



What To Remember When Waking

David Whyte, Chapter Three, Excerpts



A WORTH IT MEDIATION

When you're below the radar screen of life, when you can be mistaken, or your life can be mistaken for any other person's life, then it can't be distinguished so much you can't be found out, therefore you can't be touched. There's a kind of immunity in anonymity. There's an immunity in not giving yourself or attempting to give yourself your proper name. As soon as you stand up and speak out and say, This is what I am, or this is what I'm attempting to be, you do risk laughter humiliation, and you do risk the disappointment of all of your best hopes, but this is a doorway that must actually be walked through. But you also find out how serious you are. You find out the internal ground you must walk that is immune to all outside scorn.

And there's an astonishing little piece by Goethe, the great German poet and scientist and all round Renaissance scholar called the *Zeiligen*, which, translated into English, means something like the holy longing, you know, the deepest longing that you must follow. And in that poem, his first lines of the whole poem is incredibly impactful, but first lines are really powerful indeed, because he says, [German], "Tell a wise person, or else, keep silent. For those who do not understand, will mock it right away."

I praise what is truly alive, what longs to be burned to death in the calm waters of the love nights where you were begotten, where you have begotten, a strange silence comes over you as you watch the silent candle burning. Now you are no longer caught in the obsession with darkness and a desire for greater love making sweeps you onward, distance cannot make you falter, and a desire for love making sweeps you onward, distance cannot make you fall to now, arriving in magic, flying and finally, insane for the light, you are the butterfly, and you are gone. And so long as you have not experienced this, to die and so grow. You are only a troubled guest on the dark earth. And so long as neat asked these is stab and we had done best after dunklin Adam. And so long as you have not experienced this, to die and so to grow, you are only a troubled guest on the dark earth.

... Any serious path, any sincerity, will lead you through a lot of little deaths as you're actually becoming more alive in a greater definition of the of the sense, but many of the parts of yourself that are afraid of the world will not survive the encounter. I do remember that when I first stepped out as a poet, and I did step out, not just as a writer, but as a speaker and reader, someone who had a very public face, and I knew that public face would always be a part of my future vocational life, that there was certain quite astonishing phenomena that would happen when you were standing in front of a large group of people. One of the dynamics of standing in front of a large group of people is that the larger the group, at least, to begin with in the profession, the more nervous you become.

And I had a good old think about this one evening, and I remember coming to the conclusion that it was because the more eyes and ears there were looking at you and listening to you, in particular, the less place you had to hide. And so if you had 500 people in a room and you actually were trying to cover something up and not being truthful, there was a good chance that one or more of those 500 would actually smoke you out and would actually understand the covering dynamic that was occurring, that You weren't quite being truthful, you were being a little artificial. And so when you're speaking to a number of people, it's always an invitation to be as honest as possible, to be as straight as possible, and to have the least artifice in your attempt to artfully recreate the beautiful truth that is in poetry and in reality itself, and have them meet together on stage.

- - -

And I remember sitting down and actually having an internal dialog with this part of myself. And I had to laugh to myself, because the height of this young lad inside me would have been about the height of a podium. And I I thought that's the reason we have podiums on stages, so that your inner seven or eight year old actually has somewhere to hide, and you can pretend to be this all knowing, mature human being actually giving the talk over the top of the parapet. But I remember saying to this imagined part of myself, I really need you on stage, because if you're not there, then there's a part of me missing, and people will notice it out there, but also, more importantly, it won't be as truthful or as real. The honest answer this part of me gave back to my adult self was, I can't do that. You can do that, and I can't give a talk, so you go out and be the greatest in the world, and I'll stay back here because you actually, you don't want me. And I remember offering to this part of myself, the solution that all he needed to do was actually come out with me and and that he didn't have to give the talk. Some other part would give the talk. But he actually didn't have to give it. He just needed to be there.

Of course, this is an amusing way of getting in there and just having the conversation. There's no one way of bringing yourself together and bringing yourself in an integral way. **It's just an example of the way you can apprentice yourself to the whole way you're made up and to learn about the parts of you that are afraid of the world, the parts you might not even associate with your adult received identity, but still live inside you.** In other words, part of the early stage of apprenticeship is not only an apprenticeship to the physical elements of your work, but to self knowledge and to understanding how those physical elements actually frighten parts of you and that there's a part of you wants nothing to do with the revelation at all that's a central part of your vocation.

What to Remember When Waking: The Disciplines of Everyday Life
David Whyte (Author, Narrator), Audible Audiobook

