

Conversations

Prologue

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Adam accepted his new name without misgivings. He had arrived on the first day of the month, so Saint Peter assigned the top name still remaining listed under the letter A informing him that sometime later Adam would be given a name reflective of his Heavenly character, once established. Who's to quibble? Retirement home maintenance men didn't exactly approach Heaven's Door accompanied by glaring bugles.

As Heavenly creatures go, Angel Wisdom appeared unremarkable. Soft white hair floated down to caress his shoulders. Skin tone typically Caucasian, if such a classification applied to Heavenly creatures. Eyes appropriately sky blue and gentle. His choir-like robe clean and white. His voice calm and mellow.

"It's reported that you've expressed an interest in being assigned as a Planet Earth Advisor. Have I got that right, Adam?"

"Uh, yes, sir."

"We don't use sir or ma'am up here Adam. Yes, Wisdom will be fine."

"Okay, sir... Or okay, Wisdom. I mean, yes, Wisdom."

"Your Book of Life shows here that you spent nearly forty years of your working life taking care of really old retired persons, men and women. That's accurate, isn't it, Adam?"

"Okay-- Yes, it is, Wisdom."

"So what is it in that background that you believe makes you a good candidate for our Planet Earth Advisors' curriculum?"

"Well, Wisdom, let me call to your attention that every really old person was once a child, was once a young adult, and that year after year they lived through the life cycle of being in his or her thirties and forties and fifties and sixties, decade after decade facing and living through the challenges of life of dealing with all kinds of events with all kinds of persons—quick-tempered, loving, abusive, man or woman, Black or White or Yellow or Brown or Red, law-abiding or not, sane or psychotic, and dozens of other descriptive variations—and eventually emerged a person eighty or eighty-five or ninety years old filled with a wisdom that comes only from a life-time of experience."

“Yes, Adam, they did that and they are that. But how does that relate to your being or not being a good candidate for Planet Earth Advisor?”

“Well, Wisdom, in those forty years’ of caretaking and caregiving of really old citizens, I engaged with them individually and face-to-face thousands and thousands of times, during which they shared with me their most intimate and closely-guarded lifetime secret memories, memories so powerful in mind and heart, so wrenching in their life that those memories were branded deep into their souls and remained as inseparable and unforgettable memories, destined to remain secret and unshared until the hour of their death.

“Yet time after time after time—like trusting little kids—they shared with me their most secret memories. Many of those old persons had no one to talk to, but they felt like they just had to talk with someone. They had no family, no friends, No one. No one but me. So they talked and talked and talked. And in their talking, they shared with me their most secret and guarded memories because I was there, and I was their friend. I was their close and trusted friend. And I never betrayed that trust. Never.”

Angel Wisdom drew in a slow breath before speaking. “Are you suggesting, Adam, that being a close and trusted friend with many really old persons over the course of forty years makes you a good Planet Earth Advisor candidate?”

“Not standing alone, Wisdom. But in all those years I not only listened to the words and stories they shared, but I considered and thought about what I was hearing. I learned from what they shared.

“Let me relate one of the things I learned: In schools on Planet Earth, you are given a lesson and then tested on what you have learned. In day-to-day real life on Planet Earth—as shared with me in confidence by these hundreds of really old persons—we are often challenged or tested first. Those challenges of life test you, first, test you in a way that teaches you a lesson, a lesson you will remember. I listened and I learned from these old-person teachers and from their Lessons of Life. That unique experience is what makes me believe I am a good candidate to be a Planet Earth Advisor.”

“Adam, I’m impressed. I’m going to assign you to Intake in the Planet Earth Advisors curriculum. But before you check in for instruction, I want you to prepare a written report outlining a sampling of these conversations you’ve had with these old-person teachers—these Kids eighty years and older—to share with your leaders and other Planet Earth Advisors candidates. It may be that your caregiving experiences will add something of true value to our established curriculum.

“Good luck, Adam.”

“Thank you, Angel Wisdom.”

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