

ATTACHMENTS

The word attachment means something that is tied or fastened to something else. This suggests our attachments are literally fastened to us, everywhere we go they go with us, and more importantly, everywhere they go we go with them. There is a problem here, who are we, what are we attached to, where do we go, why, what takes us there? Once we begin to understand the relation between ourself and our attachments, we can attempt the detaching process.

Think of a fishhook on a fishing rod as a lie dangling from the rod, a lie to the fish that this is something to eat. The fish is deluded by the lie and bites, then suddenly it is attached, attached to a fishhook, attached to the end of its life. It is very difficult for the fish to get rid of the hook. A big fish can try swimming in the opposite direction, but at the very least it will rip a big hole at the point of attachment which will be painful. Have you ever looked at the barbs on a fishhook? Not only is there a hook on the way in, there is also a hook going out, a barb at the bottom going the other way so that the fish cannot release itself.

We have been hooked so many times we are attached, we have to follow the rod wherever it takes us because we are attached. To detach ourself entails effort and pain, either we are willing to put up with the effort and pain or we have to keep swimming with the hook in our mouth until we are pulled from the water. We all know what happens when we are pulled from the water.

This analogy can help us understand that we are hooked, understand how we are hooked in so many ways, in so many places we do not even realize we are hooked. We

think we know, yet we do not, and it is what we do not know that traps us, it is what we do not know that deludes us, that takes us to places where we make dreadful mistakes. One reason we do not know is really simple, we think we know. We think we know and these blinders lure us into terrible situations. We think we know and so we rush in, as they say, where angels fear to tread, we walk into situations thinking we can control them when we cannot, we credit ourselves with abilities we do not have, using our own understanding to create our own reality.

How do we step back, how do we step back to a place which does not assume anything? How do we step back to a humble place, a reverent place, how do we step back to a place without judgment? How do we step back far enough so that the illusion of a worm on the hook is no longer tempting, how do we step back so that the glitters we bite into no longer seem tasty, how do we step back far enough to have a perspective on reality? As long as we are pulled along by everything we have been hooked by we cannot step back, as hard as we try, as much as we think we are stepping back we are merely being pulled.

Things go by so quickly we do not know whether we are stepping back or being pulled. This means we must begin to examine ourselves. The examination must go back to our childhood, studying our whole life, asking ourselves how have I been hooked, what made me the way I am? We have to ask what was I hooked on, what has made me react in certain ways at certain times, what are my habits, where did they come from, how did they develop, how did they evolve, why do I still react? We know that when we are hooked we cannot help but react.

When the fisherman pulls on the hook the fish comes, it cannot help it. Sometimes the fisherman gives it a little slack, a little leeway every so often while pulling it in, and the fish thinks it has got away. This little span of time, this little leeway when we think we have got away brings back arrogance, making us think once more that we know. We are like the gambler who goes to the casinos losing nine times out of ten, but all he remembers is the time he won, which makes him believe it is always possible. We keep going back because we forget the difficulties, we remember only the times we are in control; when we are in charge and things are going well we forget everything else because we refuse to hold onto the unpleasant things, it is not our way. Illusion is smart enough to give us a little leeway, allow us to step back a little and let the arrogance creep back, then it can pull us in again.

Detachment is easy to talk about but hard to achieve. If we look at our physical needs and study the attempts we make to restrain ourselves, we can begin to understand the depths of attachment. The simplest example is substance dependency. People who drink can withdraw for a little while, then when something pulls on them the strength to fight that pull is overwhelmed by pain, by the need for alcohol. With the unconsciousness of alcohol there is no ability to resist the attachments any longer. There are so many different drugs, alcohol is just one example, but similar situations happen in our daily lives, they happen with the things and acts we are habituated to, things we are so habituated to they give us some kind of release, some kind of comfort. Certain emotional states are stronger than our ability to withstand them, and these states make some of us feel alive.

What kind of state is that? When some people have a tantrum or become very angry, they are invigorated, they feel in control, feel a sense of dominance, a certain arrogance we can hear in their voice. We can hear it rising, there is sudden strength, a strength which gives them life, gives them power which they are addicted to. We need to know what this is, where it comes from, why we like it, why we are attached to being the person in charge, we need to know why we need to be a soloist unable to sing in the choir. There are times to be a soloist, there are also times to be in the choir, we should know how to do everything required of us to be balanced. We have to look someone else in the eye and see equality, not our own superiority.

This is one of our greatest attachments, we see ourself as separate, different, superior, more important, understanding what others do not, we see ourself as lovelier, as more loving, more discreet, as more, as more, we are released from obligations because of our special position. We become a church giving ourself a dispensation for which we charge a very small price, something not available to anyone else but certainly available to us. We give ourself a dispensation because we know the truth about the kindness inside us, we know the truth about the great love in our heart. True, we do have that love, but we also have the garbage too; if we deny the lower self we are merely denying the reality of our state. The prophets, the saints, all the holy beings have told us about these base desires, and there is a struggle; if we cannot realize we are in the midst of a struggle we are denying the reality of our existence.

This is not to judge anyone, it only means we should look at ourself to learn the state we are in. Some of us have looked at ourself over a number of years, slowly coming closer to the person we are supposed to be. However, if we assume too much about our

own accomplishment we make a great mistake, we begin to think we have reached a certain level and lose humility. We must not lose our humility, we have to stay small. We have been told to be a student, to be small. We have to understand what being small means.

What happens to us when we are small is interesting. If we are small, if we are in the last line of the chorus, certain things become less important, we acquire clarity, we can look at all the big things around us with a better perspective. If we are too big we are too close to understand. Arrogance is so big, so invasive it obscures and blinds us to that quality in ourself.

If we are the size of an elephant, think what it does to our perspective, it changes the way we approach things. It is harder for an elephant to be humble than for a chipmunk. As an elephant walks through the forest he knocks trees out of his way when he has to, but a chipmunk has an advantage, he can scurry back to his little hole and hide. It is hard for an elephant to hide, and there are times in our life when we have to hide, we have to hide from all the qualities darkness and illusion use to catch us; we have to be in small, narrow places so that the hooks cannot catch us.

The grace and glory of being small comes with an understanding of love. Love understands the greatness of compassion, the greatness of mercy, of patience, of the universe. Love is in awe of the Creator, love is in awe of the wonder of the creation, love is the mode ready to help when help is needed. Love is not a boy scout insisting on helping someone cross the street who does not want to, love is not insistent, it is easy, it makes us easy, comfortable.

Love will help us burn away the hooks of illusion and the darkness of attachment. The wisdom of purity will teach us to recognize bait as nothing other than bait, and with God's help, will show us how to remove the things which tie us to the world.