

“Breathing Under Water: Step 10 Is This Overkill?”

John 21:15-17

We have reached Step 10 which is (screen), “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” This step may seem like Step 4 which was (screen), “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” As a result, the invitation to keep looking at ourselves and to look at our shadow stuff may seem like overkill. If we have done our moral inventory and owned our shadow stuff, can’t that be enough once and for all? We only wish we could deal with our shadow (sin, brokenness, ego, fears, anxieties, prejudices, etc.) stuff for a period of time and then be done with it. But if we are honest with ourselves, making mistakes or being wrong will always be part of our human experience. It is not something we could just magically or surgically remove. So Step 10 is about being willing to continue the difficult process of looking at ourselves honestly and through God’s guidance to be able to deal with our wrongdoing or wrong thinking as they come up instead of waiting for years to deal with them.

I am well aware of how difficult this is. On the surface, all of us know that we make mistakes and that our perception of reality is often flawed or limited. But when we dig a little deeper, we find a deep seated resistance in us to knowing that we are wrong. We learn from an early age that being wrong is something to be avoided at all costs and so we shun the very thought of it in any specific way. In her work on understanding our human tendency to avoid being wrong, Kathryn Schulz discovered some interesting things. She ended up writing a book about this very topic called *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*. Here is a preview of her book when it came out. It is interviews with people responding to questions about being wrong. Notice the pattern of most everyone admitting that they make mistakes in general, but when it comes to admitting specifically what they are most wrong about, they struggle. (screen)

<https://youtu.be/7H0OM2M-QkM>

Look at your own experience. When you make a judgment about something or have an opinion and someone else you know has an opposite opinion, how do you react? People usually judge and label those they disagree with in one of three ways: 1. Ignorant or uninformed 2. Stupid, 3. Evil. And as you can imagine all of these ways of thinking lead us to have more problems in the world.

If we are supposed to take Step 10 seriously, how could we do that when admitting or even realizing that we are wrong is so difficult? How do we find the wisdom to look honestly at ourselves to see the good and the bad without getting defensive or shameful about ourselves?

Our answer comes from the story of Peter in the Gospel of John. He had a powerful conversation with Jesus. This is a post-resurrection vision of Jesus to the disciples on the Lake of the Sea of Galilee. The disciples had some other experiences of Jesus after the resurrection. This was another vivid experience. Jesus appears to the disciples and they have some amazing experiences of his love and care beyond the pain of his death. As part of this time with the disciples, Jesus has a conversation with Peter and asks him to

remember to continue the mission of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, by feeding his sheep. (Screen -Read John 21:15-17)

On the surface one would think that Jesus was emphasizing his point by repeating his question to Peter three times. But if we remember the story of Peter's denial of Jesus as recorded in John 18, we know that Peter denied Jesus three times after he was arrested. Peter, who was supposed to be one of the leaders of the movement of Jesus, cowered under pressure at the most critical time to stand with Jesus. He was afraid for his life and decided to do the wrong thing. He denied Jesus not one time, but three times. And this was the time when he was facing Jesus again. Imagine the shame that Peter felt! He knew at that point that he had messed up. He had not had the chance to talk to Jesus about his betrayal. So instead of berating Peter for denying him, Jesus invited Peter to affirm his love for Jesus, not one time, but three times! This affirmation of love was the fuel that gave Peter what he needed to look at himself honestly with all the good and the bad in order to move forward. A consciousness/awareness of love was what Peter needed to heal his fear of being wrong. What Jesus did for Peter was to awaken his soul again in order to go beyond the limits and fears of being right or wrong.

Richard Rohr writes about this saying (screen), "Without confidence in a Greater Love, none of us will have the courage to go inside, nor should we." This confidence in love is what is needed to help us rise above the fray of being right or wrong to activate our higher wisdom and higher knowledge of life and love. When we can look at our lives through the eye of the soul, we can begin to see as God sees. Imagine if you are free from the need to be right or perfect all the time! What would your life look like? How would you relate to people and events differently?

The beauty of Step 10 is that it has the potential to allow us to unshackle ourselves daily from the things that weigh us down, especially our learned behavior of needing to be right in order to feel good about ourselves. The freedom that comes from knowing that our worth is not determined by how right we are but how much we love and are loved changes everything. It helps us to see the joy of surprises in life and of how things end up working out in our lives beyond the limits of our expectations when we put love first. Peter did not see the resurrection coming! He was locked in the prison of his fears and expectations. He thought that his mission was done. His call had come to an end. Jesus unlocked the door to a new freedom for Peter and for us to know that we are loved beyond being right or wrong.

Here is another clip from Kathryn Schulz about the power of being able to deal with the realization that we are wrong. (Screen)

<https://youtu.be/c5SzhPsRmas>

(Discussion and sharing)

We will end with words from Richard Rohr (screen): "To be fully conscious would be to love everything on some level and in some way -even your mistakes. To love is to fall into full consciousness, which is contemplative, non-dualistic, and including everything -even

'the last enemy to be destroyed, which is death itself (1 Corinthians 15:26). That is why we must, absolutely must, love!' Amen.

(second service)

I would like to end with a part of Kathryn Schulz's TED Talk about her book. She says the following about the importance of being wrong as part of our human experience, "We think this one thing is going to happen and something else happens instead. George Bush thought he was going to invade Iraq, find a bunch of weapons of mass destruction, liberate the people and bring democracy to the Middle East. And something else happened instead. And Hosni Mubarak thought he was going to be the dictator of Egypt for the rest of his life, until he got too old or too sick and could pass the reigns of power onto his son. And something else happened instead. And maybe you thought you were going to grow up and marry your high school sweetheart and move back to your hometown and raise a bunch of kids together. And something else happened instead... If you really want to rediscover wonder, you need to step outside of that tiny, terrified space of rightness and look around at each other and look out at the vastness and complexity and mystery of the universe and be able to say, "Wow, I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong." Amen.

LOVE COMES PRAYERS AND SONG

We invite you now to a time of prayer when we will sing and pray about the power of God's love in our lives

Song:

Love is the touch of intangible joy;
love is the force that no fear can destroy;
love is the goodness we gladly applaud:
God is where love is, for love is of God.*

Roula:

Love comes laughing,
bringing joy, bringing lightness, bringing light.
Love comes laughing in the face of fear, saying:
'Listen! There is nothing more powerful than me.'
Love comes laughing when generosity is offered
and where sharing is gratefully received;
where neighbor helps neighbor,
and friendship is honored in sacrifice.
Love comes laughing, for love lives there,
for God is where love is, for love is of God.

Song:

Love is the lilt in a lingering voice;
love is the hope that can make us rejoice;
love is the cure for the frightened and flawed:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Roula:

Love comes lightly:
in affirming tones which encourage and hearten;
in gentle silences that say clearly: 'I care for you';
in simple acts of kindness that often go unnoticed;
in cuddles of comfort that say: 'I am for you.'
Love comes lightly, for love lives there,
for God is where love is, for love is of God.

Song:

Love is the light in the tunnel of pain;
love is the will to be whole once again;
love is the trust of a friend on the road:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Roula:

Love comes powerfully,
bringing healing, releasing possibility, instilling hope:
when open hands are held out as a sign of reconciliation;
when embracing arms say: 'I'll help you, for this road is hard';
when solidarity with those who are powerless
creates new vision and births a brand-new purpose;
when troubled brows are soothed, and tear-soaked cheeks are dried,
and worries are put to bed.
Love comes powerfully, for love lives there,
for God is where love is, for love is of God.

Song:

Love is the Maker and Spirit and Son;
love is the kingdom their will has begun;
love is the pathway the saints all have trod:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Roula:

Love divine, living love among us,
give us the grace to be like you.
You have shown us how and why and where.
May we follow you in the way of the kingdom,
until the kingdom comes fully, and the world is one.