

# Unremembered Loss

*For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss.*

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## Who Am I?

A thought came to me today as I sat at lunch escaping the realities of life as an engineer and contemplating this month's newsletter which always seems to sneak up on me no matter how much I plan.

Why do I keep trying to be something I'm not? The question is a simple one. The answer at first glance is simple, too – to be better.

The thought started from a seed late last week when I heard an article on NPR about decision overload. It was about research that had found that compared to fifty years ago, now we make many more decisions each day. Also that each decision we make takes about the same amount of brain effort – whether it is where to eat for lunch, where to invest our retirement money, or how to reply to a twitter.

The number of decisions we have to make each day can leave us mentally exhausted. And I have to agree. After a long day at work my mind is worn out.

In thinking about how many decisions I have to make, and how I rebel sometimes and just won't make any, I thought about writing. In the process of writing a page of text I have to make thousands of decisions. Which words to write, if I'm spelling each right, what the grammar should be, what the characters should be doing, what they should say, what their emotions are and the desires that drive them. No wonder I feel wiped out after writing for an hour.

No wonder I don't feel like writing after a long day at work. I've made my decisions and I'm not up to making hundreds more.

So the question came, why do I keep trying to be a writer when writing is so hard for me. Why struggle and fight against my dyslexia when I'm clearly not designed for writing? Why try to be a writer when 99.99% of writers won't ever be published? Why work long hours to self-publish a collection of short stories with other authors knowing that most self-published books sell less than a 100 copies.

Another question followed from another of my "shortcomings." I have a hard time talking to people I don't know. I have an even harder time talking about myself and about things that are important to me. I was talking with my psychologist two weeks ago about it. I told him that the thing I really want to be able to do is to walk up to someone and say, "Hey, I just published a book. Can I talk to you about it?"

It's not who I am. I can sit on the train next to someone for three hours. I can talk to them about what they do. I can chat about technology or the latest news report I heard, but I can't say, "I'm a writer, can I tell you about my story, and might you want to buy a copy?"

The reasons behind why I can't talk to people about myself is what I'm working on right now, but the question is, why do I want to be able

to do that? Why do I want to be this outgoing person I'm not. Why do I want to be a salesman that can sell my books?

Monday is when this question really set in. After an especially hard day at work I was sitting in front of my computer watching YouTube videos about how to do cool things in Photoshop. The thing that hit me after sitting there for three hours is that I really want to be able to draw, to create art, but I'm not very good at it. My hands won't do what I want them to do – the technical term is dysgraphia. It's what keeps me from writing neatly. It's what has prevented me from learning how to type despite the hours of trying.

So I can't draw, I can't get the paint to do what I want, so why do I want to be an artist when I'm not?

I want to play music. I've tried for years. I practiced a lot on the dulcimer but never moved above a plateau of knowing a few songs. I tried to learn the hammer dulcimer and my eyes couldn't focus on all the strings running at different heights – my hands and arms wouldn't learn where to hit on their own. I couldn't learn how to keep my place while reading music. But, at our last camp-out I took my dulcimer with me and forced out a few tunes. Why do I want to be a musician?

I want to run my own business – to make plans, to create products, to market them and sell them, but I have a hard time making plans

and an even harder time following them. I know what I want to say, but I have a hard time expressing it. As I brought up earlier, I'm not a salesman. So why do I want to be a businessman.

There are all these things I'm trying to be. All these things that don't seem to be who I am or who I was designed to be.

Who am I?

To answer the question of why am I trying to be someone I'm not, maybe I need to first answer the question of who I am, or who I see I am. There are several facets of who I am that I'm pondering right now, but the one that seems most relevant to the question is, "I am a creative person who is trapped by his limitations.

Most of the things I strive to be, that I'm not, are expressions of creativity. I long to create, to make something new. So then why do I want to create? It may be my belief in a creator God and my desire to reflect nature. In other parts of my life I see this striving – my desire to encourage and lift people up, my willingness to come to others aid, my desire for peace and reconciliation. All these things I do because they are who I am.

Is this the missing part of my who I am? I have this desire to create to make others happy – to ease their burdens. Do I want to create to help others, or is it just for the recognition that I created something? I asked myself the question, if I could create something that made other people smile, would I be happy putting it out there anonymously and just knowing the affect it had on people?

My first response is "no", I want people to know I created it, but then I think about some of the things I've done. The things I've posted on the internet for people to read. Those

things may have my name on them, but I'll never met those people, they will never know that they came from me.

I think about the writing I did for Janet. How I took her stories and brought out what she had hidden there. I remember how much I struggled to make sure they remained her stories and did not become mine. I remember the joy I felt when I got her responses back – at how much I helped her feel good about herself.

I think about the hours I've put in editing the three collections of shorts stories for my writing group. About the time finding a cover, creating the e-book for four different platforms. The hours that even at minimum wage I'll never get paid for. I think about it and realize that I did it for the group. I want all of the authors to feel good about their work.

In my Zombie and Steampunk projects I see that I'm trying to pull people together and build them into something greater than their parts. I have not succeeded yet, but I see that I keep trying – trying not just to be something I'm not, but to build a group of people into something that none of us are.

There is something deep within me that strives to be more than I am, to be better than I am, to be something that I'm not.

I had a homework assignment that I didn't do. Then again, maybe I did it but just wasn't paying attention. The assignment was to look at the Bible and see how God has called us to reflect who he is. While I didn't do a word search for "reflected" in my iPad Bible, maybe I've been thinking about it and this rambling is the result.

I see the glory of God and I want to reflect it. I want to show his love, his mercy, his compassion, his long-

suffering, his desire for our best. I welcome strangers into my house. I try to encourage others. I feel others pain and long to bring joy into the world.

When I look at the question, "Who am I?" I see that I'm called to be a reflection of God. I'm called to be something I'm not. I'm not perfect. I have handicaps, both physical and emotional. In some ways I guess I feel a kindred spirit with Moses. "Lord, don't send me, I can't speak well." God chose him and sent him and gave him a helper, He also gave him guidance and power.

Sometimes I just want God to send me a helper, someone to do the marketing and sales, someone to take my thoughts and put them to words and colors. Sometimes I just want everything to be easier. And sometimes He does.

Sometimes as I'm writing, when my mind is tired or focused on the details of getting words on paper, the words just flow. They come from part of me that I can't normally touch or see. They bring with them new insights, new directions. They surprise me, they fill me with joy, they make me feel special.

I sat down this evening, tired and worn out from the week at work, with a single line I had written at lunchtime, "Why do I keep trying to be something I'm not? Now, two hours later and two pages written, I begin to see. I am this person.

Who I am is a person who is growing. All my life, from my first step to my grappling with who I am, is about being something new. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

Yeap, I looked it up, 2 Corinthians, 5:17

Doug