

Cynthia "Cyd" Stayrook
This I Believe Statement
November 11, 2018

This I believe: I am Cyd, and Thou art god.

Two quotes underlie this belief; I am Groot, and thou art god. One spoken by a Marvel Comic character, the other by a Robert Heinlein character. I'll go from comics to science fiction.

"I am Groot." "I am Groot!" "I AM GROOT"

Do you know Groot, from the movie Guardians of the Galaxy? Groot is a life form that looks like a tree with leafy hair, and twiggy arms. Groot's vocabulary is limited to the words "I am Groot." Throughout the movie the characters that interact with Groot ask questions trying to figure in what box Groot belongs? Is Groot a potted plant, a wimpy tree, a wood chip, a fire log? Is Groot smart, friendly, mean, strong or weak? Does he even have a super power? Where does Groot fit?

Groot, it turns out, is all of these things, and so much more. See Groot doesn't identify with any of the labels or boxes others try to construct. The answer to everything remains "I am Groot." The only way to find out about Groot, is to see what Groot gets done. Groot in action, is indeed a loyal friend, willing to help as only Groot can, a humble companion willing to be sacrificed for others, and a fierce opponent when protecting the wounded. And when chopped up, and burned out, Groot reveals a seed of life; a sprout shoots up out of the dead wood.

Groot inspires me. I want to shed the labels that subdivide my identity and power. If I am identified as an over 50 white married Mennonite women, is that who I am? If I am identified as a steam train engineer, printing press operator, and creative problem solver, is that who I am? What if I am identified as gender questioning, female presenting, lover of the earth goddess, does that tell you who I am? How someone chooses to identify me, or how I may choose to identify myself -those identities are NOT who I am. I am so much more. To truly know me, Cynthia (Cyd to many), you need to stick around, and see what gets done. Cyd in action is how you learn who I am, what I value, what my power is, and what I can do. The scripture says you will know them by the fruit they bear. I am not limited by identity labels. I am Cynthia; part of the collective life cycle of earth and you will know me by my actions.

Thou art god. Author Robert Heinlein's character Valentine Michael Smith, works to adjust to living on earth having been raised on Mars. But he cannot quite figure out individual social interactions. He was taught to value the time it takes to fully understand each part of a situation or person, before taking any action. To allow each individual to be heard, known, and valued completely as an integral part of the community. With his limited grasp of language and culture, Valentine attempts to help his companions understand by telling them, "Thou art god." As he gains a better understanding of earth culture, he attempts to clarify further by explaining that each piece of creation contains a piece of god. Therefore, each piece of creation is god; you are god. This makes sense to me.

As beings that contain a piece of god we will still have conflict, differences, and misunderstandings. But, when seeing the other as a member of your own god body, the work of restoring relationship transforms into respectful communal work. All the pieces

of god value each other; all different, all part of the whole, all precious, all fully known as god.

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