

“The Parable of the Eagle”

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Once upon a time, while walking through the forest, a certain man found a young eagle. He took it home and put it in his barnyard where it soon learned to eat chicken feed and to behave as chickens behave.

One day, a naturalist who was passing by inquired of the owner why it was that an eagle, the king of all birds, should be confined to live in the barnyard with the chickens.

“Since I have given it chicken feed and trained it to be a chicken, it has never learned to fly.” replied the owner. “It behaves as chickens behave, so it is no longer an eagle.”

“Still,” insisted the naturalist, “it has the heart of an eagle and can surely be taught to fly.”

After talking it over, the two men agreed to find out whether this was possible. Gently, the naturalist took the eagle in his arms and said, “You belong to the sky and not to the earth. Stretch forth your wings and fly.”

The eagle, however, was confused; he did not know who he was, and seeing the chickens eating their feed, he jumped down to be with them again.

Undismayed, the naturalist took the eagle, on the following day, up on the roof of the house and urged him again, “You are an eagle. Stretch forth your wings and fly.” But the eagle was afraid of his unknown self and world and jumped down once more for the chicken feed.

On the third day, the naturalist rose early and took the eagle out of the barnyard to a high mountain. There, he held the king of birds high above him and encouraged him again, saying, “You are an eagle. You belong to the sky as well as the earth. Stretch forth your wings now, and fly.”

The eagle looked around, back toward the barnyard and up to the sky. Still he did not fly. Then the naturalist lifted him straight toward the sun and it happened that the eagle began to tremble and slowly he stretched his wings. At last, with a triumphant cry, he soared away into the heavens.

It may be that the eagle still remembers the chickens with nostalgia; it may even be that he occasionally revisits the barnyard. But as far as anyone knows, he has never returned to lead the life of a chicken. He was an eagle even though he had been kept and tamed as a chicken,

Just like the eagle, people who have learned to think of themselves as something they aren't, can re-decide in favor of their real potential. They can become winners.