

## Growing a Big-Enough God

*“Exhausted people grow a little God.”* Edwina Gately, lay founder of a missionary order that works with prostitutes and street people in Chicago, said this recently to a group of spiritual directors, but it’s really a message for us all. She spoke passionately of her belief that there is a seed of God in each one of us that needs tending to grow. Without such tending, she maintains, the power of God-in-us for joyful life and for sustained action in a hurting world becomes stunted, too small. Her prescription for how such tending might happen: *“Your job in the world is to be left behind.”*

What would it mean to “be left behind” in a culture where:

- “Americans spend more time at work than any other industrialized nation and have less vacation time. Standard vacation times in this country are illegal in Europe.”  
Edwina Gately
- “We are in a super-mobile, hyper-connected, media-saturated society, where tension relief is a growth industry... The average American office worker sends or receives 201 messages a day... we’re always plugged in – always on call ... multi-tasking is in; downtime is out.”  
US World and News Report, March 26, 2001
- “It would take 3 planets to give everyone of this earth the same standard of living as we currently have in terms of consumption of material goods and resources.”  
Edwina Gately
- “Americans accumulate sleep debt like penny-ante gamblers racking up IOU’s. Each weekday night they get an hour and 6 minutes less, on average, than the eight hours that sleep experts recommend, each weekend night half an hour less. By the end of the year, they are short 338 hours – two full weeks of rest. They are the great unslept, somnabulating through life on the verge of sleep bankruptcy.”  
Newsweek, October 16, 2000

If exhausted people grow a “little god,” I wonder if a “too-small god” doesn’t in turn create an ever more exhausted people, full of distraction, consuming voraciously, but empty of what is authentically nourishing. Even people who believe they have to “pray as if it all depended on God and work as if it all depended on themselves,” spend themselves trying to fill a God-sized job description with ever dwindling resources. What might happen if we both prayed and worked as if it all depended on God?

At the Bread of Life Center we’re challenging one another to “be left behind,” to dig down deep and let ourselves be found by the One who is bigger than we’ve ever dared to imagine. It’s hard, important, slippery work, requiring a real “shedding” of the socially constructed notions of who we think we are. A question has begun to surface among us: **“Are we being asked to come together in an intentional community where we commit to God and to one another our willing desire to be formed in the counter-cultural stance of the Gospel for Love’s purposes in the world?”** We don’t know the answer to that yet, but there is a resonant stirring deep within the many conversations we’ve had that we may finally be asking the right question as we vision possible futures

for the Center. We encourage our extended community - **YOU** - to ask such questions of yourselves and with us too. Are you willing to be "left behind" so that there's space enough to hear and respond to what God invites? Let's dream boldly with God and one another, listening together for the whisperings of the Spirit in a culture where the insistent clang of "muchness" and "manyness" makes it impossible for any of us to hear clearly alone.

Sandra Lommasson