AUTHENTICITY

BeAUTiFULLY imperfect!

Morning Devotionals and Pictures from Kampmeeting
Kinship Board of Directors
President: Yolanda Elliott
Vice President: Naveen Jonathan
Treasurer: Karen Lee
Secretary: Ruben López
Director of Church Relations: Dave Ferguson
Directors of Women’s Interests:
  Debbie Hawthorn-Toop and Betty O’Leary
Director of Communications: Ashish David
Director of Youth Interests: Ronoldo Appleton
Director of Development: Keisha McKenzie
Directors-at-Large: Ruud Kieboom (Europe)
Director of Development: Keisha McKenzie
Director of Church Relations: Dave Ferguson
Director of Communications: Ashish David
Kampmeeting Committee: Linda Wright
Finance Committee: Sherri Babcock
Membership Services: Member Services Team

Committee Chairs
Executive Committee: Yolanda Elliott
Finance Committee: Sherri Babcock
Kampmeeting Committee: Linda Wright
Communications Committee: Ashish David
Governance Committee: Ruben López
Int’l Growth and Development Committee: Floyd Pönitz
Diversity Committee: (to be determined)
Nominating Committee: (To be determined)

Regional Coordinators, USA
Region 1 (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, PA, NJ): David Thaxton, Catherine Taylor, region1@sdakinship.org
Region 2 (MD, VA, WV, NC, DE, DC): Yolanda Elliott, region2@sdakinship.org
Region 3 (TN, AL, MS, GA, SC, FL): (available), region3@sdakinship.org
Region 4 (MN, IA, MO, WI, IL, IN, OH, KY): (available), region4@sdakinship.org
Region 5 (AR, KS, LA, OK, TX): Floyd Pönitz, region5@sdakinship.org
Region 6 (ND, SD, NE, WY, UT, CO, NM): (available), region6@sdakinship.org
Region 7 (AK, WA, OR, ID, MT): Stephanie Spencer, region7@sdakinship.org
Region 8 (NV, HI, CA zip 93600+): Obed Vazquez-Ortiz, region8@sdakinship.org
Region 9 (AZ, CA zip 93699+): Ruben López, region9@sdakinship.org

International Coordinators
Argentina: Martin Podesta & Julio Leyva Medina, kinshipargentina@sdakinship.org
Asia: Adam Lee, kinshipmalaysia@sdakinship.org
Australia & New Zealand: kinshipaustralia@sdakinship.org
Brazil: Itamar Matos de Souza, kinshipbrazil@sdakinship.org
Canada (east): Jerry McKay, kinshipcanada@sdakinship.org
Canada (west): Judy Coates, kinshipcanada_west@sdakinship.org
Central & South America: kinshipsuramerica@sdakinship.org
Europe/Netherlands: Ruud Kieboom, kinshipeurope@sdakinship.org
kinshipnetherlands@sdakinship.org
Kenya: Rena Otieno, kinshipkenya@sdakinship.org
South Africa: Johann Lubbe, kinshipsouthafrica@sdakinship.org
Uganda: Joseph Brown, opendoor@webmail.or.ca
Venezuela: Carlos Pajuelo, kinshipvenezuela@sdakinship.org

Other Coordinators
Transgender/Intersex: Teagan Widmer, intersex@sdakinship.org / transgender@sdakinship.org
Older Adults: Ren Reynolds, olderadult@sdakinship.org
European Young Adults Under 30:
  Itamar Ahsman, kinshipeurope_imru@sdakinship.org
Webmaster: Linda Wright, webadmin@sdakinship.org

Chaplain
Marcos Apolonio, chaplain@sdakinship.org

Who We Are...
Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a non-profit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation. Kinship is a global organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people worldwide.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God’s children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

Support Kinship
Seventh-day Adventist Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA
or visit Kinship’s website at: www.sdakinship.org.
This is an unusual issue. You all know what we are normally: some articles, some interviews, and some news. This time we thought we would just share Kampmeeting. The issue is comprised almost solely of three talks from our morning devotional speaker and photos from the entire week. We have included the announcements for three upcoming (Mini-)Kamp-meetings in the United States and Europe. We hope you are well, wherever you are and whatever life is bringing you. Take good care of yourself for you are infinitely valuable.

Catherine

Yolanda Elliott
President
Executive Committee
Finance Committee
Member Services Committee
president@sdakinship.org

Naveen Jonathan
Vice President
Executive Committee
Member Services Committee
vicepresident@sdakinship.org

Betty O'Leary & Debbie Hawthorn-Toop
Co-Directors of Women's Interests
women@sdakinship.org

Ronoldo Appleton
Director of Youth Interests
youth@sdakinship.org

Keisha McKenzie
Director-at-large
Development Director
development@sdakinship.org

Marygrace Coneff
Director-at-large
Director of Family & Friends
family-friends@sdakinship.org

Ruud Kieboom
Director-at-large
European Coordinator
Netherlands Region Coordinator
kinshipeurope@sdakinship.org

(more information on page 15)
Three Steps to Choosing Authenticity and Getting Your Real Self to Stand Up

By Dr. Greg Nelson (© 2013)

Do you remember that classic TV game show To Tell the Truth? It was one of the longest running game shows ever, airing shows in every season for 45 years.

The premise was that four celebrity judges would try to guess which of the three contestants was the genuine character being described in an unusual and unique life story read out loud by the host. All contestants introduced themselves by the name of the true character. The two “imposter” contestants could lie with their answers; the true character had to tell the truth in every answer. After questioning each contestant, the judges would vote. The host would then say those famous words, “Will the real [name of the character] please stand up.”

To Tell the Truth’s very first central character was West Virginia governor Cecil H. Underwood. He was the youngest person ever elected governor in West Virginia (at age 35). He would go on to be not only the oldest person elected governor in West Virginia in 1997 (age 75), but also the oldest person ever to be elected governor of any state in United States history.

I used to love watching the show, trying to guess which was the real character. I sometimes got it right. But often I was completely surprised. And I’ve never forgotten the host’s line at the end of the vote: “Will the real [name of the character] please stand up.”

So what was the appeal to such a simple game show? The drama of trying to figure out who was who? Deception? Humor? Seeing judges voting? Unusual life stories? A competition of winning and losing?

Probably all of the above. But I think there was also something else at play. We are drawn to that which is true, to people who are able to stand up and truly be themselves. We call this authenticity.

Defining Authenticity

I’m inspired by the way Brené Brown, in her book The Gifts of Imperfection, defines authenticity: “Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are.” (p. 50)

The “letting go” of this ideal self we think we’re supposed to be (and even that can change depending on which environment we’re in at any given time) is really hard, isn’t it? Why?

Why Living Authentically is So Difficult

Our external culture. We live in a world that strongly encourages, sometimes even demands, that we fit in, don’t stand out too much, and conform to accepted expectations and standards. Though our country was founded on individuality and the pioneering spirit, our culture has strong ways of limiting all of that.

We’re raised to acquiesce to authority—the authority of parents, adults, institutions, people who know more than we do, power, position, status. We’re taught not to trust ourselves or our gut instincts or to look too deeply inside ourselves. All true authority is outside ourselves, we’re told.

No wonder we have in our culture an authenticity challenge.

Our internal culture. Compounding this cultural squeeze is the truth that inside ourselves we often have another battle raging. It’s a self-esteem and self-worth issue. So that whenever we feel shame or unworthiness or guilt that creates self-doubt, we can quickly and easily sell ourselves out and say, “I can be anybody you need me to be. Watch me!”

So we can allow our self-identity to shift with the winds and tides of our surrounding people—whatever it takes to please them or get their approval so we can feel good about ourselves.

We definitely have an authenticity challenge these days. So how do we learn to choose authenticity more and more in our daily lives—to choose to be our real selves in every context, living out the fullest
and most confident expression of our true selves?

**Three Steps to Choosing Authenticity**

Notice the three actions described in Dr. Brown’s definition of authenticity:

1. Daily practicing
   - It’s unrealistic to think that all of a sudden, one day we can simply declare, “Okay, I’m perfectly authentic now. I’m good to go.”
   - Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It’s about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen. (p. 49)

   When you consider that we are making this choice against everything that we’ve established through the course of life as being “true” about ourselves and what’s really important—pleasing others at our own expense, living up to everyone else’s expectations, letting every situation determine how “real” we should be, hiding behind masks, or trying hard to be someone we’re really not—it’s no wonder authenticity is a daily, even moment by moment, choice. We have to practice it regularly. We have to develop a new normal.

   Philippians 4:8-9 - “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final fix. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

   Authenticity is a process of becoming, a journey into being more fully genuinely ourselves. So our practice demands: “In this moment, faced with a choice of how I’ll show up in this situation, I choose authenticity. In this moment, I choose to be real and genuine and honest. I will not hide myself. In this moment, I will not let fear of what others might say or think dictate how I show up. I choose to let my self be expressed. In this moment, I will be me to the best of my knowledge and ability and in a spirit of respect, love, and compassion.”

   2. Letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be
   - We have to stop living our lives based on other people’s expectations and standards. We need to respect and honor their choices. But we don’t have to emulate them. We are each unique individuals. We have to let our masks go. We have to let go of our attempts to squeeze into someone else’s mold. We have to let go of our obsession with pleasing and seeking approval in order for us to feel good about ourselves.

   For a trapeze artist to let go of the trapeze and fly through nothing but empty air takes courage. It’s scary and even risky.

   So is letting go of false identities—especially if we’ve lived them for a long time. We end up flying through uncertainty, even at times lack of clarity, about who we are. We risk rejection and lack of acceptance. People close to us might actually like us the way we’ve been. We might “fail” at being ourselves. Yes, it takes courage to let go.

   But we can’t grab ahold of the true identity (the other trapeze bar) without letting go of the false.

   3. Embracing who we really are
   - Think of a time when you felt really true to yourself; when you felt completely safe, loved, accepted, honest; when you felt really strong and energized. What was happening? How were you showing up?

   Chances are you were actually being your true self. That’s what you have to embrace and grab ahold of.

   That’s the new trapeze bar you have been flying through space to catch.

   That story you remember is a snapshot of your authenticity. Remember it. Relish it. Visualize it again and again. Those powerful positive memories will give you courage to choose authenticity again and again. Embrace who you really are.

   **Embrace vulnerability.** Let go of the need for perfection, even in trying to be you. Give yourself permission to fail, to make mistakes, to not do it really well every single time you embrace you. That’s okay. You’re on the journey of authenticity.

   **Embrace compassion** for yourself and for others. Remember that you are made of both strength and struggle, as Brene Brown puts it.

   **Embrace the truth** that you, as your true self, are always enough!

   **Embrace that your greatest gift** to the world, to everyone around you, the gift that God has given you and you alone, is you. No one else is or can be you. Stand in your truth and that truth will set you and everyone around you free. Only authenticity gives freedom.

   Don’t deprive the world of your authentic you.

The very last show of *To Tell the Truth* was February 28, 1978, New York City. The central character was a 17-year-old high school senior named Robert Leighton. The two imposters were Peter, a 20-year-old college student, and Adam, a mature-looking 6’2” 13-year-old sporting a thin mustache.

The four celebrity panelists had to determine which of the three was the real Robert Leighton. His story was this:

“I, Robert Leighton, am a multi-thread man. First, I’m an author. I sold my first article when I was only 11 years old. Secondly, I’m a publisher. I specialize in satire. Next, I’m a cartoonist. I do all the covers and illustrations for my magazines. And finally, I’m a ventriloquist. For 10 years, I’ve been performing with my puppet, Woody. And when my true identity is revealed, Woody and I will have reached the big time when we entertain for the national television audience here on *To Tell the Truth*. Signed: Robert Leighton.”

Turns out, the three contestants fooled the judges who voted for Peter. So they got to split the $500 prize.
In the end, though he had always wanted to be a comedy writer, Peter became an IT talent recruiter. 13-year-old Adam grew up and worked as a journalist for Reuters, traveling all over the world. And Robert, who tried so hard to be a comedian, finally realized, thanks to some brutal audiences, he wasn’t really funny. He did end up selling his cartoons to The New Yorker.

Being authentic is definitely a journey of becoming. It’s being willing to face ourselves, look fully into the mirror, and identify who it is we really are: How are we wired, what makes us unique, and what is being called out of us for our contribution to the world. And then, with boldness and courage, it’s being willing to live that out with honesty.

So next time, when the situation arises and says, “Will the real you please stand up?” jump to your feet, hold your head high, and with joy reply, “Here I am, you lucky people!” And the rest of us will be the better because of it. So will you.

You can’t do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth.

-H.L. Mencken, writer, editor, and critic (1880-1956)
Choosing To Be Nobody But Yourself: The Costs and Rewards

Dr. Greg Nelson (© 2013)

E. Cummings once wrote, “To be nobody-but-yourself in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody but yourself—means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight—and never stop fighting.”

Wow! That statement really hits me deeply because I know that to be true in my life experience. There is a reason so many people don’t go on the search for their authentic self—because it’s so hard, sometimes even painful, and definitely difficult. You’re often battling against your own powerful limiting beliefs, against other people’s expectations of, and choices for, you. It’s easier to deny that nagging thought that we might not really be living our authentic selves.

No wonder it often takes a crisis to shake us off our pedestal, forcing us to go on the search for authenticity. When we choose to push against the system of our own beliefs and others’ expectations, the system pushes back.

You’ve felt that, haven’t you? The systems in our lives use shame, guilt, religious dogmas (which in essence is using the “God” card—you are going against God’s will for you!”). We’re told we’re being selfish and narcissistic, thinking only of ourselves. “You just need to sacrifice yourself for the sake of others. After all, didn’t Jesus say, ‘Take up your cross and follow me?’ Remember, life isn’t just about you.” Those messages are deeply personal and painfully powerful to go up against.

Talk about strong push back. It always happens when you choose to practice authenticity, stepping into the full expression of your true self.

I remember walking the streets, sometimes in the middle of the night, wrestling and struggling with the implications of my choice to live my life rather than the life so many others I looked up to were telling me I was obligated to live. I felt so alone. The weight of the world burdened me down, sometimes even literally, as I felt the loss of so much I had valued in the past. The push back on every level was intense.

But little by little I began to realize that the alternative was even more potentially damaging. Even medical experts these days are recognizing this truth. Here’s the way Dr. Brené Brown states it, in her book The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You’re Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are:

“If you’re like me, practicing authenticity can feel like a daunting choice—there’s risk involved in putting your true self out in the world. But I believe there’s even more risk in hiding yourself and your gifts from the world. Our unexpressed ideas, opinions, and contributions don’t just go away. They are likely to fester and eat away at our worthiness. I think we should be born with a warning label similar to the ones that come on cigarette packages: Caution: If you trade in your authenticity for safety, you may experience the following: anxiety, depression,
eating disorders, addiction, rage, blame, resentment, and inexplicable grief. (p. 53)

Sacrificing who we are for the sake of what other people think we should be just isn't worth it. There might be some short-term payoffs (like superficial and conditional acceptance, affirmation, kudos). But the long-term damage, as she points out, is brutal.

So what do you do when you’re experiencing the Big Push Back? Brené Brown says she repeats three simply phrases to herself:

Don’t shrink. Don’t puff up.
Stand on your sacred ground.

Don’t Shrink.
Don’t Puff Up.
Stand On Your Sacred Ground.

That’s right. Your true self is sacred ground. It’s who God sees you to be and believes for you.

Romans 12:2-6 - “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your selves to God as a living and holy sacrifice—the kind God finds acceptable. This is truly the way to worship God. Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold, but let God transform you by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given each of us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well.”

Authenticity—living authentically—is all about knowing ourselves, embracing what makes us each unique, and identifying how we’re wired (our temperament, our strengths, our spiritual gifts, our passions, our unique skills and life experiences). It’s practicing how to live out this uniqueness in fuller and more honest, effective ways each day. It’s embracing our unique identities and living them out with boldness and courage.

That’s why Jesus, when the Devil tempted him to doubt his true self, refused three times in a row: in the middle of the hot desert, when he was at his tiredest, hungriest, and weakest.

“I don’t need to do anything to prove myself to you, Devil, or to please anyone else’s expectations for me. I know my truth because it came straight from the mouth of God when He told me, “You are my Beloved Son; I believe in You; I’m proud of You! Period!”

So next time you’re feeling the Big Push Back, whether from your own inner doubts or other people or powerful institutions, remember to do three things:

Don’t shrink! Don’t puff up!
Stand on your sacred ground!

And when you do, remember you are in good company. Even Jesus did that.

So here’s to choosing authenticity. Here’s to fighting the good fight. Here’s to all the health and well-being that come from standing in your truth.

And if you need some support to do this, write me and I’ll suggest some ways I can be helpful. (greg@gregorypnelson.com)
A Spirituality of Imperfection:  
God Shines through the Cracks in Our Armor  

By Dr. Greg Nelson (© 2013)

Nakedness and Inadequacy
Remember that nightmare we have all had at one point or another about being naked in public in front of a crowd? Do you remember what you feel in that dream? Excited? Elated? Proud? Seductive?

Most often we feel shame, fear, embarrassment, extreme vulnerability, powerful discomfort, maybe even horrified.

Why? Because the dream is often about the fear of exposure, fear of rejection; that if people saw us for who we really are, they would not accept us; they might even ridicule us. Dreams about nakedness in public are about a deep fear of inadequacy and even shame.

So our culture demands that we go out in public looking good, clothed not just adequately, but impressively. We grow up in families that equate high performance with value and worth. We learn early on to hide our inadequacies as best we can in order to appear put together. Perfection is the standard.

The irony is that deep down we know that perfection is not only unreasonable, it’s pretty much impossible.

Have you ever followed the hitting percentages of baseball’s best players? The all-time best hitter, Ty Cobb, had a career batting average of .366. No one has been able to reach that level in a career before or since.

What this means is that over 6 out of every 10 times Cobb got up to bat, he went out. And he’s considered the greatest. The greatest batters in history never hit perfectly. And they’re heroes.

Which begs the question, Why is it that our expectations for baseball are so radically different than our expectations for ourselves and everyone else in the rest of life?

The Commissioner of Baseball in 1991, Francis T. Vincent, Jr., made this astute observation:

Baseball teaches us, or has taught most of us, how to deal with failure. We learn at a very young age that failure is the norm in baseball and, precisely because we have failed, we hold in high regard those who fail less often—those who hit safely in one out of three chances and become star players. I find it fascinating that baseball, alone in
Institutionalized Perfectionism

S

ome of us have grown up in a church that rigorously fights an ongoing war against failure. Error is seen as a lack of spirituality and trust in God. If you simply trusted God more, you would overcome your tendency to “strike out” when you stepped up to the plate of life. With God’s help, you can get better and better at hitting the ball whenever you’re up to bat. And before the world ends, God expects you to hit home runs or at least hit safely every time you’re up.

There’s a word for this view: perfectionism.

For the most part in my life, I played the game pretty successfully. I knew the rules inside and out and was quite accomplished at fulfilling and living up to them well. I certainly received a lot of accolades for how successful I was, at least on the outside of my life—which is the only side of anyone people can really see, right?

So when you live in a perfectionist culture where mistakes and failures aren’t accepted as the norm, there’s intense pressure to measure up to the highest standard in order to feel good enough. Self-worth becomes built upon performance.

Without realizing it, my sense of self was being constructed on a shaky foundation. I had to make sure I was successful and didn’t fail; I had to constantly prove my worth by my performance. So if you’re one of those lucky ones, like I was, who is able to be really productive within the accepted measurements, you’re rewarded—you get praise and positive attention from others and therefore you can give yourself the same.

Until the big failure and fall. And I had it. Epic. My whole world collapsed around me. And in one fell swoop I was on the outside, no longer seen as successful, all my past accomplishments wiped off the slate of institutional memory.

Unlike baseball’s radical paradigm in which the player steps up to the plate and strikes out, still maintaining his beloved stature as the valued and famed hitter even though he goes out 6 out of every 10 times—in my world it was one big strike and you’re out, for good.

Connecting Perfectionism and Shame

D

r. Brené Brown, in her book *The Gifts of Imperfection*, points out that “where perfectionism exists, shame is always lurking. In fact, shame is the birthplace of perfectionism.” (p. 55)

That certainly explains our fear of exposure in our nightmare of being naked in public. We will do whatever it takes to keep our inadequacies from being seen, because deep down there’s a feeling of shame connected to failure or imperfection. We see ourselves as “less than” in our failures.

So the ongoing question for me in my life is: Whenever I make mistakes (and I do, often), whenever I don’t live up to my values in even small ways, whenever I try something and make a mess of it, whenever I feel the need to present myself to others as all together, whenever I am tempted not to feel good enough unless I do it all perfectly—whenever I’m faced with these moments, can I still feel a sense of value, acceptance, and okayness and refuse to place my worth into judgment?

Identity and Self-Acceptance

B

eyond the pain of the institutional response to me, my biggest personal challenge suddenly became, Now that I’ve blown it big time, what is my identity, where do my feelings of worth and value come from without that great reputation? Can I accept myself even in the midst of failure? Or am I simply a loser forever, from now on?

My road back to a sense of deep personal acceptance and worth was long and difficult. But in the end, the opportunity to build my sense of self on a much more stable foundation than the shaky one of performance and perfection was the most important outcome that could have ever happened to me. It has given me a sense of confidence, security, and acceptance of myself in powerfully authentic ways like never before.

Perhaps baseball has a lot to teach us about life. Like the commissioner observed, errors are part of the game and perfection is an impossible and unrealistic and not even expected goal. No player ever bats 1.000 in a career. Ever.
wonderful ways. That belief system
narrowst rather than expands our
lives.

Three Ways a Spirituality of
Imperfection is an Antidote to
Perfectionism

O
ne of the powerful antidotes to
this debilitating life approach is
the practice of a spirituality of im-
perfection. That’s right. Healthy,
genuine spirituality is based upon
embracing the value of imperfec-
tion.

Here are several whys and hows
of practicing this spirituality of
imperfection.

First, imperfection is a call to
practice compassion on yourself.

D
r. Brown interviewed scores of
people who were engaging with
the world from a place of authentici-
ty and worthiness. She noticed that
all had a lot of common experience
when it came to perfectionism.
First, they spoke about their imper-
fections in a tender and honest way,
and without shame and fear. Sec-
ond, they were slow to judge them-
selves and others. They operated
from a place of “We’re all doing the
best we can.” Their ability to step
into self-compassion was extremely
high. (Ibid., p. 59)

The next time you make a mis-
take or do something less than per-
fectly, practice compassion on your-
self. Don’t judge yourself negativly
by going to that indictment, “I’m
such a loser! Why can’t I do any-
thing well? If people knew I was this
kind of a failure, they’d reject me
for sure!”

“A moment of self-compassion
can change your entire day. A string
of such moments can change the
course of your life.” —Christopher K.
Germer

The great spiritual teachers of the
past saw imperfection as the
crack in the armor, the “wound”
that lets God in.

Meister Eckhart (the 13th cen-
tury German theologian, mystic,
and philosopher) wrote, “To get at
the core of God at his greatest, one
must first get into the core of him-
self at his least.”

This truth is applied by the con-
temporary Jungian analyst who
identifies “addictions,” for example,
as one of the “wounds” that lets
God in:

“Addiction keeps a person in
touch with the god…. At the very
point of the vulnerability is where
the surrender takes place—that is
where the god enters. The god
comes through the wound.”

So rather than immediately con-
demning ourselves for a mistake,
failure, or even continual “wound”
whenever it manifests itself, pause…
embrace it… and let it bring you to
the point of surrender… let it point
you to God who comes through that
mistake to embrace you and love
you, and then, little-by-little, to
bring healing to your wound.

Isn’t that what we do as parents
when our child falls down, scrapes
himself, and comes to us bleeding?
We don’t refuse him, telling him to
get cleaned and bandaged up first
before we embrace him. We get
down on our knees, pull him into
our arms, holding him tightly and
tenderly, whispering words of love.
We gently clean up the wound, put
a BAND-AID® on it, and then hold
him close again. That moment of
“wounding” lets our love into his life
in tangible, intimate ways.

The New Testament spiritual
leader Paul, who wrestled with what
he called “a thorn in his flesh”
some kind of either physical, emo-
tional, or spiritual ongoing ailment)
and kept asking God to remove it
from his life, was confronted by the
grace of God in the midst of his
wound. Rather than taking the
“wound” away from Paul, God came
to him in the middle of it and said,
“My grace is sufficient for you. My
power is made perfect in your
weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

So embrace your “wound” and let
it allow God’s amazing compassion
and love to shine through the cracks
of your armor straight into your life.

And third, imperfection is a
place of light. Let it out.

To paraphrase Leonard Cohen’s
lyrics from Anthem, “There’s a
crack in everything. That’s how the
light gets out.”

It is a misguided myth which our
perfectionism gets us to buy into:
that we lose people’s respect if we
fail and make mistakes, if our
“wounds” show too much.

Truth is, people aren’t looking for

The word “imperfect”
actually spells “I’m perfect”
because everyone is perfect
in their own imperfect ways.
perfection from us; people want authenticity, honesty, and transparency, even about our imperfections. “Be real,” people often say.

The same New Testament spiritual leader, Paul, emphasized this truth when he described human beings as “clay pots”—cracked containers. His point was that the light (he called it the “glory of God”) that lives inside us is able to shine out into the world through our cracks (2 Corinthians 4:7). No cracks, no visible light to the world. God needs our cracks so God’s glory can shine through us in order to reveal divine compassion and love to others.

So rather than running from our imperfections, rather than covering them over, or hiding them, or even denying them, we can “sanctify” them (give them over to a holy purpose)—that is, allow them to be used by the light as vehicles through which the Light of Love radiates out to the world.

Leonard Cohen is right. There’s a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets out.

Sometimes, it’s the “sinners” that are more appealing than the “saints.” Who wants to be around someone who tries to be perfect all the time, who refuses to admit imperfection in themselves or others, and who thinks they’re more “righteous” than everyone else? No grace or compassion there. Perfectionism is, after all, an attempt to play God.

So embrace the crack. Be vulnerable. Be authentic and transparent. That will be used by God to let the light shine out, to show others that even in our imperfections, love and compassion can shine through and be visible and experienced by others. Sometimes, it’s our willingness to be “naked” in public that reveals the true glory of God.
Thank you Linda!
We're having an unexpected response to our September Mini-Kampmeeting! Our project for that weekend is to “develop a theology” along with some adventures, dolphins, discussions, worship, play, and wonderful meals. The books to be discussed this year are Zechariah, Horton Hears a Who, and The Mousehole Cat. Be sure to register now to reserve your space!
Cost for room, food, programs, and dolphin watch is $150.00 per person.
For more information, you can contact Catherine at Region1@sdakinship.com or at 413 325-3648.

You are invited to our 8th Annual Vermont Mini-Kampmeeting!

It will be held at a rambling, comfortable Victorian home in Ludlow near one of Vermont's most scenic ski mountains. We will have access to a wide range of historic and artistic activities.
This year we have the opportunity to have our Sabbath worship in an Adventist heritage church, weather permitting. We are quite excited that we have a new pastoral ally who will be joining us, with her family. Our focus for this year continues to be Building Sanctuary.
There will be the usual morning Prayer, Praise, Promise, and Pajamas worship; Sharing Circle; and unexpected surprises.
Go to http://sdakinship.org/en/events.html and click on the selected event in the left-side menu.

For more information, please feel welcome to contact Catherine at Region1@sdakinship.org or 413 325-3648.

“I believe that God wants us to live authentically. That means God gave me a set of characteristics that makes me unique and different from everyone else. If I invest in and nourish who I am with my natural talents and gifts, I have a very high chance of finding fulfillment in life because I will be doing what comes naturally to me.
I can try to live according to what relatives, friends, society, church, and I expect from me and aim to achieve their standards. But I can also work on discovering, understanding, accepting, and nourishing the ‘me’ created originally by God. In being the best version of me, I can flourish in a way I never could if I kept on trying to be who I am not or to develop characteristics that are not my natural gifts. That's what it means to live authentically in every sense.”
For more information contact Ruud at kinshipeurope@sdakinship.org.
Kinship Board of Directors Elected!

On page 3 the newly elected board of Directors is presented. Karen Lee was appointed as Treasurer to lead an accounting team that will serve the remainder of the term that Brian Durham has had to vacate due to his school schedule.

Marygrace Coneff was appointed as Family & Friends Director and will work with Sharlett Reinke who is retiring from that position.

Many thanks to Brian and Sharlett for their important work on the Kinship Board over the past years!

Appreciation

[Debbie Hawthorn-Toop & Betty O'Leary]

We would like to let all LGBTI Kinship women know that we appreciate the faith you have put in us by electing us as your new Co-directors of Women’s Interests. We will do our best to continue to build our part of the Kinship community! If you have any suggestions for events, programs, or activities, please let us know by writing to us at women@sdakinship.org.

We would like to thank Karen Wetherell for her four years of service as the Director of Women’s Interests. We appreciate the hard work and dedication she demonstrated as our fearless leader! Thank you for the time and wisdom you shared as you passed the torch to us.

Thank you, Linda and Jacque, for the work you put into making Women & Children First a success this year. We notice and appreciate the many ways you make Kinship better.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank Wolfie for being our volunteer host for the Kinwomen Chat every Friday night. Your dedication to this position is greatly appreciated by all of us that attend chat!

We both look forward to getting to know all of you better over this coming year!

European Chat Hour

Lately we have started a European Chat Hour on KinNet Chat for all members in the European time zones (6 – 7.30 pm GMT/7 – 8.30 pm WET) and other parts of the world for those who are interested to get into contact with each other. The chats (in English) are led by Andrea Roth, one of our coordinators in Germany. The topic of our next chat on August 12 is How has SDA Kinship impacted your life and what experience do you have with it? Talk to you later!

Share your news with us!
Write to connectioneditor@sdakinship.org
Kampmeeting 2013
Pacific Grove, California