

Opening to the Universe of Love

Marv Baldwin



An essay contribution to
Conversation 2015

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Marv Baldwin

Chief Executive Officer, Foods Resource Bank

Marv Baldwin has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Foods Resource Bank (FRB) since February 1, 2005. Prior to joining FRB's staff, he was an FRB volunteer which continues to be a source of grounding and inspiration.

FRB empowers people to "grow lasting solutions to hunger" through a network of farmers, organizations and supporters all around the world. His first introduction to FRB was as a volunteer US community growing project leader through his church. FRB's main activity in the US is to form community growing projects that raise money and awareness. The funds raised support overseas small holder farmer development programs in 30+ countries through the FRB network of members and local partners.

Marv is passionate about FRB's culture, approach and work because it supports people in their efforts to see themselves in new ways; make changes in their own lives; encourage and support changes in their families and communities; and consequently make lasting positive changes in our world. FRB's strategic plan which highlights FRB's transformative vision, mission and activities inspires and energizes Marv's spirit.

If you want to have a lively discussion; ask Marv about the potential energy of creative changed housed within each of us; the grounded faith of farmers around the world; the humility we gain through experiencing the art & science of agriculture; and the life giving energy of Divine presence.

Marv is grateful for the opportunity to serve on several boards including: the Alliance to End Hunger, Plymouth Place Senior Living, and The Well Spirituality Center. In addition he is an active member of the First Congregational Church of Western Springs, IL.

Marv graduated from Hope College in Holland, Michigan and prior to joining FRB, he worked for Nalco, a for profit water treatment company. Marv resides in Western Springs, Illinois, with his wife Amy and their three children.



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Do you breathe, or are you breathed? When you are thirsty, do you reach for the water or does the water control your desire for it? Are you in love or just trying to control another's actions? Are we so busy or are we just trying to avoid the pain we feel from loneliness? So many questions.

Once a novice monk approached his senior brother in the scribe room to ask where the original manuscripts were kept as he noted he was copying a copy. The elder said they were in the catacombs and told the younger to keep faithful to his work. As the elder sat with the question, it began to bother him and thus he headed to the catacombs to read the original manuscript, which he had never considered doing before.

After about an hour, the young monk took leave of his desk fearful of what may have befallen his elder brother in the catacombs. As the younger approached the elder, he found his elder brother wailing and sobbing as he read the original text. The younger approached the elder with deep concern and said brother what is it?

The elder through tears, said "we forgot the 'r.'" Puzzled the younger brother looked and then the elder said "the original text says 'celebrate.'"

Therefore, we must not assume previous experiences of others are valid, we must test them for ourselves.

Freedom

Freedom eludes, because it is right in front of our eyes. Perhaps within our eyes already. Our five senses sense a great deal and yet we often relegate their honest observations to a back seat. We know the truth and yet because of our ranking systems and internal judgments, we frustrate and create divisions within ourselves leading to schisms which require vast life energy just to maintain. Our ability to intellectualize, cypher, categorize, judge, think, and process through more than 20,000 thoughts per day is generally thought to be accurate. Yet we know much "common knowledge" is not fact based. Often people know certain things and lock down on certain things, mostly out of laziness. At our best illusion, our worst, delusion?

We say we control our thoughts but they are actually a runaway train, like a reflex, they take us for a ride, emotion brings in the hills and curves. Why do we trust what we think we know?

Yet, we have the ability to be free, 'Freedom' can be like the air we breathe if we are willing to discover ourselves experientially.

Experience matters.

We are on a journey of sorts. We travel standing still, as if in a time machine, distracted by the background noise of thoughts and ideas realizing there exists in this cloud a better and clearer possibility. Slightly aware we begin to pay attention through the constant attraction, the busy-ness. Like a moth to the flame we keep getting drawn to our histories, our futures and the many emotions that entertain us. It is the cutting room floor takes, disguised as Oscar material.

Reality strikes, or rather emerges, sometimes meekly, yet clearly.

Freedom eludes.

One constrains another for "their own good"; another constrains the one through "feigned neediness". Be present. Created reality is there too. Are our friends, our friends? Or do they keep us in the fog, with good intent yes, but is freedom there?

Real reality, Reality, is not neat and clean.

Truth is an outcome of Freedom. True?

Our brains convince us that we know and yet only We (the collective) know.

We think we know certain things and they are not so. And there is Freedom in the seeing of the not knowing. Such battles fought, blood spilled but for what purpose? To serve man's desire for control, for legacy, for acceptance? Sadly, it is that simple, and repression makes it so. Fear of rejection, death, loneliness, drives. Thus beauty is perverted into objectification. What a travesty. And yet choice of beauty is there, sacredness of Oneness is there. Wholeness awaits and yet becomes perverted through fear.

Physical death, return to life, to our Spiritual home, our skins of flesh once again put to rest for at least a time.

Why do we cling to our shell, our physical, intellectual, social and emotional covering? Are we so conditioned? Are we so afraid of being "naked" to Truth? In avoiding Truth are we avoiding Freedom and thus Love? Yes.

So we must accept. Except "must" is likely too strong and pointed. Freedom removes the "musts", "have tos", "shoulds", and "shouldn'ts" from our lives. Will we be willing to give them up and embrace our fears? Or are we too afraid to be responsible for our own decisions?

Facade of control

If we have control, we don't have to be so worried. Our ability to control the other, thus reducing their freedom, allows us to be less anxious and therefore we act. We use positions, relationships, words, "their best interest" and other various forms of manipulation to try to reduce our own insecurity about a constantly changing world. Really! We do. So can we, or how can we provide the space for others to be free? Is it possible?

Ironically, as we control others we constrain ourselves.

When we assume we have control or think we should, it leads to two levels of problems. On the secular side, it leads to great feats of extremism to regain control. On the religious side, it leads to both extremism to gain control and a sensed isolation from the Divine.

Fatalism leads to equally dire results mostly due to either a secular victim stance which continues to take deeper hold in western society and fatalistic views that God either will step or not. This often leads people to draw conclusions about whether they are loved or not. And again creating a sense of isolation for people.

Damage occurs on the control or fatalist extremes. The key to overcoming the traps laid at the extremes is to view ourselves properly and then act out of that.

Both the secular scientist and devout religious mystic agree in a Oneness in our universe. The scientists point to field theory, string theory, relativity, etc. The religious point to a shared Spirit, the Great Spirit, One God, Emptiness, etc. It is the same.

And yet we spend so much time in naming and categorizing what is ubiquitous that we miss the universal connectness and thus make poor choices individually and collectively in the extremes.

So how will we view ourselves, roles, and relationships? Without transforming our views, all will be lost.

Love

Within us and among us as the sages say. So if we go looking for it... we will never find it. To "go looking" denies it resides within us. It is true for all things we objectify. As soon as we think we can "go find" something or "wait for something" we have set ourselves up for loss, suffering and denial. At that point we start telling ourselves and others stories that help us justify what we thought was going to happen because we had to project rather than live in the present moment.

So, what now? Be present.

Ask yourself how you can read these words and how you know how these various letters put together form ideas, concepts, objects and actions. Ask yourself how these symbols we call letters serve us, inspire us, depress us, change us. How can it be? How much weight do we put on ourselves to say it, write it, communicate it, do it, just so, just right. Yet it is a miracle just to be able to type on my iPad knowing that although whoever reads this, assuming someone will, that we will share some meaning, some thought, some connection, for a brief time.

Additional ideas and concepts to be explored...

- Collective consciousness (Love) will eventually overcome collective comfort and safety.
- Big Data may be a major catalyst for greater global consciousness.
- Organizational *asanas*; recognizing, sensing and describing patterns; scenario planning as tools for becoming more conscious; and methods or approaches for organizations to provide more freedom, less constraint.
- Dimensionality of conversations as a method to practice presence in groups and organizations. Including new words, symbols or phrases that indicate the depth, complexity, intent, weight of ideas and deep truths explored through articulation.
- Harvesting the tension and energy in relationships rather than depleting energy and creativity through a perceived need to struggle for control.
- Rediscovering openness and intimacy as strength in various group and organizational settings - getting things "on the table" rather than trying to say the right thing or not saying anything for fear of making a mistake.

Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversations* are one central element of our work. GHC was founded on the belief that every individual and each organization is capable of bringing about profound change in the world. We are personally and professionally committed to learning and, by choice, place ourselves where we can partner with like-spirited leaders, engaged continually in a process of discovery to deepen presence, impact, and value. We seek to be in the community of wise change makers.

These *Conversations*—and our client work in planning, strategy, philanthropy, and coaching—are all designed to strengthen adaptive organizations for inevitable change and greater impact.



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In order to strengthen adaptive organizations for inevitable change and greater impact

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