

## Our Stories

It is our stories  
our sacred, chaotic, blessed stories,  
our lonely, peaceful, frightened stories,  
our awe-drenched, doubting, joyous stories;  
it is our stories  
that are the stones  
of God's language  
on the rocky, jagged, radiant  
path of life.  
It is the holy listener  
who helps to arrange these stones  
into cairns  
which point the way to  
God's desire for our lives  
and  
God's desire for our every moment.  
The cairns, if patiently balanced,  
uneven though they be,  
if patiently balanced,  
by the two who gather in God's presence,  
if patiently balanced,  
can point the way to heaven.  
Heaven, after all,  
is making God-serving meaning  
of our stories  
on this rocky, jagged, radiant  
path of life.

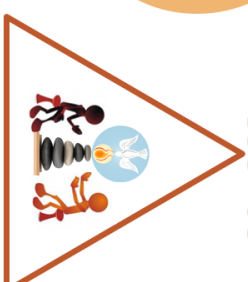
by Jennifer Hoffman. *Listen*, 3.1 (Jan 2009)

## Authority ...

Directee  
and director both  
have *authority* in  
SD conversations,  
as co-authors  
with the Spirit

## Presence

Having an  
acknowledged  
speaking position



## Ownership Freedom

Naming the  
meanings of one's  
own experience

Freedom to ...  
question ... differ ...  
imagine ... play

### Presence

Hospitable space for genuine dialogue vs 'Monologic'\* conversation

### Ownership

'Internally persuasive'\* meanings vs 'Authoritative'\* interventions

### Freedom

Open and loving attentiveness vs 'Finalising'\* assumptions

\* Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975) – author of *Dialogic Imagination* etc

### Conversation excerpt for discussion

D1: Hi Jim, welcome, and good to see you again.

J1: Thanks Daina. It's good to be here. I've been looking forward to having the chance to talk with you again.

D2: Great. That's good to hear. And I've been wondering how you got on with that meditation exercise we talked about at the end of last time.

J2: Oh right ... with the Bartimaeus story you mean?

D3: Yes, that was it. How did that go?

J3: OK, well, you gave me that sheet on Ignatian meditation, so I gave that a shot. I got up to the part where Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" But do you know what I found myself saying then?

D4: No, but I'm certainly keen to hear.

J4: Well, I imagined that Jesus called me out of the crowd, like the blind man, and that he asked me that question, "What do you want me to do for you?" And I just blurted out, "I want you to leave me alone!"

D5: My word, that *was* unexpected Jim. "I want you to leave me alone ..." And so ... what happened then?

J5: He did. He just walked off, and left me.

D6: And how did you feel about Jesus walking off, and leaving you alone as you asked?

J6: Well —I know this doesn't sound good—but actually, I was quite glad. I felt relieved.

D7: You felt relieved when Jesus left you. OK. And did anything more happen in the meditation after that?

J7: Um, not really. That was it. I thought about trying it again a few days later, but I forgot about it. Lots of other stuff has been going on, and all that put the meditation out of my mind until last night, when I remembered I was seeing you today. I was going to try it again this morning, but during the night I had quite a vivid dream, and I woke up thinking about that. I don't remember it all, but I know that my brother was in it, and that we were having one of our arguments like we often did as kids. He was always hassling me, and criticising me. In my dream he said he was very disappointed in me ... but I can't remember why.

D8: OK, so let's have a look at that, shall we? Remember what we've talked about before, that each of the characters in a dream is a part of ourselves?

J8: Ah, yep, that does ring a bell. So ... my brother in the dream would not actually be my brother, but would represent a part of me in some way? Is that what you mean?

D9: Exactly, that's the idea. So could there be a part of you that's disappointed in yourself for some reason?

J9: Mmm ... not that I can think of in a significant way ... Of course I'm not perfect, I'm not saying that, but ... I guess that's not ringing any particular bells just now.

D10: That's OK. It's not for me to interpret your dream, but ... well ... I'm just wondering if there might be some connection between the meditation and the dream? It's just a possibility ... what do you think Jim?

J10: Ah, right. That's interesting. So ... well ... so maybe my brother in the dream actually represents Jesus, and Jesus is saying that he's disappointed that I told him to leave me alone? Is that what you mean Daina?

D11: Well ... maybe ... although, you see, that wouldn't fit so well with the brother being part of you. So, for example, what if the brother is a part of you that's feeling sad because another part of you doesn't want to relate more intimately with Jesus, and told him to leave you alone? Just an idea ... what do you think?

J11: Oh, OK, OK ... I think I'm beginning to see what you're getting at now. So what you're saying is that what's coming out of both the meditation and the dream is that deep down I'm wanting to hold Jesus at arm's length. Gosh. That's a bit of a worry, isn't it? Why would I want to do that?

D12: Well, actually, that does happen sometimes. The spiritual writers call it 'resistance,' and resistance often occurs just when God is inviting us to deeper intimacy. For us as mere human beings, getting closer to God can be scary, and so we resist. Maybe in that sense we could see even what's happening in your unconscious – as reflected in the meditation exercise and the dream – as a good sign. God is at work!

J12: Oh, right ... so it could be a good thing you reckon? I'm not sure I quite get it. Do you think I should try that meditation again? I think maybe I should. I don't feel so good about Jesus being disappointed in me.