

Lint Screen, by Pastor Ahyh

If you keep your heart, your mind, and the eyes of your soul open, you will find truth *anywhere and everywhere*. The entire Universe is a symbol for the higher, purer truths of God. I found infinite truth...in a lint screen! I'll explain:

First, understand the physics of a lint screen. A lint screen works in your clothes dryer for the purpose of preventing lint from blowing everywhere. A clothes dryer works by blowing hot air on the wet clothes. As your clothes heat up, the water evaporates, leaving your duds warm and snugly dry. The air that blows into the clothes has to have some way to blow out of the dryer; otherwise the proper flow of air won't do the work. As the warm air circulates, it hits the dampness in the clothing, causes evaporation and blows away. On the way, the air picks up tiny specks of fiber, hair and skin cells, dust: lint. If your dryer doesn't have a lint screen, the lint goes blowing everywhere; in your garage, in the garden – wherever the hot air exhaust from the dryer is allowed to escape. To prevent fiber, hair, skin cells and dust from flying everywhere, we use a lint screen to capture most of the lint.

Okay, I get it: the lint screen doesn't sound like much of a revelation! Just hold on and keep reading.

Six ways to relate to a lint screen

What, exactly, do you do with a lint screen? I make sure my lint screen is clean so it can do a good job of capturing the lint. As I wash and dry my clothes, the lint screen gets filled up with the lint, and when I'm done drying everything, I clean it off, so the next time the dryer gets used, it's ready. This is normal and logical, and is especially important if you use communal washers and dryers.

As we all know, normal and logical isn't always what happens. It turns out that there are six scenarios as to how we can operate a lint screen:

- 1) The screen never gets dirty.
- 2) The screen is never cleaned.
- 3) You find the screen clean and leave it clean.
- 4) You find the screen clean and leave it dirty.
- 5) You find the screen dirty and leave it dirty.
- 6) You find the screen dirty and leave it clean.

Each of these scenarios tells us something about us and about the world we inhabit.

Scenario #1 isn't realistic. If our clothes never acquired any lint, you wouldn't need a lint screen, and you certainly wouldn't need to clean it. If we had high-tech clothes that never broke down and never collected dust, then we could dry them without needing a lint screen. So, in the never-never land of scenario #1, the lint screen never gets dirty and never needs to be cleaned.

In short, the screen never gets dirty.

Scenario #2 – nobody ever cleans the lint screen, and the lint accumulates and accumulates until eventually, the lint screen becomes so clogged that air can no longer circulate through the clothes dryer. The air gets blocked at the lint screen, there is no more circulation, and the clothes won't dry. The entire system breaks down.

In short, the screen never gets cleaned.

At some point, somebody must clean the lint screen, because if it isn't cleaned, the dryer is useless! That leads us to scenarios #3-6.

Scenario #3. You go to the laundry room to use the dryer, and someone has left you a clean lint screen. You use the clothes dryer, and when your clothes are finished, there's a good deal of lint in the screen. You pull it off and leave it clean for the next person.

In short, you find the screen clean and you leave it clean.

Scenario #4. Just like scenario #3, you find the lint screen clean. You go ahead and you dry your clothes, but you *don't* do your part and you *don't* clean the screen off when you are done. You are inconsiderate (or forgetful) and leave it dirty for the next person.

In short, you find the screen clean and leave it dirty.

Scenario #5. You go to the laundry room and somebody has left a dirty lint screen. Well! You know that if the screen is clogged your clothes won't dry, so you clean the lint screen and dry your clothes. When you're done you figure, "Since nobody cared enough about me and I had to clean it off once already, I'm not going to clean it off again!" so you leave. You pass along the mess you inherited to the next person who needs to use the dryer.

In short, you find the screen dirty and you leave it dirty.

Scenario #6. You walk into the laundry room and someone has left you a dirty lint screen. You pull off the lint and dry your clothes. When your clothes are dry, you take the lint screen out again and pull off the lint a *second time*.

In short, you find the screen dirty and you leave it clean.

Amazingly, it turns out that all of our human interactions and relationships are *symbolized and embodied in the lint screen!* Okay, that may seem like

a stretch, but let's keep going.

The lint screen symbolizes our lives

The clothes dryer symbolizes the work we all have to do – and I don't mean just our jobs. Whatever you do for money (our employment) should never be a defining characteristic of your essence, no matter how many hours you put in. When I speak of 'the work we have to do,' that encompasses employment, family life, creative pursuits and all the lessons we're here to learn.

The clothes dryer symbolizes the mechanism that enables us to get done what we have to do: the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual activities of our lives.

Every one of us, in one way or another, is 'all wet'! We all need to be 'cleaned up' and 'dried out.' During the process of living, 'lint' gathers. Lint is the by-product, the dross – those not-quite-perfect parts of us, the reverberations and echoes of how we live and what happens. None of us are perfect. None of us loves or understands completely. No matter how well intentioned we try to be, there's always something not quite right. For example, when I play a piece of music, there is always an error. You may not hear it, but I know I didn't play it perfectly. There is always a little bit of 'lint.'

Our relationships with others are never perfect. No matter how great our intention, we inadvertently hurt the other. In every relationship, there is always a little bit of lint.

When contractors build a house, there will be a door, a window, or a corner that isn't perfectly square. Mistakes will happen, and there will always be a little bit of lint.

Let's face it. Lint happens.

Interpreting Lint Screen Scenario #1: Paradise

In the ultimate dryer, there is no lint. When Adam and Eve first walked the Garden of Eden (paradise), everything was perfect. They lived in perfect oneness with God, each other and Mother Nature. They suffered no pain, never sorrowed and made no mistakes. There was no lint.

We're not living in Eden today. Every day of our lives, lint does, indeed, happen. We strive for the lint-less state, for the return to paradise where there is no more sorrow, pain, despair...no mistakes. And no more lint.

All the religions of the world agree that eventually, we will return to paradise.

Each religion has a different prescription as to how we get there, but are essentially unanimous that there is a *unified wholeness* at the 'end,' when all people will be reunited with each other, with the natural world and the Universe.

We have a lot of laundry to do.

Interpreting Scenario #2: Hell

In scenario #2, no one *ever* cleans the lint screen.

For the most part, scenario #2 is what we call 'human nature.' We see it every day, all over the world, from the smallest human interaction to the biggest government or corporation. As we go about our business we make errors, fail, cover up and lie. Many cause intentional pain, and very often nothing is done to stop it.

Others feel and deal with the pain that has been inflicted on them, but often, they cannot (or will not) do anything about it. When people have no voice and are powerless to make changes, people often go forward with hatred and enmity, until eventually, their relationships and even their lives are destroyed.

From spousal abuse, child neglect and broken homes, to gang wars, murders and international disputes...very often, the machine simply breaks down. Lives, relationships, companies, governments, nations - become so clogged, so polluted, that the 'lint screen' really can't be cleaned. When no healthy, clean air can pass through the system, all is lost.

The Breath of God

Air is a symbol for the spirit. *Ruach Elohim* means the breath of God. The voice of God is often symbolized by a great rushing wind, animated and charged with energy.

The warm air that rushes through the clothes dryer is like the *Ruach Elohim*, the breath of God coming into our lives, offering forgiveness, love and peace. As we absorb this Holy Wind, we become animated and enabled to get on with our work. Whether our work is to make a happy home, build a successful business, create a new invention, master a musical piece or any other activity, it is the animating, warm and comforting *Ruach Elohim* that gives us the encouragement to make it happen.

If we haven't done the work to see that our internal 'lint screen' is cleaned, the flow of God's living breath in our lives becomes blocked, and cannot perform its' function.

Better to give than to receive

The Dead Sea is dead, not because no water flows into it, but because the Dead Sea is so low that *no water can flow out of it*. Your bathtub faucet might fill your bathtub flawlessly, but if no drain was installed, your bathtub full of water will quickly become putrid. A bathtub is unusable without a drain.

The breath of God that flows into us *must flow out*. It is not merely enough to take, but we must *give* and *serve*. When you enter a relationship, the question is not, 'what can I get out of this' but 'what can I give?' To realize this truth is one of the watersheds of human life.

One great example is church. Going to church for the purpose of getting something means that we haven't reached spiritual maturity and have some growing to do.

"As you give, so shall you receive," is the essence. If you go somewhere (church or anywhere) for the purpose of *receiving* something you will *receive very little*. But if you go for the purpose of *giving* you time, talents or treasure, painting a wall, scrubbing a floor, teaching a class, cooking a meal or simply taking the time to listen, you will derive much more satisfaction than trying to *get*.

So what does this have to do with the lint screen?

Human life goes on, we make mistakes and 'lint' accumulates. People will hurt us and we will be angered; we will hurt others and they will be angered. As the lint of our lives accumulates, it begins to clog the system and God's breath is no longer able to flow through us. We become frustrated and unable to do the work we're here to do.

Many of us get to the point where the lint has completely clogged the screen. We are no longer able to give or receive. Returning to the bathtub example, when the water cannot flow out, the bathtub becomes full and no more water can flow in. The water in the tub is the only water it can hold, and the water will become stale and nasty. In a dryer with a clogged lint screen, the air in the dryer can't get out, and will become lukewarm, saturated and powerless to dry anything.

When we become hung up on our anger, pain, hatreds; the wrongs we have committed and the wrongs committed against us, our internal lint screen is clogged. We are no longer able to receive, give or go about doing our work. If we are to be healed, *we must have a mechanism to get rid of the lint*. Failure to clear the blockage means our relationships will fail, our lives will deteriorate and over time, the society at large will fall to ruin. Sound familiar?

Our internal 'lint screen' collects our errors, failings, angers, misgivings – and requires purification. Cleaning and clearing the screen is of ultimate importance, and the focus of the next four scenarios.

Interpreting Scenario #3: The good life.

In scenario #3, you find the lint screen clean and leave it clean. The screen does get filled up, but you don't leave it that way.

So what is the screen, exactly? It's a mechanism for dealing with dust, fibers and hair – the clingiest kinds of 'dirt.' The screen symbolizes all the stuff we do to right our wrongs, like forgiveness, repentance and restitution. This is making amends or compensation for hurts and wrongs we have committed. Our internal 'lint screen' is activated when we turn over a new leaf and change our ways of thinking and acting, in order to prevent committing further hurts and wrongs in the present and future.

These are all solid Biblical terms. Whenever we commit a sin, we are to repent (change our thinking). We seek forgiveness and make amends for the wrongs we have done, and freely forgive others for the wrongs they have done.

Following scenario #3 provides a normal, solid human life. Not perfect, but good. As an example, when your lint screen is clean, you feel open, and are able to be honest. You are attracted to others who are open and honest. When you meet someone who shares this inner clarity, your relationship has the potential to be healthy, transparent and caring. There is a flow to the good life: the warmth of Ruach Shekinah, the Breath of God.

Life can, however, present situations so painful and difficult to overcome that some 'lint' accumulates despite our best intentions – but not enough to block the flow of God's Holy Breath. And you will persevere.

Scenario #3 is good, natural and human. We do our work, live honest lives, and clean up whatever we mess up so the next person has a clean start too. We know the alternative all too well: grudges, drama, ugliness, malice, pain and suffering. It's not fun to be this blocked, and it's no fun to be around people who are in this situation.

The person who lives from scenario #3 lives a self-aware life. Each day is a clean, new day. Life and work happen, and in moments of self-reflection, prayer or contemplation, we clean our 'lint screen' with repentance, forgiveness and restitution, ready for the next clean, new day. Mistakes will happen, but the self-aware person is willing and able to make things right.

When you live the good life, you are healthy, loving, kind and giving. But there is no guarantee that you will be treated well by others, which brings us to scenario #4.

Interpreting Scenario #4: Sin

In scenario #4, you find the lint screen clean when you open the dryer door. Someone else has done a good thing and left the screen clean for you! You get your laundry all done, but then, selfishly, you think “Woo hoo! Today I’m going to get a free ride. I’m not gonna clean that screen. Why should I?” And you leave your dirty lint for the next person.

Dear friends, this what we call *sin*. Someone treats you kindly, and you pass along evil by taking advantage of a good situation. This is unfair treatment to the next person, but you don’t care!

(Please note: purely *forgetting* to clean the lint screen does happen. We all get distracted. Forgetting doesn’t rise to the level of sin, unless you ‘forget’ on purpose.)

The Bible says “If you do not work, you should not eat,” meaning we all must contribute to the work that must be done. Humankind is a team. We are all brothers and sisters in the human race, all equal children in the family of God. When one of us decides not to participate and instead decides to take advantage of others, that person has decided he’s better. Superior. But in fact, he’s become reprobate. Egotistical. A narcissist.

This is sin, the essence of theft, vandalism, lying, abuse, manipulation and and and...all the kinds of evil we see in the world today.

People sometimes think they can get (or take) a free ride. Maybe it’s for a very real reason, like growing up poor and oppressed and feeling like society has done them wrong. Stealing from somebody else feels like ‘getting even.’ Other times it’s because people grow up spoiled and entitled, and think “If I don’t clean up after myself and leave a mess for somebody else, that’s their problem.”

Either way, this is an ego-based attitude (I, me, mine) that exalts one’s self above others. It’s the attitude which says, “I don’t have to do what everybody else does. I do what I want, because I am superior.”

‘I, me, mine’ egotism is actively breaking down societies across the planet.

In scenario #4, someone has left you with a clean screen out of goodness.

Someone who wants you to have a good experience has treated you with honor and respect. Someone has, in effect, paid their goodness forward, but you take advantage of their kindness, turn around and leave your dirt for someone else.

We humans have found many ways to display our egos and throw our superiority around, and every one of our ways is wrong and unfair to others. We walk around all puffed up, holding grudges against slights, manipulating people from our hidden agendas, feeling antipathy for anyone and everyone in our way. The inner lint screen is blocked, but we've lost the ability to be forthright or honest – in fact, we can't keep all the lies straight.

Let's face it, we've all been the person who walks into the laundry room, the new job, the personal relationship...and finds a big mess left by a nasty sinner. We have all had to clean up the mess before getting on with our work - which leads us to scenario #5.

Interpreting Scenario #5: Retribution

In scenario #5, you open the dryer door and, even though you really shouldn't have to, you know you better check the lint screen. Sure enough, some selfish sinner left the lint screen clogged. Figures. Obviously the person didn't care about you, and now you have to clean up somebody else's dirt. You do your laundry, and when you're finished, since you already cleaned the thing once, you leave your lint for the next person.

Scenario #5 is normal, daily life. It's not the good life, certainly. It's not as horrendous as scenario #2, but pretty bad. Admit it: scenario #5 is life as it has come to be in our day-to-day lives. Somebody leaves us a bag of garbage, and in order to do our jobs, we have to clean up after them. We pull the lint off the screen because we know our clothes won't dry unless we clean it.

Embittered, after we get our job done, we think, "Nobody cared for me, so I don't care either." And we leave the screen dirty for the next person.

Everyone who has ever lived with others knows this feeling: walk into the kitchen to make lunch, and find the sink overflowing with dirty dishes, sticky spots and crumbs all over the counters. So you clean up because you want a healthy environment for cooking and eating. But, frustrated and angry with your housemates, you leave your mess for the next person, because "why should I?"

This is *retribution*. It's payback, "You hurt me, so I'm going to hurt you back." It's immature and selfish, and yet scenario #5 is where many of us spend our lives.

Notice that scenario #3 and scenario #5 are quite similar. You have a job to do

and you clean the screen once. The difference, however, is that in scenario #3, someone has given you a blessing, and you leave a blessing for the next person. In scenario #5, you receive sin and pass on the sin for the next person. The same amount of work is being done, but the results are very different.

The amount of retribution in our personal lives and in our world at large is terribly sad, but completely understandable. Since so many of us have either learned retribution as a way of life, or have 'inherited' messes (often again and again), payback is difficult to rise above.

Often the problem starts very early, with our parents. Mom and Dad weren't treated well by their parents, and our folks didn't learn how to be good parents. It happens over and over again, all around the world, passed down from generation to generation. Children who are abused are far more likely to become abusers. We wound others from our own wounding, because as we receive, we also give. Just like it's true that as we give so shall we receive, it is also true that as we receive, so we will give.

If a child lives with hate, she learns to hate. If a child receives anger, he will pass his anger along. Child molesters aren't born that way – the common thread that runs through the psyches of child molesters is that they were molested as children.

Tragic, but this is the human condition. What can be done about it? Well, thank God for scenario #6.

Interpreting Scenario #6: Redemption

In scenario #6, you find the lint screen dirty, but you clean it up and get your work done. But rather than leave your lint for the next person, *you clean the screen a second time and leave it clean for the next person!*

If things were even and 'fair,' everyone would clean the screen once. Scenarios #3 and #5 show us that, after you have cleaned it once, you decide whether you're going to bless or curse the next person. You decide whether to clean up your dirt and leave things nice for the next person, or make sure the next person has a mess to clean up. Either way, you're even. You only clean the screen once.

The scenario #4 people don't clean anything - they're the problem.

This means that if we're ever to return to scenario #3, (the good life) where the screen is cleaned before me and I leave it clean, *somebody has to come along and clean the screen twice!*

Those “somebodies” are the redeemers, the saints and saviors. These are the kinds of people who, when faced with a mess, clean it up...and refuse to pass along anything but blessing. These are the people who have taken up their cross to follow Christ into life eternal. They are the ones who are willing and able to bear the sin of those who have gone before. Selflessly, these are the people who do the work that the scenario #4 people stole from the future.

Redeemers pay back the scenario #4 person’s debt. But rather than be a scenario #5 person and allow the ‘sins of the fathers’ to be passed on to future generations, the redeemers bear within themselves the ugliness and pain. They are willing to clean up the past, forgive and move on, leaving a clean slate behind, paying forward the chance to live the good life of scenario #3.

Who are YOU?

At some point, we all have to ask ourselves “What kind of person do I want to be?”

Ideally, we all want to live in the paradise of scenario #1, with no pain or suffering, no harm, no ego, no sin - everything just perfect. At least, we tell ourselves we’d like to live that way. If you take an honest look at human history, it appears we actually *don’t* want to live in paradise, because we sure don’t act like it!

It is painfully obvious that many people in the world are living scenario #2, in complete hell, and often in denial about even that. With inherited dirt clogging and polluting their inner selves, there is little hope for change in their lives without a complete renovation. People living in hell desperately need the saints, saviors, and redeemers to come in and sacrifice their own lives to offer hope, and the possibility that things could be different for those trapped in the scenario #2 hell.

Most of us find ourselves somewhere between scenarios #3 and #6. We have semi-healthy relationships and mostly, we clean up after ourselves. But what happens when someone robs you? What do you do when someone has left you a big mess to clean up? How about when you’re treated unfairly? What about when someone lies about you? Do you feel yourself *wanting* payback? Or are you willing to forgive, clean up and absorb the pain, moving toward being an ever more loving person?

It is my prayer that you find within yourself the power to clean the lint screen, no matter how dirty it was left for you, and when you’re finished, pay a blessing forward by leaving the lint screen clean for the next person.

And finally, I want to leave you with a parting thought of a higher, broader

nature, pertaining to the redemption in Jesus Christ. The vast majority of Christians see the redemption of Jesus as a scenario #5 redemption, like this: mankind sinned, and this offended God. So, God had to vent his wrath, His divine retribution, by passing along His pain to Jesus. We are told God poured out His wrath upon Jesus, so as to pay the penalty for our sins. Having poured out His wrath, God no longer held our sins against us.

This is false. God did *not* affect a scenario #5 redemption, because scenario #5 is *retribution*. God provided a scenario #6 redemption. God fixed the problem – He cleaned things up! God did not force His wrath upon Jesus; rather, the redemption He presented through Jesus *fixed the problem and left a clean slate for the ALL of us!*

In conclusion, yes indeed, everything we need to know about life can be learned from a lint screen! The life you live is up to you, but please, for the sake of the generations to come, have the strength to help be an instrument of forgiveness and healing.

Let's free the world from lint! Happy drying.