

Matthew 10:40-42 (Petterson translation) We are intimately linked in this harvest work. Anyone who accepts what you do, accepts me, the One who sent you. Anyone who accepts what I do accepts my Father, who sent me. Accepting a messenger of God is as good as being God's messenger. Accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help. This is a large work I've called you into, but don't be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing.

Matthew 10: 38-39 (Petterson translation) If you don't go all the way with me, through thick and thin, you don't deserve me. If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me.

### LOSING ONESELF -- FINDING ONESELF

**Introduction:** Authenticity is a word much favored by psychologists and popular therapists right now. And one can understand why. At a time when reality is whatever television producers dream up and truth consists of the latest tweet or facebook entry, trying to find and be the essential "me" is a worrisome task. It is such stressful work that many, perhaps most, of us, simply give up and become a bundle of trends, fashions, notions and defenses. But from time to time a feeling of unease causes us to whisper to ourselves, is this all there is? The short answer is NO, there is an authentic "you", but first you need to lose oneself. So what are we called to lose?

**Toys:** Why don't we start with the easy ones. First off, we need to stop counting toys as a measure of our success. Mind you, this is said by a person who loves toys. I have not been hunting in years, but I have a closet with many guns. If ever an intruder darkens our door I will have to repel the invader by throwing unloaded handguns at him because I can't remember where I stashed the ammunition. And that is just as well for the intruder will probably be my medical case worker sent to check-up on a senile old professor. For most of us the toys we accumulate tend to be ever larger houses, more land, bigger boats, more and bigger of anything! I remember how impressed I was when I lived in Christiansted Virgin Islands and saw a private yacht with a helipad on the stern deck. I just got through reading about a new yacht that has two helipads, both stern and foredeck. Incidentally, you can charter the boat with two helipads for only four million dollars a week. All of this makes the point wonderfully well that we all too often, measure the worth of a person by the material objects that they have managed to collect over the years. If that is an important part of oneself, one needs to lose it.

**Power:** The part of oneself that is very well developed in some people is the lust for power. The ability to shape interpersonal relationships is often a power goal found in families. Families sometimes have someone who delights in defining who is bad, good, worthwhile, worthless, etc. It is a power that disrupts families to the point of disintegration. Others pursue their lust on a larger stage. They may make business or political relationships serve their power needs. They may be quite successful, but they may well be quite destructive as well. Whole nations have been torn asunder when in the grip of a power abuser. Power is simply a tool for good or for evil. If its' use is problematic for a person than one must lose it before harm results from ones actions.

**Greed:** Sometimes inseparable from power, greed is a powerful motivator for many people. The desire to have more, of whatever it is that the person desires, eventually destroys relationships and the individual. Acquiring becomes an end in itself. Whether money or objects, it is the act of acquiring that is the goal, not the thing acquired! Greed is another one of those things which we must lose if we are to discover our real selves.

**Me and Mine:** If the words “me” and “mine” are central to your way of thinking, you may have some serious excess psychological baggage. It is probably correct to view yourself as the center of the universe until you are weaned. From then on a person should grow in their consideration of others. People are not possessions. Love is not a currency with which we buy human beings. The real universe is big beyond our imagination; the interpersonal universe is certainly much larger than a single individual. The centrality of “me” and “mine” need to be lost as we grow in spirituality.

If we lose excess toys, power, greed and narcissism, what is it that we find in our quest to grow in the spirit? The list is short and the items easily pursued, with God’s help!

**Positive relationships:** We should count positive relationships with our fellow humans as a powerful marker of life success. These may be, for many of us, limited to our circle of family and friends, but we should be ever mindful of the need to expand that circle.

**Creating power:** Power is not a finite quantity, meaning that if you have more power I have less. It is expandable. Our Christian life is enhanced if we create more power by sharing opportunities. As we empower others, we increase our own power so much so that it becomes Godly love.

**Empathy:** The Jesus way to create equality is through the development of empathy. If we truly “walk in the shoes of another” we will be moved to generate equality through an understanding of the other. And, all “others” become significant others. Interestingly, as we grow in empathy, we also grow in spirituality.

**We and Ours:** When we allow our personal universe to grow around us and begin to grasp the inter-connections among us, “we” and “ours” become central to our thought and action processes. Whether it is apostolic succession in the church or multi-generations in the home, we all become aware of an “our” world replacing the limits of a “my” world. This is the pathway towards peace and the love of God.

**Conclusion:** We don’t have to die before we participate in the Kingdom of God. It is here, right now, living in us. By removing ourselves from the mundane, we find both Jesus and ourselves in the richness of a life of love that is more real than we could possibly imagine. This is what being authentic means. Amen.