

Wisdom from Shug

by Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline

A novel that touched and enriched so many, including me, is *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. The movie was good, too, but the novel was superb.

Perhaps the most famous and inspirational scene, at least for LGBT people of my generation, is the dialogue between Celie and Shug about God. As I was contemplating meditations I might write for our series, "Love Makes a Way," I remembered this passage in the book.

What makes it special for many of us is how Shug discusses sexual desire and life. She says God loves all that, and that makes sex even more special, indeed we praise God by "doing it."

And when Celie asks if God thinks it dirty, she says absolutely not.

Shug says God loves admiration because God loves everything we love and wants us to love it too. And in a statement that is the basis of the book's title, she says God can be irritated if we don't notice purple in a field as we walk by. Celie, aware of her own life experience in the White man's world, asks what an irritated God might do. Shug tells her God just makes more good things for us, because God is always trying to please us, springing surprises on us.

When I read this book almost 40 years ago, I was deeply touched by this scene, not only because it affirmed the beauty and divine inspirations in our bodies and sexuality, but also it offers a clear statement about the God of love, indeed how God is in what God wants to be a loving relationship with us, and for us to share in loving relationship with all. Shug gives shape to love which is God.

So, God makes a way, uncountable numbers and kinds of ways, for us live as God does, as God loves. God makes ways for us to reduce if not erase whoever The Man is in our lives, keeps drawing our attention to the multiple gifts from God, splashing sunrises and sunsets that take our breath away, squirrels whose scampering bring smiles to our hearts and flowers that bloom and bloom and bloom widening our world, loved ones who continually bless us. God even helps us see the positive qualities in those with whom we experience little or no love, as God/love gives us courage and wisdom to stand against injustice and oppression.

In one sense, because God is love, everything, everyone, all beings, are love. Love, the way of God.

You can read the scene as Walker paints it here:

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/230016-oh-she-say-god-loves-all-them-feelings-that-s-some>