

Beyond the Drama!

“Do not abandon yourself to sorrow, do not torment yourself with brooding. Gladness of heart is life to a man, joy is what gives him length of days!”

Ecclesiasticus 30

I want to talk to you today about the benefit of getting beyond the drama in your life. The drama of life itself is unavoidable. What I think we can avoid is:

- internalizing the drama, rehashing it and complaining righteously about things with indignation and horror
- we can avoid choosing to bond with others through our wounds.
- We can avoid choosing to use drama to get negative attention and manipulate people.

All of these are choices we can avoid. The failure to do so simply makes matters worse. Let's see if we can get beyond the drama and be happier about our lives! 😊.

There is a folk saying which predates the writing of Isaiah, but it is found in Isaiah 65:8:

“When new wine is found in a bunch of **grapes people say, “Do not destroy it. It contains a blessing.”**”

The commentators think that the image here comes from a problem with collecting grapes when a large part of them are damaged or spoiled either by the vine quality, or a bad season, or by being gathered too early or being left too long in a heap. In such a case the vine dresser would be ready to throw them away. But in the pile of spoiled grapes, he might just find a few that were ripe and good. So, the

blessing would come from saving these few grapes, or that is what some commentators think.

I don't think that these commentators know much about wine making however...,

I think that is not what this old saying is trying to tell us at all. I think it's something much more exciting!

We must remember that the best wine is made from *wild yeast*, from the vineyard where the grapes are grown. It has a much higher alcohol content than a wine that has artificially infused yeast.

Robert K. Mortimer, Professor emeritus of Molecular and Cell Biology at UC Berkeley, who has worked closely with several California winemakers, studying the role of yeast in natural fermentations, has shown that *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* is naturally on the grapes, but here's the thing: only on about 1 in 1,000 berries. *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* is referred to as the "true" wine yeast because its alcohol tolerance enables it to ferment up to and beyond 13% alcohol.

The ancient saying is I believe talking about *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, found on those 1 in a thousand berries in a thin white film. A true wine maker would recognize its value immediately. The blessing that comes out of the one in a thousand rescued berries would be an incredibly fine tasting wine, rich in body and of a higher quality. A blessing indeed and one not immediately apparent among a damaged pile of grapes, unless you really knew what you were doing!

In the first miracle of the historical Jesus in the New Testament he turns water into wine. The wine was wonderful according to the host who asked why it had been left to the last.

My speculation is this: Jesus and *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* had gotten together and in answering his mother's request, the mask as to who Jesus was, was off, very briefly! It was the original Divinity at work...

The Jewish community have their own style of humor. In Jewish humor one of the things that Jewish mothers are known for is creating drama and always having the last word.

A Jewish man calls his mother in Florida. "Mom, and how are you?"

"Not too good," says the mother. "I've been very weak."

The son says, "Why are you so weak?"

She says, "Because, I haven't eaten in 38 days."

"Mama," the man says, "that's terrible. Why haven't you eaten in 38 days?"

The mother answers, "Because I didn't want my mouth to be filled with food if you should call."

Drama kings and queens are found in every segment of society. A teenage blogger writes: She said: "Friends ... who are drama queen are pathetic. They do everything, lying, backstabbing, and everything in between just to have

attention... Usually, the drama queens are selfish, arrogant, self-centered persons. They create stories (sometimes so fairytale and not logic at all) just to make others give attention to them...”

Drama does not just apply to women however. We men can also get into it bigtime!

A sincere young Muslim woman was writing for advice to a Muslim website. She said; “I recently fell in love with a good Muslim guy and we are ready to get married. He is approx. 7 years younger than me and is having a hard time dealing with my past... I have made some mistakes in my past, with regards to previous relationships. Essentially my fiancé feels like he is being robbed of the joys/experiences that should come from marriage; things that he waited for, as a Muslim... He can't overcome the pain... He is happy with the fact that I am finally at a place in my life where I have embraced Islam and practice as I should, and that I seek forgiveness from Allah daily... Is there any advice that could make it easier for my fiancé, or at least to help stop the hurt and pain that he feels?”

The replies on the website are interesting and nearly all of them call for a pause and reassessment of the relationship and identification of the fiancé's problem as psychological.

Why?

Because in Islam, after confession and repentance there is a fresh start. Judaism and Christianity teach the same. But the fiancé is interesting. He apparently has lived a chaste life as a devout Muslim and wants to marry someone who has done the same. Trouble is that he has fallen in love with someone with a past different from an Islamic life style. So,

what does he do now? His reaction is to feel hurt and he can't seem to let go of it.

Perhaps he needs to check his drama meter...why?

Because all of us have a choice when something bad happens to us, or someone we love. We have a choice to go into the wound and stay there or we can let it go. Why, beyond self pity, do we keep our wounds? What is the payoff? Interestingly it is intimacy!

Carolyn Myss writes that we develop intimacy through sharing our wounds with each other. But if anyone asks for a less dramatic reaction to the wound or questions this kind of intimacy, all hell can break loose. She writes about an experience she had with a friend at Findhorn. She writes:

“ I had arranged to have lunch with my dear friend Mary. Having arrived early in the dining room, I joined two gentlemen for tea. Mary entered a while later, and when she walked over to our table, I introduced her to my companions. She had just extended her hand to greet them when another member of the Findhorn community, Wayne, came up to her and asked, "Mary, are you busy on June eighth? We're looking for someone to escort a guest coming to Findhorn for the day."

The tone of Mary's response was as revealing as its length. She snapped, "June eighth? Did you say June eighth?" Suffused with anger and resentment, she continued, "Absolutely not! June eighth is my incest support group meeting, and I would never, ever miss that meeting! We

count on each other, after all. We incest victims have to be there for one another. I mean, who else do we have?"

Myss was captivated by the instantaneous dramatics triggered by a simple question about her schedule. Later, as Mary and she were having lunch, she asked about her friend's behavior:

"Mary, why, when you were answering Wayne's question about your schedule, did you have to let all three men know that you had suffered incest as a young girl, that you were still angry about it, that you were angry with men in general, and that you intended to control the atmosphere of the conversation with your anger? All Wayne asked you was, 'Are you busy June eighth?' and in response you gave these three men a miniature therapy class. A simple yes or no would have done fine."

Carolyn writes:

"Mary looked at me as if I had betrayed her. Her body stiffened, and she emphasized her words in an ice-cold, defensive tone: "I answered that way because I am a victim of incest." She drew back from the table, stopped eating, and threw her napkin over her plate, indicating that our lunch together had come to a close. Myss said: Although I didn't realize it at that moment, so had our friendship."

Drama!

Many people I know have what can be called a 'rap'- an internal or external running dialogue. It becomes a

characteristic way of responding to the news and events of life.

It is very easy to have one today as we are inundated with negative news daily.

It is often a form of intelligent complaining. We hear some bad news and then go into a rant about it. We say to ourselves: If people would only listen to us, we could fix the entire world! We say: What we need is to get back to a simpler Canada. The founding Fathers of Confederation had it right. We need to get big government out of our lives and get back to freedom. It's all Justin Trudeau's fault. It's the carbon tax. It's the big labor unions. Its health care. It's military spending. If we could just get back to the days when neighbors helped each other out rather than have big government tell us all what to do.

Rant!

Do you have friends who you rant with all the time as a way of developing friendship?

Barry Neil Kaufman in his book Happiness is a Choice says that he had a friend who he used to be in contact with all the time. They had marched together for civil rights, they talked on the phone weekly about current events and it was always in a complaining style, a kind of 'ain't it awful' way of talking about the world. It was full of drama, righteous indignation and judgment.

Barry Neil Kaufman decided that this way of carrying on about the world no longer served him. Instead, he wanted to be happy and get beyond the drama.

So, he made some positive choices. He scrutinized all his beliefs and judgments and found many of them erroneous and self defeating. He decided to hold onto only those which served him. He made a huge decision : **to no longer be a victim of his personal history but decided to become a co creator of his true self with faith in God.**

His friend found Barry's changes appalling for it signaled an end to the years of sharing anger, frustration, self righteous indignation and sadness as they poured out their mutual concern for the planet. These emotions reflected the depth of their commitments, so they never questioned them. But when Barry Kaufman began to change and seek to be happier and more accepting and less judgmental of others, his friend found the new Barry alarming.

No longer could they share their mutual wounds and the whole friendship had been based on that. On the last occasion of the friendship his friend came over for coffee with an article on civil rights violations. He shared about how stupid the legislators had become. At one point he banged his fist down on the table because he felt that he had right on his side.

But Barry asked him softly why he was so angry.

“Because I want to! Is that alright with you?”

“Sure” said Barry, “Its fine. But I still wonder why you feel that way here and now?”

The friend said “If you ask me one more question I’m leaving and I will never come back.”

Barry thought about what his friend wanted. He wanted Barry to be the person he wanted rather than the person Barry was becoming. Barry decided that he was not going back and so he asked one more question “Why would you leave here and never come back if I asked you one more question?”

The friend never replied. He grabbed his wife’s hand and left, never to contact Barry Kaufman again.

You see, the friend was not able to get beyond the drama.

There is however a much healthier way of dealing with the tragedies of life and its suffering. It is to follow the wise advice of the ancient winemakers saying: “When new wine is found in a bunch of spoiled grapes people say, “Do not destroy it. It contains a blessing.”

Alan Cohen updates this ancient saying. He says that when we operate a vegetable juicer, we place a carrot in a funnel at the top of the machine and it spits out the pulp one door and sends a golden stream of juice out the other.

Similarly, he says, we can take all the very painful experiences of our lives and put them into a blessing extractor. We press the right button which is to have our

lives be a success with a choice for happiness and then let the machine whirr for a few seconds.

The blessing extractor shoots out the tasteless unusable pulp made up of all the drama, facts, figures, loss and sorrow, into a refuse basket. Then a miracle happens. **Out of another door pours out all the blessings that the painful experience has given us.**

What are the blessings? A very fine wine of

- deeper personal strength,
- greater aliveness,
- fresh insights,
- a more open heart,
- new direction,
- The dissolution of long- standing destructive patterns

And a richer appreciation of our own gifts.

Long after the pulp has been thrown away, he writes, the blessings keep flowing!

So even if our life has been incredibly hard, we don't throw it out in depression and despair or into victimhood. We need to stop checking our wounds and instead look for that 1 in a thousand berries! That berry can transform the meaning of our whole life into a blessing for ourselves and others.

Gladness of heart is life to a man, joy is what gives him length of days. Beguile your cares, console your heart.

Chase sorrow away! For sorrow has been the ruin of many and is no good to anybody.

Its time to taste the blessing of the new wine!

Joel Osteen writes:

“Christine was driving through an intersection, when she accidentally turned too sharply and sideswiped another car. Worse yet she was driving her brand new car, a wedding gift from her husband Eric.

Christine pulled over...and the driver of the other car, an older gentleman, got out of his car and began to examine his severely damaged bumper. He then stepped over to where Christine was sitting in her car crying.

“Are you okay young lady?” he asked kindly/.

“I’m fine,” Christine sobbed, but I just got married and my husband gave me this car as a wedding gift; he is going to be so upset. I don’t know what I am going to do.”

“I don’t even know if I have an insurance card.”

“Well its usually in the glove compartment,” the man suggested. “ Why don’t you check there?”

Christine opened the glove compartment to find the owners registration, the insurance information, and attached to the insurance card was a note that read:

“Honey. Just in case you have an accident, please remember that I love you and not the car.”

This one in a thousand husbands, rather than sour grapes coming from the chaos and upset of an accident, had chosen instead to place a blessing.

Getting beyond the drama, this marriage was on the way to becoming a fine wine.

Amen.