

Like a Watered Garden  
"Self-CREATION, Day 1"  
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***Part 1: The Situation***

As I have said many times, there are no problems in life: only situations. It is our perception that turns a situation into a problem. That being said, we all have many "situations" in our lives we would like to change or wish were different. Overscheduled, uncertain, overdoing it, under-rested, overly frustrated, under-appreciated, over-it-all, under the covers—whatever your situation may be, you have the power to choose your perception and to create the change that is needed in your life.

Too often we allow our thoughts and feelings to rule our minds, hearts and even our spirits. As the clouds roll in, we submit and, like Eeyore, mumble, "Well, it's going to rain, no chance of sun for me today," turning back to hide in our cold, dark cave. We fail to embrace our power to choose, to create what we want despite the weather, to grab an umbrella, a sunny raincoat, and polka-dot rain boots and head out to seek our good fortune. Too often we forget that between feelings, thoughts, behaviors, we have choice. As holocaust survivor and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl, wrote, "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." We can learn to see our thoughts and feelings as a signal for change. We can learn to see our situations as opportunities to exercise our agency, to choose growth and power. When we learn to see, we will have the perspective we need to create and experience what we truly desire.

The problem is (and yes, my perspective is that this *is* a problem) we seem to remain stuck in old patterns and habits. This is because the fundamental structure of our lives may not be the way we need it to be. As Robert Fritz explains, in his book, *The Path of Least Resistance*, "Once a structure exists, energy moves through that structure by the path of least resistance. In other words, *energy moves where it is easiest to go* (p,4)." He goes on to compare each of us to a river. A river flows according to the underlying structure of the riverbed. So, too, do we "flow" according to the structure of our lives.

"If a riverbed remains unchanged, the water will continue to flow along the path it always has, since that is the most natural route for it to take. If the underlying structures in your life remain unchanged, the greatest tendency is for you to follow the same direction your life has always taken (p.5)."

This is great news if the direction you have taken in your life so far continues to lead you where you need to be. But for most of us, we remain stuck in this pattern of repeating old behaviors only to have them work for a while but ultimately fail.

So why is this the case? What causes us to remain stuck, even though we work very hard to be “unstuck”? Fritz poses an interesting and helpful idea he calls the “reactive-responsive orientation” and I call being “stuck in the rubber bands.” He invites each of us to imagine you are standing in a room, between two walls. Imagine that you have two giant rubber bands around your waist, each stretching to an opposite wall, where it is securely attached. On the wall to your right, you see the words, “I want to get better sleep.” To the wall on your left, you see the words, “I can’t have what I want.” As you move toward the thing you desire (in this case, better sleep), the tension of the rubber band attached to the “I want to get better sleep” wall loosens while the tension of the rubber band from the other wall grows stronger. Eventually the tension from that other wall becomes so strong, it slings you back in the other direction, toward “I can’t have what I want.” In other words, the more you work on sleeping better (going to bed earlier, reducing distractions, sleeping in when you can), the better sleep you will get (hopefully) and the less tension you will feel about needing better sleep. As you feel less tension about needing better sleep, you are then more likely to stay up later, allow distractions and get up early every day, thus pushing you back toward the “I can’t have what I want” stance and worse sleep.

As you ponder this, you will begin to see all kinds of rubber bands in your life. Some examples include: feeling overscheduled and then cutting back only to find you’re now bored, which leads to scheduling more; enforcing rules in your home in order to have more structure, only to find that you relax once the “structure” is in place and things once again become chaotic (leading to enforcing rules again); or frantically getting rid of clutter and finally being “clutter-free,” only to loosen up and then find your home cluttered again a few months later. These “rubber-band structures” are everywhere once you look. And they are, unfortunately, ultimately unsolvable. They keep us stuck in our “problems.”

Psychologist Carl Jung observed the same phenomenon:

All the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble.... They can never be solved, but only outgrown. This “outgrowth” proved on further investigation to require a new level of consciousness. Some higher or wider interest appeared on the patient’s horizon, and through this broadening of his or her outlook the insoluble problem lost its urgency. It was not solved logically in its own terms but faded when confronted with a new and stronger life urge (*in Fritz, p. 40*).”

So, what is this “new level of consciousness,” this “new and stronger life urge?” Creating. As Fritz says, “No matter what your problems are, for the most part, solving them won’t solve them. You will always have a new problem if you do not know how to create what you want. And creating is no problem.”

***Ponder this:***

1) Do you see yourself stuck in the rubber-band system? In what ways are you stuck in the rubber-bands? Take some time to ponder the rubber-bands in *your* life.

## Self-CREATION, Day 1, Part 2

“...by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth upon which thou standest. And the earth was without form, and void; and I caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep; and my Spirit moved upon the face of the water; for I am God. And I, God, saw the light; and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness. And I, God, called the light Day and the darkness, I called Night; and this I did by the word of my power, and it was done as I spake; and the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Moses 2:1-5, Pearl of Great Price)

### **Part II: Creation**

We start our discussion of creation by focusing on *The Creation*. Jesus Christ is the Creator of this world, everything in this world, and each and every one of us, not to mention other “worlds without number.” We are His daughters, and as daughters of the Great Creator, we too are meant to create. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf says, “...remember that you are a spirit daughter of the most creative Being in the universe. Isn’t it remarkable to think that your very spirit is fashioned by an endlessly creative and eternally compassionate God? Think about it—your body is a masterpiece, created with a beauty, function, and capacity beyond imagination (*Remarkable Soul of a Woman*, p.25).” So, *think* about it. Really think about it. The creations of God are endless and unspeakable. And *you* are the crowning masterpiece of all He has created.

“But to what end were you created? You were created with the express purpose and potential of experiencing a fullness of joy. Your birthright—and the purpose of your great voyage to this earth—is to seek and experience eternal happiness. One of the ways you find this is by creating...” (Uchtdorf, p. 25). Are you experiencing a fullness of joy in your life right now? If the answer is no, then Elder Uchtdorf encourages us to try creating. Like the Great Creator, we too possess the divine capacity to not only create things of beauty, but to create relationships, experiences, emotions, and we are ultimately each the creator of our own life.

Again, creating is the key to getting out of the “rubber-bands” in our lives. It is a “paradigm shift,” a whole new approach to becoming who we desire to be and living the life we are intended to live. As Robert Fritz writes, “When you are in the orientation of the creative, life is often interesting, exciting, and special. This is not because creators try to be interested in whatever they are doing, but because they are involved in life on a level where there is always the possibility of something new and wonderful happening that has never existed before (*The Path of Least Resistance*, p. 57).” Does this sound like the kind of life you desire to live? “Interesting, exciting, and special,” are not just empty ideals meant for others. They are the possible and even probable results of working in partnership with God to create the life *you* envision.

It is important to recognize that we are not talking about creating more “to do” in your life. In fact, what we are talking about focuses more on your “to be” list than your “to do” list. As Elder Lynn G. Robbins said, “Many of us create *to do* lists to remind us of things we want to accomplish. But people rarely have *to be* lists. Why? *To do*’s are activities or events that can be

checked off the list when done. *To be*, however, is never done. You can't earn checkmarks with *to be*'s.... Christlike *to be*'s cannot be seen, but they are the motivating force behind what we do, which can be seen" ("What Manner of Men and Women Ought Ye to Be?", *Ensign*, April 2011, p. 104). Do you have a *to be* list? If not, then how do you plan to become who you are intended to become? The scriptures tell us, "*What manner of (wo)men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am*" (2 Ne. 2:27). If we are to be like Christ and develop Christlike attributes, then we must create our lives in such a way that no matter what we *do*, we are always focused on who we will *be*.

So, in order to begin creating, let us first look to the Master Creator. On Day 1 of the Creation, the Lord says, "*And the earth was without form and void*". Is your life without form? Does it feel void in some ways? Remember, the form, or underlying structure of your life, determines the "flow" of your life. It is therefore worth taking a good look at the forms of your life, and the Lord shows us how. "*And I, God, saw the light; and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness. And I, God, called the light Day and the darkness, I called Night*". His first act is to "see" both the light and the dark and then to divide the light from the darkness. Similarly, we must first "see" both the light and dark of our lives and then "divide" them.

In order to create the life, emotions, relationships and experiences you envision, it is important to be honest and open about where you already are. This means taking off the "rose-colored glasses," being willing to take a good, hard look at the ups and downs, strengths and weaknesses, experiences and "problems" that make up your current life. It means setting aside time and attention to look and really *see* what your life is like. Then, once we have taken a searching look to see the "light" and the "dark," we may name them for what they are. It is only in naming the truth that we can go about changing it.

### ***Exercises:***

- 1.) ***Get outta the dark!*** Close your eyes, get comfortable, inhale, exhale. Imagine entering a dark room. This room represents your life—emotions relationships, experiences, dreams, desires and who you intend to become. You close the door behind you and are enveloped in deep blackness. Slowly, you take out a shiny silver flashlight and flip the switch. Using your flashlight, look around the room, little by little. Illuminate every nook, corner, and crevice. Take a searching look at your life—your activities, time, relationships, stresses, successes, weaknesses, strengths. Be willing to see the areas that need improvement. Be willing to find the weaker points of your life's structure. Do not judge what you see. Instead, learn to see these weaknesses as opportunities for growth and improvement.
- 2.) Steven Covey encourages us to "***begin with the end in mind.***" Imagine the end of your life. Picture all those you love, who have touched your life and whose lives you have touched, gathered to honor you. 1) What would they say about you, based on how you are currently 'being' in your life? 2) What would you *want* them to say about you? 3) Do these two lists match up? If not, why not? Use this image to help you create your "to be" list. Write this list in a safe place and re-visit it often. Your "to be" list will grow and evolve as you do.

## Self-CREATION, Day 1, Part 3

### ***Part III: Dreams and Reality***

Once you know the “reality” of your current life, you can begin to name the “light,” or to create your vision. Every artist, composer, choreographer, designer, must first envision what they are hoping to create. The same principle applies in creating your life. Robert Fritz says, of vision, “When I conceive of a result I want to create, I always begin as if nothing existed before. I do not consider the past at all. I focus on what I want to see exist. I start from nothing (*The Path of Least Resistance*, p. 123).” In letting go of all preconceived ideas or plans, you become truly free to create anything you desire.

So, what do you truly desire? Desires are deeper than mere wants or even needs. They are the foundation of who we will become. Elder Dallin H. Oaks states, “...desires dictate our priorities, priorities shape our choices, and choices determine our actions. In addition, it is our actions and desires that cause us to become something, whether a true friend, a gifted teacher, or one who has qualified for eternal life (“Desire,” *Ensign*, April 2011, p.45).” Thus,

**Desire→Priorities→Choices→Actions→Who We Become.** How often do we focus on our actions, on our choices, or even our priorities in order to make change in our lives? It is good to look at our actions, choices and priorities, but perhaps the reason it is so often difficult to make lasting change is because we do not work from the core, from our desires.

How many of us have taken the time to honestly look at our desires? How many of us might feel unworthy of even having desires? I can testify that the Lord desires to bless us according to the desires of our heart. He wants to give us our righteous desires! But, we have to ask. We must first *desire*. In D&C 11:8, we learn, “...even as you desire of me so it shall be done unto you; and, if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation.” What an incredible gift the Lord desires to give us. We can do much good in this world, in our own unique ways and according to our own righteous desires.

The trouble comes when we fail to desire. Often, we become stuck in our “rubber-bands” because we believe we cannot have the thing we desire. Whether better relationships, a successful business, greater energy or joy in motherhood, we may feel it’s impossible to have what we truly desire and thus, we give up desiring and remain stuck in the rubber-band system.

Desire is the seed of all creations in life. When we allow ourselves to believe we can and should cultivate our righteous desires, we move from the orientation of “problems” to the orientation of the “creative”. Fritz says, “When you are trying to solve a problem, you are taking action to have something go away: the problem. When you are creating, you are taking action to have something come into being: the creation. Notice that the intentions of these actions are opposite (p. 11).” Intention is key here. Do you intend to go throughout life waiting to see what comes and trying to “fix” your “problems” or do you intend to *create* the life you want, to bring into being the emotions, relationships, experiences and connection with The Great Creator that you have always secretly desired?

D&C 11 is a great tool for helping us uncover “reality” and cultivate righteous desires. Verse 10 encourages us, “Behold, thou hast a gift, or thou shalt have a gift if thou wilt desire of me in faith, with an honest heart (footnote, *Motivations*), believing in the power of Jesus Christ”. Do you know what your gifts are? Do you know what gifts you desire? If you will let yourself see your honest motivations, see your heart’s truest desires and ask of Him, He will create you into a being beyond your imagination. The choice is up to you.

***Exercises:***

- 1) What do you desire? Are you able to easily discern the desires of your heart? If so, make a list of your current desires. If this is hard for you, see below.
  - a. Your list may include things like, “I desire emotional health,” “I desire a more joyful atmosphere in my home,” “I desire to have more fun with my family,” or “I desire to develop my ability to...(sing, paint, write, be kind, have faith, etc).” There are endless possibilities to what you may desire and there are endless types of righteous desires you may possess.
  - b. Remember that your desires are uniquely yours. Let go of your urge to look around and compare to others. *You cannot compare what the Lord is asking of you to what He asks of anyone else. It is only between you and Him. Let your faith take hold and trust in Him. He knows what you are capable of becoming!*
  - c. Let go of your preconceived ideas of what is possible. For this exercise alone, suspend your current concept of reality and what you can or cannot do or become. Simply let your desires take hold. What you do with them will come later; just let yourself desire away! (*Could you imagine Stephanie Meyer having decided not to write a novel about vampires because she is “a mom of young kids”?* *Could you imagine Janice Kapp Perry having decided not to write music because she was “over 40” and the mom of four?*) Who’s to say what’s possible and what is right for you?
- 2) If you are not sure what you desire, then start dreaming yourself to sleep.
  - a. Imagine your best possible life, relationships, work, etc., as you drift off to sleep. What do you see? What do you feel? What do you desire for your future life?
- 3) Daydream, pay attention to your dreams at night, & remember what you used to dream about when you were younger.
  - a. What did you want to “be” when you were 10 years old? What activities did you love? What were your dreams?
  - b. Often, we shove our desires down so far because we believe we cannot or should not ask, but they are in there somewhere. *Journal about what you desire, crave, need, or dream about.*