

What is Abundance?

I think most of my fascination with abundance can be traced back to stumbling across this little book in a Hallmark store years ago. The copyright to the Art of Abundance is 1998 and I've had it quite a long time. I came to Unity in 1985 and most of our teachings use the language of prosperity. Somehow abundance struck me as a different quality and very personal. The dictionary defines prosperity as the "condition of being successful or thriving" while it defines abundance as "an ample or large quantity". It feels as if our social structures—family, peers, media and even religion—try to tell us what success looks like. Eric Butterworth, in *Spiritual Economics*, tells us Prosperity is "spiritual wellbeing in every aspect of our lives". If you've heard any of my Radical Wholeness talks, even that metaphysical meaning has some baggage of biased opinions about how our spiritual wellbeing should show up or manifest in our lives. But who tells us how much is an ample amount?

Candy Paull is the author of *The Art of Abundance* and she is not a theologian. She is a singer/song writer who lives in Nashville now. She cites New Thought authors among her influences, along with Thoreau, Merton, Nouwen and Thich Nhat Hanh. She says, "The art of abundance is the art of awareness. It is a way to count our blessings and practice mindfulness in our daily lives." It is the ordinary, daily-ness of abundance that captured my attention years ago. It is a moment that seems to hold so much more than that moment, the sum of thousands of moments. Have any of you been practicing with a journal? Have you been able to capture the image of a single moment that is like one more drop added to a full cup and with the addition of that one drop, the cup overflows? That's how abundance feels to me.

In John, chapter 10, verse 10, Jesus is reported as saying, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." For me, ***abundance is the measure the Universe uses in giving***. It's the measure and yet there are no units to quantify abundance. It's the tipping point tension that holds the cup full being broken into overflowing. It is that fullness into overflowing that is the mark of my sense of abundance. When I say, "Abundance is stepping out on a crisp morning and drawing a breath that awakens your senses", I am not just grateful for one breath. I am grateful for the seasons, for every breath, for my senses and for that first morning breath that breaks the tension at the top of the cup full of gratitude and sends gratitude spilling into overflowing for all of it.

Abundance for me is a feeling measure, not an intellectual, head measure. In Luke 12:15, Jesus is said to have cautioned someone who asked him to order the man's brother to divide the inheritance, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Abundance does not lend itself to counts even if the book's author says it is a way to count our blessings. It is a count that includes the sum of all things not individually counted because they are beyond human measure. If I say, "Abundance is the feel of the sand giving way to my feet and the ocean as I walk along." We cannot count the grains of sand, the drops of the ocean, the moments of life we've lived and the countless steps we've taken. And all of that is the fullness that overflows into a sense of abundance on this particular walk. "Abundance is a hand to hold and the silent companion in our grief." The hand is not a possession any more than the companionship in our hour of need can be bought or held onto and in that moment we acknowledge the ever-present support that surrounds us.

The practice of abundance consciousness begins to move us away from really counting our blessings as isolated items or as possessions we are, at best temporary stewards of. I feel it moves us toward a greater sense of the oneness we find when our human mind releases the need to count. We connect with the infinite quality of the things that capture our attention in a mindful moment.

In Matthew, chapter 6, we find Jesus advising the crowd not to worry. How much do we take that advice to heart? *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God[l] and his[m] righteousness, and **all these things** will be given to you as well."* The human mind focuses on countable items and the spiritual self is immersed in the infinite substance that lies beyond all the things we count. The spiritual self is grateful for the all-sufficiency this one moment demonstrates. How many of us are worried about the menu for Thanksgiving dinner? Will Aunt Hattie bring that awful salad? Will Earl insist on wearing his muddy boots into the house? Will Ned be drinking again? Abundance is being able to set an extra place at the table for more guests. Abundance is saying grace to a Source bigger than any host and allowing each one to name Source in his/her/their own heart. Abundance is the sound of children's laughter, the shouts of a football game and the quiet murmur of good food being consumed.

“Strive first for the kingdom of God” sounds like a chore. Is it really? Sometimes I like to re-write Bible verses. What if Matthew 6 said, “First, focus on allowing and acknowledging the all-sufficiency of the Universe flowing through you, and then you will begin to notice all the things that are available to you.” Does that sound hard? Does that sound like what we do?

The Art of Abundance is the art of *awareness*. November is a time we try to become more aware of the good in our lives yet is it just the good we can hold in our hands? Is it being grateful for what is in the pantry or is it a larger sense of abundance because we are aware that every day we have a pantry with food in it, in a house that is warm and shelter for the ones we love and it all flows from our connection to Divine Source? Abundance for me is that sense of the all-ness of the ocean when we focus on a drop without trying to count each drop. Does that make sense?

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 9, he says, “And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance.” Maybe all of faith is summed up in three words, “God is able”. The is-ness of the Universe in infinite activity and substance provides, sustains and inspires us. In theory, that is what we believe. We affirm One Power, One Presence every Sunday. Sitting in these seats, we can nod our agreement. Then we walk out the door to the car. And we fret about the reliability of our car. Or we lament that we are taking the bus. Or we are annoyed that we have work to do and we’d rather be on a beach somewhere warm. And our God shrinks. Or is the all-ness of Source the same as it has always been and our perception of Source is being tightened and constricted by our own doubts and beliefs? Can we affirm that abundance is the car starting when we turn the key with the same sincerity we affirm that abundance is a great repair shop? Could abundance be a bus pass and the ability to move freely around the city or even the country? This is the personal nature of abundance and the ordinary daily-ness of continuing to turn our attention to what is available. And trusting that what is available is more than enough to tip the scales to overflowing.

At ULV we say that abundance is one of our core values. We say what it means to have a core value of abundance is believing “As grateful channels for the flow of God's good, there is always more than enough for us to be, to have and to give.” Our sense of abundance is grounded in gratitude and the awareness of our divine connection constantly flowing. Always more than enough for us to be—knowing the expansive nature of our true self.

Always more than enough for us to have—without greed or the need to possess or cling to stuff. Always more than enough for us to give—as we center ourselves in the flow of good, we give as freely as we receive. We give as channels for God’s good. We give because it is the very nature of **more than enough** to flow and not be damned up and hoarded. We live in the daily tension of the moment that opens the cascade of overflowing.

Whether we begin our morning meditation with a pause to reflect on our abundance or we end our day with a reflection on abundance or we break up the busy-ness of the day to reflect on the abundance of this moment—take time for abundance consciousness. When we center ourselves in the awareness of “more than enough” we discover peace, contentment and the very essence of gratitude. Consider it a holiday gift to ourselves!