

## The Spokes and the Wheel

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Do you sometimes feel like just a spoke on a wheel? This term is usually used when a person feels expendable, or they don't feel valued. The comparison comes from the fact that one or two spokes can break, but the wheel will continue to function.

It's easy to feel small and unimportant in a world that seems to roll on no matter what we do. People usually deal with this dilemma in two ways: 1.) by making themselves feel more valuable through external means such as wealth, fame, position or accomplishment, or, 2.) by searching for the

meaning of life, or by making a contribution to what they perceive is the bigger picture.

### Where Does Value Come From?

Either method of finding value has its inherent problems. Being rich or powerful strokes the ego, but money and position are also easy to lose. One accomplishment leads to the need for a new goal, because it's human nature to keep progressing. However, accumulating material possessions and status is not deeply satisfying. The ongoing need for fulfillment can become addictive. Eventually we grow old and weary wondering if our efforts had any value.

On the other hand, a person who invests all their time and energy in a great cause, as noble as it may seem, can end up in the same place. A mother might invest everything in her children and feel lost when they leave home. A charity worker might neglect their own welfare to help others, and end up in ill health and impoverished. We have to ask the question, what causes one person to feel fulfilled, while another seeming to make similar choices ends up with regret?

There are wealthy people who feel happy and fulfilled, and there are disadvantaged people who feel happy and fulfilled. Human fulfillment is a mysterious thing.



### Putting Purpose in Order

Let's consider what Jesus has to say on the subject:

*"Therefore, I bid you, put away anxious thoughts about food and drink to keep you alive, and clothes to cover your body. Surely life is more than food, the body more than clothes. Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow and reap and store in barns, yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. You are worth more than the birds! Is there a man among you who by anxious thought can add a foot to his height? And why be anxious about clothes? Consider how the lilies grow in the fields; they do not work, they do not spin; and yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendor was not attired like one of these. But if that is how God clothes the grass in the fields, which is there today and tomorrow is thrown on the stove, will He not all the more clothe you? How little faith you have! No, do not ask anxiously, ... because your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your mind on God's kingdom and his justice before*

*everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well." – Matt; 6:23-33, New Testament, Christianity*

This passage is often used to justify giving up material wealth in order to focus on spiritual goals. But on closer look, the message is quite different. First Jesus says, "put away anxious thoughts". Anxiety – a terrible feeling that comes from worry over things that are beyond our control. Anxiety only causes a greater loss of control, and never solves problems. So Jesus begins by telling us to control our thoughts and feelings.

Then Jesus gives the example of the birds and Lilies, explaining that these things fulfill their purpose with no anxiety about their needs or means of survival. He implores us to "trust in God's love and provision for us", because we are precious to God who is aware of our needs.

## Shifting the Focus

Finally Jesus tells us to, “Set your mind on “God’s kingdom and justice” (righteousness in some translations). What is God’s Kingdom and justice? Is it not the place where we all live equally in the unconditional love of God? So, to focus on God’s kingdom and justice would mean to personally live in a way that expresses and perpetuates unconditional love, equality and justice. By doing this we live in harmony with the natural laws of the universe; or you could call it oneness with God’s nature.

Jesus is teaching us to focus on 3 things here: 1.) Our value as a human being, 2.) Trust in the natural order of the universe, or God, 3.) Life is more than survival or fulfilling immediate needs. Essentially Jesus is saying – if you focus on what you think you lack, you are living with a deficit mentality. This type of thinking ignores your real value and purpose, and does not trust the natural way of the universe. You devalue yourself and your life by putting excess energy and focus on your perceived needs.

## Creating Balance Reveals True Value

The world seems to be advertising a different model – “You need more money, a better house or car, prettier clothes, or the best food to be happy! You need to be slim and beautiful to be happy! You need lots of sex to be happy!” Just stand in the checkout line at the grocery store if you want evidence of this.

It’s a mind trick. We drive ourselves to go after what we want and think we need, believing this will make us happy. It may be love or it may be material things we’re after, but either way we’re out of balance because we’ve focused on the perception of what we don’t have. We learn to live in this unbalanced relationship with life very early on, and it gets reinforced by the culture around us.

Jesus was trying to teach us how to balance our perceptions, how to live in harmony with our true value and natural law. It’s all about what you focus on, what you derive your value from, and knowing where true value resides. Jesus also taught:

*“Love God with all your heart and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself”*



Loving God is more than singing praises. It’s recognition of a higher power, order and goodness that we are the result of. Recognizing this is the core of understanding your own value. If you understand your value as an extension of the divine, then it’s natural to love yourself and take care of yourself. It also becomes natural to recognize others in the same light – as God’s children equal to yourself, your brothers and sisters, whom you want to love the same way you love God and yourself.

## A Spokes Value is Equal to the Wheel

Getting back to the example of the spokes and the wheel, we can draw the conclusion that a spoke is never expendable. Although it’s true that the wheel may continue to roll on, it is weakened by the loss of any spokes. The spokes connect the rim of the wheel with the hub, and they support the integrity, strength and longevity of the whole wheel. Each spoke makes this connection between the rim and hub at a completely unique angle, and without that angle a greater burden is put on the other spokes, and the wheel as a whole is not as good as it could be.

We can’t make ourselves more valuable by becoming prettier or getting more things. We can’t fulfill the longing of our original mind by gaining knowledge, power or position. Even love and charity can ruin us if we do it out of need, obligation, guilt or fear. Our value is inherent, but the world has deceived us into thinking otherwise.

Truth, beauty, love and goodness are where we come from; these are the building blocks of the universe. Perhaps we just need to learn to live in harmony with who we really are, to see our true value and manifest our unique potential as a shining spoke on the wheel of life.