

GLIMPSE

Consumerism

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Every month a statistic is published about how many durable goods have been produced that month. Other statistics indicate how many new houses have been constructed as well as how many tons of imported and exported goods have been exchanged. The "Gross National Product" is an indicator of how healthy a nation's economy is. Producing is a basic human drive and in many ways, its identity.

I recall a Christmas present given to me when I was coming slowly into my consciousness of needing to produce. Imagine a peg board on four legs. There were six holes on the top of the board, each one holding a different colored peg. A hammer accompanied the gift. What I would do, was pound down all the pegs, one after the other. Then through a connecting tube, the first peg popped out which was then retrieved and inserted to begin the process all over again. I spent lots of time producing and feeling pretty good about myself because of what I was accomplishing.

I do not think it a totally selfish question to ask what we are getting out of things we do or the relationships we have. We could have a business relationship with the butcher and what we get out of that is hamburger or chicken wings. The butcher gets something out of the transaction as well. Maybe we both get more than meat. We meet persons and have a good smiley chat and maybe we walk away a little lighter of spirit. "Getting out" indicates productivity, advancement, and worth. There are very few things we do which do not have a personal value; some way of knowing something good about ourselves. So what do we "get out" of things we do? We ultimately get ourselves; a sense of quality.

This very basic human instinct can get us in trouble when imposed upon intimate relationships. I doubt you would go for a walk with a close friend, an intimate, and after the walk you would turn to each other and ask, "What did you get out of that?" Yes, you did get some exercise, some exchange of ideas or experiences, but what is the "Get-Out-Of" from the walk and conversation? If you are only interested in what you personally are getting out of the relationship, the walks, rather soon you will want to get out of the relationship itself. If it aint productive, it aint worth the effort. "See ya".

I often wonder what God gets out of the relationship with us humans. We also wonder what we get out of our side of the walk. I really can only imagine playfully what is in it for God. Does God enjoy our human ways of relating with each other? Does God feel discouraged at our having been created? Does God enjoy making other universes and worlds just for fun? I don't know! The more important area is what we get out of that relationship which God initiates constantly. There are a few old hymns about God's walking and talking with us and "Just a closer walk with Thee." We would want to know what we can do to make the walk more productive, more self-improved.

Prayer, taking time to pray, personally or communally is a major area of interest. Many good-souled persons find they do not get anything out of praying. Others like to get new and good ideas about God, Jesus, and themselves and that keeps them coming back for more. They enjoy going to the Divine Butcher Shop and getting a pound of heavenly hamburger enough for the day. We are so hung up on productivity! If we could only know that we are making God happy or helping God enjoy being God, that would be something at least. Taking time and risking that nothing is happening, well that's inhuman and anti-American.

Prayer insults our American ideal of making and consuming. Prayer also insults our getting our identity and value out of what we do. Prayer is less a mechanical-merchandise. Prayer is mystical, intimate and so is unavailable for weighing and paying. Prayer slowly reduces us to a dignity of reception of our simple truth and invites us to be freed from self-creational productivity. What we get out of praying is what we get out of any experience of intimacy. We get out of our obsession about our self-satisfying improvement. God prays over and within us and then gently invites us to get out and prayerfully do something good with the blessed-self God constantly is creating of each of us.

Prayer should not be evaluated. Life is 'valuated' by God's praying over us, around us and so our life is improved. Others may notice a quality of our living and say we are improved that we are a better producer of life. That would be a good product and worth the time of receiving God's prayer. It is only a glimpse and I produced it myself.