**Grounding**

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In my late twenties/early thirties, I had this amazing re-occuring dream that I was flying. I traveled the skies above the tree tops, with joy and a sense of possibility. The interesting thing, however, is that I was connected to the earth by a cord. The cord kept me from disappearing into the clouds, into the ozone, to another galaxy. It doesn’t take a professional Jungian analyst to see that the cord kept me grounded and connected. It was a time in my life that I really was understanding the power of roots and wings as a metaphor for wholeness.

For me, in order to fly, to stretch my wings, to be open to imagination and change and creative fullness, I needed to know how to ground myself.

I was working very hard on that.

I’m still a work in progress, especially in these first days of 2025, with the impending change in the political landscape in Washington. As I remarked in my Thursday Note, a lot of people are having a lot of emotions right now. So how do we ground ourselves in the midst of impending doom?

Daniel Hunter is a nonviolence trainer in social movements around the globe. In the last issue of Sojourner’s magazine, he wrote of how hard it is to ground when the future is unknown, when tremors of anxiety are felt in the air around us, and the thought of unhinged power and more drama is exhausting and terrifying. The title of the article is, *“10 Ways to Ground Ourselves For What Comes Next.”* Here are a few that struck me:

1. **Trust Yourself.** We are living in a time of great social distrust—of media, politicians, so-called experts, in our families and in community institutions. Distrust is like oxygen to autocracy—it makes it easier to foment division. We not only need to build trust by being trustworhty to others, but to ourselves. Listen to your gut, believe your eyes, and acknowledge your emotions. This means, if you are tired, rest; if you are scared, make peace with your fears; if you are over consuming news or doom scrolling on your phone, take the break your inner voice is pleading for: go for that walk, bake those cookies, pick up your novel instead of reading yet another article. Trust your Self. It’s the place where the Holy dwells.
2. **Find Others You Trust.** Find your tribe, your community, your circle, your team. We need each other. Don’t isolate! Hannah Arendt, 20th century political philospher describes the dangers of “verlassenheit” which is a kind of loneliness borne out of social isolation. One of the tools of totalitariansim is to relentlessly attack social systems, which rips away at community and turns people “towards ideologically simple answers that increase isolation.” We need each other, friends—even you introverts. Community is essential. Go to your small group; meet folks for coffee, come to Friendship Dinners, come to worship on Sundays, join the choir….we stabilize and ground each other just by being together and sharing similar values and concerns.
3. **Grieve.**  Daniel Hunter points out that “walking around and saying, “I can’t believe this is happening” or allowing yourself to rationalize, intellectualize or ignore what is happening creates a false narrative of denial. Instead, we must name and grieve what is being lost. In 2016, the first Trump administration acted on a policy to separate families who sought asylum in the US by crossing the border illegally. I remember the stories of women being told by Border Patrol agents that “their families would not exist any more” and that they would never see their children again. We saw photos of children huddled together, alone, crying for their parents; one Honduran man took his life in a detention cell after his child was taken from him. I had this wrenching conversation with someone who couldn’t or wouldn’t acknowledge these horrors for the sake of upholding a policy. They couldn’t open their mind to a more compassionate way of border patrol. I wept at the absence of compassion. We have to believe what is happening now, we have to believe it is happening and grieve the absence of humanity, of compassion—this leads us to acceptance which opens up our own hearts to courage.

1. That being said, another practice of grounding is to **Release What We Can’t Do.**  Better said, engrave the words of the Serenity Prayer in your heart, mind and soul. *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.* These words are attributed to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, during the rise of Nazi Germany, and have endured for almost a century as a guide for life not only in Twelve Step programs, but as life practice. As Hunter reminds us, the first day of the new administration (tomorrow) has been promised to include pardoning Jan 6 insurrectionists, re-allocating money to build The Wall, pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement, and firing over 50,000 government workers. Who knows what the second day will bring, but it will likely be chaotic. We can’t change it all, which is hard to accept. So, we do what we can, we support the efforts of others, we breathe, and we pray…. *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Beloved, grounding is essential in our vision for justice, mercy, and compassion. It creates an inner vulnerability to feel “the pain of people we don’t know; and strengthens our kinship in spite of differences.” This kind vulnerability bruises our hearts, but our friend John Pavlovitz reminds us “it is in the crucible of such bruising that the best parts of us are formed. No one became a better version of themselves through apathy or cruelty.”

Yes, grounding, holy grounding is necessary to keep us from walking complacently through life in spite of the hurts and horrors and pain and injustices around us. In her 1963 book, *Eichmann In Israel: The Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt reports on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the architects of the Holocaust. She used the phrase “banality of evil” to refer to Eichmann's deportment at the trial, for he displayed neither guilt for his actions nor hatred for those trying him, claiming he bore no responsibility because he was simply obeying the law and “doing his job.” Arendt believed that Eichmann was actually not a fanatic or a sociopath, but instead an average mundane person who relied on cliched defenses rather than thinking for himsel. She described him as being motivated by professional promotion rather than ideology, believing success as the top standard for a “good society.” Banality does not mean that Eichmann's actions were in any way ordinary, “but that his actions were motivated by a sort of complacency which was wholly unexceptional but grossly negligent.”

Beloved, this is the time not for negligent complacency. Because believe me, the banality of evil is subtly seductive in its numbing. It brushes away the uncomfortable feelings of bruised hearts; it erodes trust in the midst of the messiness of kinship with one another.

By grounding~~trusting ourselves, rooting ourselves in community, by seeking serenity and wisdom unleashes the wings of compassion. Our friend John Pavlovitz writes that “compassion is the lifeblood of our fragile humanity. It’s the whole point of showing up every day; the thing that tethers us all together, and in at this precise place and time in the history of the planet that compassion is more precious than ever….compassion is the defiant, relentless, rebellious burden that will not allow us to turn away when someone is hurting—and there are so many who are hurting right now….[even]… you are hurting—and you are the person the world needs most right now.”

Back to that grounding cord of my dreams. There is this sweet verse in the book of Ecclesiastes (4:12) that says “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” This image reminds me that grounding is found in unity, in sharing trust and compassion, in connecting our bruised hearts. A cord of three—today I like to think of it as God, You, and Me—is what we all need now.

**We** are the people the world needs right now. So let us ground together, hold one another, and trust—trust in the One who chooses the fast of loosening the chains of injustice, knowing as we follow in that Holy Path, light will break forth like the dawn, that Glory will be the strength of our rear guard, and that always, always the voice of Sacred Presence will be constantly whispering this promise: “Here I am, the Ground of your very being. I am with You.”

Amen.

**SOURCES**

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