the glory of God within us".

We were born because a male and a female of the species copulated or insemination occurred, sperm and egg uniting, at the correct time during the female's cycle, allowing fertilization, gestation, and birth and this is true, yet when I looked upon the face of my new-born child, and fully recognized what I had been the vessel of creation for, I felt God move in me or at least was stirred by some force far greater than myself, that connected me in that moment to all mothers of all species, to creation itself and I most definitely saw magnificence, glory, in that tiny face.

I do consider it a gift that I was raised as a Unitarian and do not have rejection reaction to words such as God. In our Sunday school classes we looked at so many different ways that God, Source, Great Spirit, Universal Energy could be interpreted, that the opportunity for a personal relationship with stayed in tacked.

When the great father interpretation of God, that which is most rejected, was presented it was as protector, a way to identify feeling safe in the world. I remember my son Daniel, when he was about five informing me that God lived at

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the end of our street. I was perplexed – mom the man who lives at the house with the bright painted fence, he has a white beard, always says hello, has the funny laugh and gives the most candy at Halloween. Children can use the term with ease and know God personally.

A denominational confine to standing in fully connected light may be the removal of the concept of "God" for this can inhibit a personal connection to that which is greater than the body self whatever term it may be given.

This is a risky topic in Unitarian circles yet we each have experienced awe-filled moments, through connection with another being, with nature, with an idea, with our personal intuition, the awe-fullness of connection.

Well to continue with the risk of using taboo Unitarian words, "someone once said that sin is doing the same dumb things over and over. That might be too casual a definition, but it is food for thought. The key idea is that if we do not learn from our mistakes, we continue to make the same mistakes, not because of accidental repetition, but rather because we refuse to learn, the universe will keep providing opportunities for us to get the lesson. In *The Road Less Traveled*, Scott Peck called sin militant ignorance.

A Dutch definition expands the idea saying that sin is the refusal to grow in the direction which conscience dictates. In all cases, there is a sense of deliberate, even willful, disregard of our own knowledge of what is good - of what leads to wholeness for ourselves and others and a disregard of the greater good in which we all live and move and have our being.

The Greek definition of sin, is a separation from source. Always, sin is separation and severance. Always it is the rejection of our most true selves.

I am reminded of the story of Lenny on his death bed. As he drifted in and out of consciousness, Lenny made several trips back and forth across the bridge between the realities of time and eternity. One time he met God on the other side. He trembled terrified that God would be angry at him because he wasn't as wise as Solomon, as brave as Moses, or as compassionate as Jesus.

God knew Lenny's fears and said "Never mind Lenny, I am not going to ask you why you weren't Solomon, or Moses or Jesus. Only, please, Lenny, tell me, why weren't you Lenny?" Lenny came back to his body with a wonderful new insight. he told his family, "I know what you have to do in life - become yourself.

"We can say, then, that sin is the willful refusal to become yourself, to grow into who you really are when fully realized, alive, creative, loving, and expressing the power of love."

We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" - Actually who are you not to be? In reality, it is a sin not to be. Why is it that as

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human beings we do not allow the natural unfolding of our true beauty, be as a flower blooming into full magnificence.

Imagine a flower, a crocus or daffodil, saying to itself, I better not be too bright, don't want to offend the tulip, or the rose's internal voice suggesting it stay a bud, not quite fully bloom so as not to call attention to itself.

Cultural biases and social pressures impede standing in full bloom. Williamson said "Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you." yet how many people are there in your individual lives that you can speak your own greatness to with out concern for being interpreted as conceited, selfish or seen as "full of your self".

I recall facilitating a women's solstice ritual where participants were called forth to speak their greatness out loud in a circle. So much of what was expressed was based on the perceptions others out in the world, being a good parent, administrator, message therapist. It was a process to get to the place of acknowledgment of the pure light within, the Namaste center and recognition of the same in the rest. That recognition brought with it a sense of being expanded and immense; a sense of being self-full not selfish.

I personally believe that we can make the greatest contributions to ourselves and the world when we are thus self full.

Let me use the analogy of a jar. We all recognize the need for cookies in our lives, we need two cookie jars. One is only for ourselves, the Self Jar. The other is for giving away, the Hospitality Jar. Now these jars are filled either by our baking cookies or by our receiving gifts of cookies.

When I speak of self full, I mean that our Self Jar must be full first. It is important to give only from the Hospitality Jar and it is only filled after the Self Jar is full.

Giving to other than yourself from the Self Jar is sacrifice, it is burn out, it is unhealthy and also encouraged in our society.

Co-dependent relationships are based on reciprocal feeding from Self Jars, depression occurs when the Self Jar is empty or the Hospitality Jar hoarded, abuse occurs when one individual steals from another's Self Jar, love happens when a cookie gifts go into the Self Jar, esteem is built when we bake cookies, commitment happens when we share our baking or abundance.

Now it is also important that the cookies be eaten, stale cookies are a drag. Feed yourself, feed others, bake often, cookies fuel the light.

Oh but I can't bake, I don't know the recipe, I'm allergic to wheat and chocolate (there go double chocolate chip), I can't afford the ingredients, real men don't bake, I could never make as good cookies as...

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Were there ever cookies as good as the mud ones you made or that were given you by a child. Baking soul cookies is not about perfection or comparison. It is about the action of baking, the action of being of service. Service is love in action.

As Mother Teresa put it: "Love cannot remain by itself - it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action and that action is service." If we are not in service we resist the action of love.

Now by service, I do not mean that each one of us ought always to be out doing good deeds for others. There is service also in taking the time to appreciate a glorious sunset, in reading a good book, in being with people we care about, in laughing really hard and long, there is service to self in making sure that your own cookie jar is full before filling the Hospitality Jar. There is service in sharing.

There is service in not "shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you" and also in letting our light shine so others are safe and encouraged to do the same.

Coming here this week has had its anxieties as you may well imagine, most new positions do not require a ten day interview after the initial three day one. I was anxious and also somewhat frightened, often times when I present a sermon, there is fear, Unitarians are a tough crowd. Will I offend someone with language or metaphor, expose myself, be totally off base, that fear of inadequacy and then something in me moves and the shift is the resonance of.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?"
"Actually who are you not to be? ... Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

"We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's in everyone, and, as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Thank you for the permission to let my light shine, I realize that to let our light shine is a human responsibility. Shine on.