Growing Up With Myself

Well there's everyone else, then there's me. So what's wrong with me, anyway? I suppose this or that, maybe more or less as much as another person. I am not neurotypical, some would say. I can say that I had to learn to accept myself, and that was as important as being understood.

Accepting and understanding yourself can be as hard as to be accepted and understood. I've learned to deal with trauma and integrate with people who are more or less normal. If writing about it doesn't seem normal, well, I don't know what to tell you. Is every author a little eccentric? Maybe. If an author is more bohemian than the next, will their writing be indelicate? Probably sometimes. But I've done my best to accept both the encouragement and criticism gracefully, while focusing on what I believe are the appropriate and necessary goals and means.

I can say for pretty sure I wasn't a Christian in the sense of being born again, until I was 24. How can this be? Some people may ask. I was great at telling people what to do and what to believe. So what is the difference? I really believed facts about Christ, and I really believed I should to relay the message to others.

But there are several key differences between back then and now. For one thing, when I was a kid in church, even if I said "Amen" to Biblical preaching, or even when I was singing a church song, or even one of my own "Christian rock" songs, I was thinking about what other people should do, or what I wanted to have. Even if it was wanting to be accepted by God, I had the wrong approach. I wasn't thinking about how I might need to change, nor recognize what I couldn't do on my own. I wanted to figure out how to do better, or in some cases just feel better. Doing better deeds is not itself the Christian life. It is about discovering that Christ loves you and having a relationship with him, not about discovering the right formula for doing good and not doing bad and following that formula. I lived that for a long time, and it didn't serve to even make me feel better. That would be putting the cart before the horse.

We weren't made to walk between the lines, we were made to walk with God. That results in a better life, but you can't get their by your own formulation or effort, no matter how much you believe the right facts. A key common similarity between the "good old" version of me and the "good old" version of my brother Ray is probably something like that "cart before the horse" way of doing it. Regardless of how heartfelt that is, it is still backwards. It is reaching out to grab instead of with open hands of an inner filling with love ready to be re-gifted from the overflow. I only got there by letting go of control. Anxiety was normal for me until then. I had a tenuous yet white-knuckled grip on control instead of trusting God. Sometimes it is even necessary to trust people, to an appropriate extent for the person and situation. I wish I trusted someone enough to tell them about my home life and get me out of it.

I was happiest when doing extreme things. Exploring emotions and boundaries is part of growing up, but at the same time, I think doing both unhinged and underhanded things became major forms of escape. I didn't really know another way to feel better. I'm not just talking about sports

and stunts, though there was plenty of that, eventually. I got into a lot of "normal" trouble but usually it was with my friend Steven who was the son of my dad's friend and didn't go to the same school. When I was in school, I lived a double life. I reprimanded others for doing, saying, or watching the same things.

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