



## **Book Recommendation**

Forgiveness and Other Acts of Love by Stephanie Dowrick.

I have returned to this book to rediscover what it was that resonated so much with me when I originally purchased it some years ago. I am delighted and amazed that its wisdom still speaks volumes and aligns so well with our own book, **My Manifesto**. I am reminded of one of those awarenesses that the road we are on in life, has flags and signposts along the route to guide our way – if we pay attention.

The surest way of paying attention is of course the elicitation of your personal manifesto, and then most importantly, the living of it. While this does not guarantee a faultless life, or to continue the metaphor, a perfect journey with no pauses or detours, it does guarantee a place to return to, to realign yourself before proceeding truly.

Dowrick explores the six virtues of Courage, Fidelity, Restraint, Generosity, Tolerance and Forgiveness. It is an informed and personal interpretation of these virtues, which we may have encountered among the VIA Character Strengths, albeit under different names. I originally read, embraced the discussion on Forgiveness, which I sorely needed to find at that time of my life. It was water on the desert.

I encourage you to dip into this book when ‘life gives you lemons’ at least, but also to find wisdom to ponder, to reflect upon as you compassionately replenish yourself. An example of Dowrick’s wisdom may be found in her discussion on Restraint. Perhaps Restraint may not come readily to mind as a virtue, but I have oft times encountered the concept with a different name. Dowrick lauds holding back and allowing yourself to think before choosing – an important distinction here – your action. Sound familiar? Among the works that come to mind is Stephen Covey’s “Between stimulus and response, there is a space”. This space, or pause, or act of restraint, allows you to choose your response.

In our book, Step 5: *The Releasing Step*, we allude to Viktor Frankl’s words where he advocates choosing our attitude to the random events that life serves up. We know, as do these afore-quoted luminaries attest, that we are not in control of so much that happens in life, to us, and around us. If we take their lead though, we can exercise restraint, pause, deeply reflect, and **choose** our response. This is personal agency. This is freedom.

Dowrick discusses Fidelity. Again, this may come under the alternative name of Loyalty. Fidelity may have connotations of constancy in matters of marriage or sexual relations, which may be unpopular notions to many in our current times. She, however, discusses Fidelity in much broader terms. She states:



“The capacity to be faithful in any remotely meaningful way arises not from containment, but from a sense of freedom; not from wishful thinking or other people’s rules but from the unceasing continuity inside, which is the self.”

How wonderfully this companions her discussion of Restraint and our My Manifesto belief that fidelity to self – once one has revealed who that self is — is the way to inner peace, to contentment. Remaining steadfast to who we are, making choices which are values aligned to that self, having the courage to pursue that life, acting with restraint, when necessary, all resonant powerfully with our work.

I recommend a deeper dive into Dowrick’s book. I found it once again illuminating, reassuring and wise.

Best wishes,  
Sue