

STANDING ON AND STANDING FOR

Give me a place to stand on and I will move the Earth.
– Archimedes

There are two perennial questions we need to ask in order to find each other and our way in the world. They are: *What am I standing on?* and *What am I standing for?*

Standing on refers us back to a timeless foundation, to some sense of Source, to all that is larger than us from which we're renewed as integral beings. *Standing for* leads us into the heart of what we value and the ethics by which we live in the world. *Standing on* gives us a compass. *Standing for* gives us a direction to stay true to by following that compass. The two perennial questions need to be asked of ourselves and everyone we meet. They are a basis for honest relationship.

What we stand on is inextricably linked to what we stand for. Consider how a simple lever works. Using a pivot point known as a fulcrum, one weight can leverage the lift of another weight. With our commitment as the fulcrum, what we stand on gives us leverage to empower what we stand for. In this way, who we are leverages what we do in the world. But without knowing what we stand on, what we stand for can become hollow. Without knowing our foundation, we can become overbearing in our opinions.

There are always two sides of knowing. One is the quest for meaning, the endless forging of what is essential in order to live. The other is our attachment to a particular view, idea, feeling, or belief. This is the trap of conviction: the stubbornness that turns truth into an assumption or conclusion. It's the trap of conviction that has Israelis and

Palestinians distrust each other without ever having met while young Christians in the Midwest run with no reason from Islamic children.

As Jon Kabat-Zinn puts it, “If you’re too convicted in your opinions or beliefs, perhaps you are a convict, imprisoned within the confines of your own understandings.” In this way, unquestioned convictions are old thoughts hardened into seldom-tested beliefs. Instead of bringing us closer to life and each other, our hardened views enforce patterns that keep us from reclaiming the common ground we all stand on.

Part of the riddle of being human resides in this question: If love and truth are in us, why are they so hard to find and grow between us? It seems that love and truth wait like seeds within us. If never watered, they never grow.

But if what lives in us is watered, the vastness of life enters our heart like rain soaking seeds waiting in soil. In time, there’s a fertile silence that takes the place of words as we break surface and living with that, our pains give way to joy.

How vastness enters our heart is part of the human journey. For everyone will be dropped into the depth of life. What matters is how we meet that moment and who comes with us. Meeting that chance is how the deeper journey of life begins. For me, that chance was my journey through cancer. It changed my stance in the world. It made me a student of all paths and all traditions. It made me a student of applied Spirit. It led me to what I stand on and stand for.

But it doesn’t have to be illness or catastrophe that grounds us. It can be wonder, beauty, love, or surprise. Great love and great suffering come to us all, to remind us how rare it is to be here at all. Then it’s our job to stay awake and aware, kind and loving. Ultimately, we’re challenged to find something lasting to stand on and something noble to stand for.

Being human is such a mystery, filled with blessings and hardships, often one leading to the other. And through my own spin from blessing to hardship and back, I've learned that when all else fails, I'm often forced to stand exactly where I am until the ground of being that lives forever comes up through my feet, making me a little more solid.

So I invite you to reflect on what you stand on. What is your deepest, bedrock, your foundation? How does it solidify your place in this life? And what do you stand for? What are the values and ethics that guide your truest actions in the world? In a personal way, how is what you stand on related to what you stand for?

I invite you to also reflect on your hardened convictions, obsessions, and excesses, as a way to diagnose what keeps you from what you stand on. I invite you to listen to your experience, as a way to put down what's in the way. For inner work begins with the vow to get closer to life.

Standing on and standing for are endless quests for how we in our fullness can keep the world together. I only know that when a flower finally opens, it accepts everything that comes from the sky. And when a heart finally opens, it accepts everything about existence. And when loving wholeheartedly, we can make honey out of anything. The river of who we are runs through every country. It ignores all borders. Our call is to follow that river.

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Questions to Walk With

- *In your journal, describe one way you are trapped in your own convictions, one way you are too stubborn about something you believe in. How can you update and refresh this conviction or belief?*
- *In conversation with a friend or loved one, take turns describing what each of you stands on and what you stand for. Then discuss one aspect of your personal history that you both have in common.*

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Mark is offering a new 3-session webinar THE LIFE OF EXPRESSION: Finding Your Voice June 13, 20 and 17 1-2:30 pm ET | 10-11.30 am PT. The webinar will also be available for downloading you are unable to attend the sessions.
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