

RESHAPING OUR HEARTS

JOURNEY TO THE HEART

In December 1999, I made a trip to Nairobi, Africa with Global Citizens Network. Our group joined with the beautiful people of the village of Taracha, to repair the damaged cement floors in the local children's classrooms. This three-week journey led me to the hearts of many, and even more so, to my own heart. Recently, I've been remembering a particular *moment*...a life-changing *moment*...from this **journey to the Heart**.

GRIPPED BY THE DIVINE

I recall sitting with the group I traveled with as we listened to doctors, nurses, and board members of a local clinic (built by previous Global Citizens Network groups and locals) share how they've been serving locals within their new clinic setting. Suddenly, as if entering another realm, I felt an 'energetic tug.' This 'tug' had me turning my head to the left, my eyes landing upon several obviously malnourished children wearing tattered strips of clothing in the cold mountain air. These curious children bore brilliant smiles in hopes that their faces would magically land in one of my photographs. My heart was suddenly filled with wrenching pain in witnessing their profound poverty. Before I could catch my breath, I was **gripped by the Divine**, and in what felt like a flash, I was somehow shown *all* the starving children on this Earth in several flashes of images within my mind's eye. My entire body began trembling uncontrollably, and in that moment, my heart broke open.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Seated to my right, a dear soul from our group managed to make eye contact with me, noticing my well of pain. Her simple acknowledgement offered a loving container that had the floodgates of my heart nearly bursting. I closed my eyes, and began coaching myself. "Jane, not now! Hold yourself together!" I began praying. "**Why are you showing this to me? What am I supposed to do with this information? How can I possible make any difference in this huge suffering?**"

BEING PRESENT AND BEARING WITNESS

I sat with my eyes closed, making every effort to return to my breath, attempting to calm my quivering body and ease the *seemingly* unbearable pain running through the very core of my being. I waited. *This* came... "Jane, stay right here, right now, in this very experience. Look *into* the eyes of these children. Feel the

pain. Feel the suffering. Keep returning to the Love centered in your heart. Notice that you are still here, that you are okay, despite the pain. Keep looking. Keep seeing. Keep experiencing. Notice!"

In my noticing, I realized that I *did*, in fact, have something to offer, and it remains true in every single experience Life offers me. It was simple, but not easy. I was able to offer my full and undivided attention to **being present** and **bearing witness** to exactly what was before me *and* within me, despite the pain I would feel in doing so. I had my Love to offer.

OUR HEARTS BREAK OPEN FOR A REASON

It can be quite arduous to be truly present, and to truly bear witness...particularly in the face of that which rips our heart wide open, and yet, **our hearts break open for a reason!**

My life is different since that day...since that breaking open of my heart. I learned, and continue to learn, that I have more Love living within me than I had realized. I learned, and continue to learn, there is true and undeniable power in genuine presence. I learned that my heart has the capacity for Love, even in the face of that which feels utterly unbearable. I am oh-so-gradually remembering that our heart's Love, in its true nature, is truly limitless.

"Shatter my heart, to make room for a new and limitless Love." -- Sufi prayer

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Love will do this...break open our hearts...and this offers us tremendous opportunity...an opportunity that is unmatched by any other...the opportunity to continually **reshape our hearts**...to reshape them so that they may soften into the limitless Love being offered to us in each and every moment.

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." -- Mother Teresa

MAY WE EACH HAVE THE BLESSED EXPERIENCE OF WRAPPING THE ARMS OF LOVE AROUND OUR HUMAN SUFFERING LONG ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE RESHAPING OF OUR HEARTS FOR A LIMITLESS LOVE.

Written by Jane Ellen on 6/29/07