

Session 12.1: Seeing with Generous Eyes

Living in the Gift

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Hey Everybody,

In this unit I'd like to toggle back to a realm of gift that has little or nothing to do with money. I call it "seeing with generous eyes," and it is part of a decolonization practice, or you can say a deprogramming, to undo one of the big ways in which the money economy can infect our relationships and just how we see other people and actually how we see ourselves as well.

As before, this is not just so that you become a kind person. It is also the most potent way that I have discovered to be a force for positive change in the world. It is probably the most powerful practice that we will touch in this course.

Two important background pieces.

I would like you to recall Jimi Eisenstein's animation *A Game of Musical Chairs* how the current economic system tends to encourage the most competitive, ruthless aspects of human nature. From a young age, we see a world where it seems like everyone is trying to get the best deal, in which everyone is trying to gain an advantage over everyone else. Everyone's out for themselves. Obviously it is not everyone doing that all the time but that is the essence of capitalism and that is the tilt of the playing field that we live on, and we are immersed in capitalism or in that *kind* of capitalism. And any behavior that is not about maximizing self-interest, in economics that is called "non-economic behavior" or uneconomic behavior. Anything that is in the realm of money tends to be, what they call, economic behavior where you are seeking to get the best advantage. And as we've looked at before, the realm of money in our society keeps growing and growing and growing while the realm of community, of gift, has been shrinking.

So this climate of competition has become more and more all-encompassing. And we can add to the economic background a competitive educational system we can add to it neo-Darwinian ideology of survival of the fittest. Put all those things together and you have a society where we're often seeing each as a threat. We are quick to agree with the economist, biologist, and politician in the musical chairs story. "Yup, that's human nature for you."

So we are programmed to think not very nice things of other people. That's the story that our culture bestows us. Human nature is wicked, selfish, and competitive. Then on top of that the system of musical chairs then reifies that story by creating artificial scarcity and competition. No wonder we might sometimes have trouble seeing best the in each other. Seeing the generous, seeing the selfless, seeing the altruistic, the service orientation. Yeah we do see it but the

predilection, the expectation that's given to us by the culture is not to trust. As they say, "don't trust strangers".

Now let me add one more piece of the background which is the habit of judgment. The essence of judgment as I am using the term is, "If I were in your situation, I would have done differently than you." It comes from the belief that people do good things because they are good people, and people do bad things that's because they are bad people. Whereas, non-judgment says, "If I were in the totality of your circumstances, I might very well do as you did."

The habit of judgment divides the world into us and them, into good and bad. Taking all kinds of guises, it prevents us from really seeing other people. It prevents us from seeing where they have come from, where they are, and where they might be able to go. Because we're stuck in a dehumanizing caricature of the other, therefore we are unable to hold a vision and invitation for who they might become.

This understanding that informs what Orland does in his work with gangs. He invites them to see the enemy in his full humanity, not just as an enemy but as someone's brother, as someone's friend, as someone's son.

Holding a person in the story of enemy, you will act in ways that keep them an enemy. Releasing that story, there is a possibility of the relationship changing. It's not a certainty, but at least a possibility.

We saw a stark example of that in Nipun's story of Julio Diaz. If you remember a young man robs him at knifepoint. He refuses to see the man as a thug; instead he gives him his jacket as well. "Hey are you cold? Take my jacket as well". Hey let's go and have a burrito. Once they are eating the burrito he asks for his wallet back. "Hey I'd pay for you but you've got my wallet". Then he asks for the knife. Now how is he able to that? It only makes sense to do what he did if he is holding that young man strongly in another story, in a story of *"This is a beautiful young man. This is a confused man. This is somebody who wants to do better than this, this is somebody whose soul is too beautiful to be doing what he is doing"* and holding that story so strongly that the young man cannot resist. This is what I call seeing with generous eyes. He saw something beautiful in the young man, the possibility of a change. He knew, "You don't really want to be doing this." He knew it, this is not a formula. If someone tries to rob you, you can't just repeat those words, repeat those words that Julio said or something like that and expect the same result. You have to actually **see** the future person you want to invite into manifestation. It cannot be a spiritual ideology that says we're all a child of God so it must be in there somewhere. You have to actually see it. To see it, you have to look for it. Looking for it – that's what I mean by generous eyes. You're looking for the best; you're looking for the sacred in other people. It doesn't mean deluding yourself and pretending that you see it when you don't see it. Simply to look for it, it is an orientation.

Another way to put it, it means actively looking for the god within. It means looking for the part of each person that wants to give, wants to love, wants to be kind, wants to do something beautiful with their lives. When you look for it, you are likely to find it. When you find it, you can speak to it. When you speak to it, it dares to come forth.

It is very hard to see the god within when instead we look at the projection of our judgment. Judgment is a kind of stinginess. Its opposite is compassion. Compassion is the result of a question, or really another orientation, which always asks, "What is it like to be you? What is your experience? What is your story? How does the world look from behind your eyes and how does it feel walking in your shoes?" This orientation clears away the smog of judgment. The next step is to look for what is possible – the transcendence of circumstances that had defined that person. That's what a possibility is. It's moving beyond the programming. Moving beyond what they have been in the situation they are in.

So much of spirituality and the self-help movement rests on a premise that I would like to challenge. It is that our transformation comes through our own efforts. That's not how it has been for me. My growth usually comes when someone sees something in me that I was blind to. This is the gift we can give others. Sometimes it is a hard gift. When somebody sees something in me that I was blind to, it is not a very pretty thing but it was in the way of my unfolding. You know you might be able to offer that hard gift to a friend or something, you name the blind spot but you might notice it isn't always received. I would say that it is received only when it is offered with love, and not a desire to dominate. If your offering meets resistance you can ask, "Why am I so keen to name this person's blind spot? What is in it for me? If they admit that they have that blind spot then am I the winner? If you answer yes to that question when you are honest with yourself then no wonder they're not going to receive it because you're vying for dominance.

Usually the offerings I speak of are not of this sort. Usually they are more about an unfulfilled potential or a change that is ready to happen, a gift wanting to emerge. And you name that and it does emerge and it does happen. It's not though that you name it directly. I'm not saying that you tell the person what is supposed to happen, what you think wants to happen or what the gift is. It's that you see it and from that place, you speak to that person, you relate to that person. What you actually say depends totally on the circumstances. But it is that when you are seeing the person in that way, that's when everything you say becomes an invitation to be just that.

Before I move on to the end of this session, I want to return to the Earth Treasure Vase and the sacrifice we offer into it, that ego coin that we let go of. The release of judgment that I am speaking about it is actually, also, a kind of sacrifice. Because, every time we hold a judgment about another person, we implicitly define ourselves in relation to it. Usually it is some form of "I'm better than you"

although it could be the opposite. If you judge someone as ignorant, or rude, or racist, or selfish, then you imply that you are less of those things. Because you wouldn't be doing that if you were them, now would you? You might give lip service to humility ("Well I've got my flaws too") but that is the implication. That I'm better than you, that I wouldn't be doing this. This is one reason I want to move from this place, to give that up, to give up that "I am better than you", to give up "Here's who I am" in contrast to that judgment. Giving that up that is a sacrifice.

If you can see someone without that smog is already a gift, that seeing is already a gift. And then the air is clear for you to see them with generous eyes. And then you can invite them to be the best version of themselves, or shall we say, the next version of themselves. As you cultivate that habit, you become a walking invitation for people to be kinder, more generous, and less judgmental themselves.

The next part of this session is a conversation with Pancho Ramos-Stierle, a man deeply practiced in seeing with generous eyes. Hopefully that conversation will give a boost to the practice I will offer you now.

To see what is beautiful in another, it helps to see it in yourself. Close your eyes for a minute and recall an occasion where you did something kind or generous. It doesn't have to be a big thing. Maybe someone asked directions in the street and remember how happy you felt to be of help. Remember you wanted nothing in return from this person. So recall and incident like that, a small thing, feel that giving part of you.

And now recall a time when you wanted to be generous or kind, but were afraid to. So you held back. And the moment passed. You were meant to give and you were stingy or selfish. Maybe you said something mean. Maybe you withheld something. Maybe you didn't do the right thing, and the moment passed you by. Feel that part of you that really wanted to give. Feel that frustration. Feel the desire to liberate your giving self.

OK. Seeing that in yourself, you see yourself with eyes of generosity. You see a future in which your giving, kind, brave nature is free. You have an image of yourself at the next stage of freedom. And you can feel the presence of that future self. Feel it now. Feel the presence of that future self, so generous, so uncalculating, so brave. And feel for a moment its universality, knowing that it is in all of us, that future self in every human being. . And again that is what you look for when you see with generous eyes. Over the next few days, or as long as you want to, let this phrase echo through your head – *seeing with generous eyes* – and when you do, touch this feeling again. *Seeing with generous eyes*.