



... Be the Change

The Journey

'Be still and know ...'

Nothing is wasted on our journey; all of our experiences are valid and helpful.

Even the things that cause us discomfort, suffering or pain, can help us as well. I think that we have an overwhelming notion that, our life will be smooth sailing, but it's not always the case.

I believe that it's in the discomfort that we grow and learn much more. It takes a bit to recognise this of course, because our mind can be made up on what we need to do to live a happy and fulfilling life.

From Richard Rohr

Jesus walked, enjoyed, and suffered the entire human journey, and he told us that we could and should do the same. His life exemplified the unfolding mystery in all of its stages—from a hidden, divine conception, to a regular adult life full of love and problems, punctuated by a few moments of transfiguration and enlightenment, and all leading to glorious ascension and final return. As Hebrews 4:15 states, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who was like us in every way, experienced every temptation, and never backtracked" (my translation). Jesus' life reveals that we don't need to be afraid of the depths and breadths of our own lives, of what this world offers us or asks of us. We are given permission to become intimate with our own experiences, learn from them, and allow ourselves to descend to the depth of things, even our mistakes, before we try too quickly to transcend it all in the name of some idealized purity or superiority. God hides in the depths—even the depths of our sins—and is not seen as long as we stay on the surface of anything.

It would seem that we can all stay on the surface of things and think we are doing a deep dive, about ourselves and God.

I have noticed that mostly, it's about what we have been taught and the group think, or an obscure notion of doctrine, sometimes influenced by YouTube. This can come over quite harsh.

For me it's the truth of who we are and what we have worked through or not worked through, that is an honest and a better way to see our journey.

But, as a dear friend Rosy called it, this is "risky disclosure".

Generally, this isn't what we do and in the area of men's health and well-being, until the wheels fall off, we don't usually risk much.

But what if this risk is the path way, as we honour our past and all it stands for and we are able to grow into a deep spiritual person of faith, and be able to trust ourselves a bit more?

What if we are, *“given permission to become intimate with our own experiences, learn from them, and allow ourselves to descend to the depth of things, even our mistakes”*?

Within the men’s work we have discovered that the 3 rules of engagement, no judging, criticism and fixing, do work.

One of the biggest problems is, and I believe it’s hard not to have an opinion of someone, or to compare, in other words if it doesn’t stack up with my experience, I can discount it without even seeing another view, it’s our bias that is stronger than new learnings.

What if our attitude of deep value of others, was so imbedded into our culture and life, that you not only valued everyone you come into contact with, but you found space to value yourself as well.

I do think everyone circulates around who they are, or who we have made ourselves to be, not risking too much, or exposing any cracks in our character.

Perhaps the world isn’t safe enough to risk unmasking who we truly are, but this can happen in the circle work.

So, what do I mean circle work? Well, it’s obviously in a circle, but the notion of sitting in a circle doesn’t need to be adhered to. This can eliminate the need for one person to present an agenda driven or outcome focussed discussion, from a position of authority.

To facilitate a circle group, you need to be very secure within yourself and allow men to speak their truth, even if you disagree with them, the response should always be, ‘Thank you, I hear you’.

This is so important because most men haven’t had a safe and sacred space to be able to tell their story or speak their truth.

So, setting the rules for engagement is paramount, to allow sacred space for men to feel valued and they will open up and share their deep secrets , to allowing healing to flow.

Silence is always a great place to start, let’s say even for 5 minutes, to let our mind and the things of today go, and stop thinking and be present.

Often people can just rattle on, this is so important for them to do and not to shut them down or dismiss what they are saying. Some if not all men have been shut down at some time in their lives, discernment is needed, on what’s going on under the surface.

Why is it important?

Experiencing devaluation starts a tape playing in our head and somehow it eventually becomes who we are, which is a false way to see ourselves, and should always be rejected.

This can happen in sporting groups with people who teach young boys especially. It goes like this, 'You are hopeless, and you will never be any good at anything'. Psychologically it's damaging and in spiritual language, 'the devil doesn't need to do anything', you just did his work for him.

I can hear you say, 'So how do you teach anything'? Well, if you start off by valuing, honouring, respecting, caring and loving to name a few, and asking them to share a small portion of what has happened this week, they will be heard, it's important not to engage with what they have just shared, just acknowledge them and say 'Thank you'.

Then you, as a facilitator open up and place the subject in the middle of the circle, and you become one of the members of that circle, and remember, saying less is more. If we are truly wanting to listen to the group, without conclusions, then asking open and honest questions, without any yes-no answers, is a great way to start.

If you are looking for people to agree with you, then you don't have the basic 101 facilitating skill yet.

Why is this helpful, not to control the outcomes of the group? Well, if you do, what's really going on with the group, you won't know about and is driven under the surface, and it will fool you into thinking that all is good with your group and any problem, is driven underground.

Questions are always better than answers, it takes skill not to get drawn into providing solutions or answers for your group.

Listening is the major skill you need to become a facilitator and there will be a thread that you can follow through the sharing, this thread is like gold. To get the best out of the group it takes usually risky disclosure of someone to make the discussion to be honest and real. This could be you of course, and it's ok to say, 'I don't have an answer for your question'.

One of the biggest challenges is if someone totally disagrees with you, what do you do?

For me inviting people to be challenged in the way they think is important and to say, 'It's ok to disagree with what I am about to share', actually puts you and them at ease, and you can have a fruitful discussion. Even though you may be poles apart, we all learn something from this positive interaction.

This opens up the door for everyone to be honest and conclusions become secondary to the discussion. Recap at the end is often helpful and you will see the depth and the inclusive way we honoured everyone's contribution. This is important to understand in order to become a facilitator.

Often leaders are people with a certain charisma, but it could be just about them. In the process of trying to help someone, the way they interact can become unsafe, you feel this, so for the man sharing his story, men can feel diminished in the process. No one grows

under this model, including the facilitator, this is never good for people's health and wellbeing.

But if the leader is always listening, not pitching, but rather thinking, 'How can I help people I lead be better than me?', ... these are leaders that multiply. Not only the leader grows and matures, you guessed it, so does everyone he facilitates in the circle, trust is key in facilitating.

Understanding our journey is important for our personal growth.

I think from a church perspective it's always about finding Jesus, this is important of course, but there doesn't seem to be much that speaks of discovering who we are and about our own divine journey of discovery.

I think we would know that it's not about the destination but the journey. I have spoken of the excitement of living a life focused on discovering the Christ that lives within us, the Holy Spirit that is.

For me I have previously stated I grew up in the church and it has been a great privilege and experience for me in my formative years and I wouldn't change it for anything.

I am now 73 years old and I have seen many changes within the church and I have noticed that we all need a new way to see.

Within the church, with all the good things that the church does, I take my hat off to the leaders of the church today. I don't think it would be easy and there are many complex challenges.

I do see things differently today and it's in the area of the Journey and growth of men.

(John 5:14). You have that power through His righteousness to sin no more. By the meat of the Word, you are able to discern that which is good and that which is evil. You can separate them.

I have noticed that there is a tendency to narrow down the eternal God. One way this can happen is by having a view that says, we know how old the earth is and anything that challenges this is wrong.

On a recent trip to Europe in Northern Spain I visited a salt mine and they said it was 7 and a half thousand years old, I accepted this and looked around with fascination, wow very interesting, salt was more valuable than gold.

I spoke to a fellow and I told him of my discovery, and as quick as a flash he said to me, 'Well how old do you think the earth is?', not believing me. He quickly shut down the conversation, his belief didn't line up with mine, so he couldn't let me speak further on the subject.

When I visited the dinosaur displays in outback Queensland, Australia, they said they could date the bones back for thousands of years, so science is exploring without restrictions on belief. For me it's good to see the value in science, without judgement and conclusions, as we are in the age of information, where we have a greater understanding of the universe.

The notion of new learnings and information other than what we grew up with is a journey in its self, its possible that in general mankind doesn't like change, I have noticed that unless you are pushed to change, usually we don't.

I can get stuck and not grow, but if I have an open mind to change my attitude the journey unfolds in an exciting way.

Another way we don't grow is to restrict our religious experience to only be about Jesus. Now it is so important to understand what Jesus did in his death and resurrection and about time, being BC, before Christ and AD, after the of birth of Jesus. It's also important to understand Jesus' significant role in our history and dying for us all, bringing salvation to the world.

There is a larger notion of God that takes a bigger view of God, it's the trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, where Christian's believe that it's the Godhead where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one.

How do we understand this complex spiritual notion, I will try to explain what I have come to understand, let's begin.

Well, I have spoken of this previously in saying that the whole world speaks of trinity, atom = 3 parts, proton, neutron and electron, the 3 are one.

But how do we understand this in relationship to our experience of God, well I am glad you asked?

I think it's a complicated notion to understand, so let's start with a basic model that will help to unravel a trinity view.

For me we are at our core, a trinity model, and looking into the parts of our being, mind, body and soul, would be a good starting point. If we can understand, the impact of all three on our wellbeing and know when we operate in each one it is a starting point.

These are separate identities but they are one, the body isn't the mind and the mind isn't soul and so on, there is an interplay where they become one that is you, it's a dance between all the parts of the whole.

The mind is amazing and we can be trained to become very skilled people, take a doctor and a surgeon, wow the skill to navigate complex procedures and understand how to operate on a patient is astounding.

Also to become an engineer to be able to calculate, stresses on extremely high rise buildings, the highest building in the world is 830 meters high, wow the mind is amazing and it shouldn't be underestimated.

The mind could also be heavily identified and invested with ego and this I have spoken of in previous writing, we need this part of us as long as we realise it's not the whole story. I believe that the ego is difficult for the mind to comprehend, because we are all so smart on one level, it doesn't seem possible that we could have a blind spot.

The body is astounding in the way it is made up, all the parts operate as one, we truly have been made by a very powerful and creative creator, my reference point is that it's God and we are all a Divine being, in his image and likeness.

Your breath just to name one aspect of our body, we don't think I am going to breathe now, it's just automatic, and scripture tells us God breathed into all of humanity, the breath of life.

We often don't listen to our body health wise and going to a doctor or a psychologist is often tabooed.

We have focused on the hot sins associated with the body and sexual sins and cast out people who are the obvious sinners, but the hidden sins like love of money being the root of all evil is often overlooked.

The soul is also complex to understand, most teachings are focused on understanding doctrine, but the main emphasis should be on experiencing the in-dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, that helps us define our doctrine better and reinforces our beliefs

This is the place where we don't need to search for our identity, the soul, that is, we need to rest in who we are, no need to pretend any more about our purposes and our gifting, we need to be brave and not worry about what people think any more.

With the understanding that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are intrinsically good and we are made in the image & likeness of God. I believe this is a new way to see, it's a "movement", where we see a greater reality of who we are.

This sounds like it may be achievable, but we are highly invested in the status quo and as previously said it would be a move of God to see change in a significant way, in this area.

Father Richard Rohr summarizes a pattern of five stages of change that have taken place in religious and cultural institutions. He calls these stages the "Five M's": human, movement, machine, monument, and memory.

It seems that many great things in history start with a single human being. If a person says something full of life that names reality well, the message often moves to the second stage of becoming a movement.

That's the period of greatest energy.

The church is at its greatest vitality as the "Jesus Movement," and the institution is merely the vehicle for that movement.

No single person can ever control the movement itself through any theology, doctrine, or dogma.

We cannot control the blowing of the Spirit.

The movement stage is always very exciting, creative, and also risky.

During the charismatic movement back in the 1990's it was like this, very exciting, creative, and also risky. Wow! So much healing and a move of the Holy Spirit, you weren't sure what was going to happen next.

I guess it was risky as well, especially trying to understand what was going on, if that's at all possible, when the spirit blows.

What I noticed about this time in history, for me as an observer, it looked like the move of the Holy Spirit was shut down by the collective ego, the mind that understands a small human view, cannot possibly understand an eternal view. We need all the God given parts of the trinity to know God the Father the Son & the Holy Spirit.

We also need to be looking at the future & allowing our Mind, Body and Soul to help us with the next movement, to make sure we are able to see everything God has for us, this movement is complicated to understand.

Equally if we don't understand the personalities of human nature that we all have invested in over many years, it is hard to see strengths in others, one reason is, we think everyone thinks like I do.

As you read these, see if you can identify what your number one leaning is towards. So how do we understand these complex characters? Well, we will be strong in one personality type with a leaning towards another type, to make it easy to understand.

The Reformer- The Rational, Idealistic Type: Principled, Purposeful, Self-Controlled, and Perfectionistic

The Helper- The Caring, Interpersonal Type: Demonstrative, Generous, People-Pleasing, and Possessive

The Achiever- The Success-Oriented, Pragmatic Type: Adaptive, Excelling, Driven, and Image-Conscious

The Individualist- The Sensitive, Withdrawn Type: Expressive, Dramatic, Self-Absorbed, and Temperamental

The Investigator- The Intense, Cerebral Type: Perceptive, Innovative, Secretive, and Isolated

The Loyalist- The Committed, Security-Oriented Type: Engaging, Responsible, Anxious, and Suspicious

The Enthusiast- The Busy, Fun-Loving Type: Spontaneous, Versatile, Distractible, and Scattered

The Challenger- The Powerful, Dominating Type: Self-Confident, Decisive, Willful, and Confrontational

The Peacemaker- The Easygoing, Self-Effacing Type: Receptive, Reassuring, Agreeable, and Complacent

This is why we need community & connection, because we need your unique view and voice to complete the whole picture.

What is there to learn on a broader perspective on movements, well we have to have understanding that we can't control outcomes.

So back to the journey, there is so much to learn about, a few things I have found necessary.

When speaking to any group we have to speak in an inclusive way, so as not to alienate all the personalities, referenced above, everyone is on a unique journey, coming to a better understanding of the complexities of a huge number of people

1 Corinthians 12 : 12

12 "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jew or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

As we look back at movements, this was one of the amazing things about the 1990s, we were all one and we were all baptised into one Spirit, there didn't seem to be a need for dominant leadership, this has been a journey of discovery, to trust the Holy Spirit within.

Discovering our gifts within is associated with action first then contemplation, if you are moving in a direction that's enough to learn your gift. It can't be taught, you have to learn your craft, often by making mistakes, in fact mostly by doing it wrong.

Its fine tuning what you hear and applying it, let's say when I started men's work in Tasmania over 30 years ago, I didn't know much about men's health and well being.

I read up on what others did and I tried to copy this and it was all head knowledge, it was ok but not authentic. It wasn't until the understanding moved from our mind to our heart, that we saw significant change not only in me but in the men we were trying to help, you can't lead anyone where you haven't been yourself.

When we put ourselves out there and are vulnerable and give it a go, we quickly realise how little we actually know. I do think this is why we need a process of discovery of how to learn, not what to learn. To better understand this, is also a journey.

My reflection last night was that we need excitement on our journey discoveries. Well, it's just boring to follow others in their journey.

I guarantee people who are on the cutting edge of entering into their change, or are working through challenges are fulfilled even if it is difficult.

Is there an underling problem with humanity that the journey is reduced to no new learnings and being happy for their life to be in neutral, what is that? How can the creative juices be stimulated in all of us, to get off our back sides and just do something, this is a journey as well. I have worked with many people and they say, I am now 50 what am I going to do with my life, why am I here and what's my purpose?

For me we need to start no matter what age, earlier would be better, to discover our purpose. There is a huge need for everyone, to live life giving, to be fully alive.

Some people can take the oxygen out of the room, and no-one else can breathe. John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." God's desire, is to help you become fully alive.

Discovering our shadow or trying to understand what is hidden is a deep journey we all need to go on to live in freedom.

But how can we discover something, if it's hidden from our view, I do think it takes a life time to uncover the complexities of our shadow.

Where do I start ?

I love the idea that things are hidden in plain sight, in other words, we do know that there is a shadow side of us but perhaps it's because we are so busy just trying to survive we don't have the head space to go there.

Maybe the thinking is that, I don't need to do any work on my interior journey. I have listened to many men who declared that it's ok for others but not me. In working with men, a lot quickly disconnect and tell me they are good now, and they may be in one area of their life, but we are all complex beings and often we don't always comprehend the depths of trauma that is hidden away in the shadows.

The crisis that we all go through often is a driver, I remember after speaking to about 50 men and I was talking about my crisis, this older man came up to me and said, not everyone goes through a crisis and I shouldn't generalise.

A crisis causes death to something, loss of a factory, the wife/ husband leaves, the health diagnosis, to name a few, so learning what will eventually happen to us all. Dying to self is the message, Jesus had to die to live and to bring life, how did we miss this?

To discover the interior journey can be a bit complex.

This subject will have many ways to unfold, this is my story of working with men over the last 30 or so years.

First of all the interior is often hidden from each of us and somehow we all have disguised the deep me, from me, often it's the only way we can live with the version of ourselves we have created.

Discovering our shadow or trying to understand what is hidden is a deep journey, we all need to go on to live in freedom.

But how can we discover something, if it's hidden from our view? I do think it takes a lifetime to uncover the complexities of our shadow.

Spending time on the interior is like tilling the soil in your veggie garden, turning the soil and allowing things to grow.

Finding a space to be vulnerable enough to allow the ego to let go of its grip on our life is a good starting point.

You can do this yourself, a wisdom guide you trust with all your secrets is going to be more helpful, remember, it's you that will do all the work.

An old saying ; 'when the student is ready the teacher will appear', is so true, because until you are ready, all the wise council will just appear as more information.

One of the reasons it's hard to grow up, is that information isn't transformation, so let me be clear, we need good information but it's a deeper dive into our behaviour and the way we think and why we react to things, that will be our greatest learning.

In speaking to people about uncovering the deep secrets of our interior, at first they don't want to go there, and I didn't either. For some reason we would usually prefer to put up with the problem than try to understand it.

The other thing is in the early stages of the deep dive into our persona we have created, you will definitely feel like dying.

Not always, but mostly it's a crisis that takes you there and you aren't in control, the way you got out of trouble last time, isn't the way you resolve this.

We are at our wits end and we just don't know what to do, but this is a great place to learn if we are open, this is liminal space, we are between where we were and where we are going, but it looks like a black hole with no light at the end of the tunnel, very scary.

Liminal space is a threshold for learning, let's say it's a door way and you are on the outside, well the threshold is stepping over to get inside, through liminal space, this is unnerving for the ego.

For me when I went through my crisis of the fire, I looked for the elders of the city to help me through, but all they could say was pray more, read your bible more, so with more certitude, you will get through it.

Well I couldn't do any of those things, the only thing I could do, was commit my day to God and trust, that the decisions I made today would work out, I had many well meaning people offering me advice, but I couldn't hear any of it.

This journey of not having the answers causes a deep search within and could be seen as a door that opens to the uncertain or frailty of our lives. Can we journey into this place with any confidence that we will be safe and what could we find in the depths of our being.

I have noticed that most people don't want to go there, I hear them say, "All good, there isn't anything going on over here."

It's fear of the unknown that keeps us from exploring this hidden part of us. I can remember a dear friend of mine said to me, do you realise you do this and this, he was talking about a way I interacted with people, I had no idea until he talked to me about it.

We need good guides that love us enough, to offer a correction, in a good way through relationship, because we just can't see that our behaviour needs some tweaking.

But what do we do when corrections or criticism is all you hear? For me, I have to limit my exposure to these people, it's a protective practice that stems from my early childhood, do they know what they are saying? No, they don't. This behaviour comes from their hidden place, Echart Tolle says, "It's their pain seeking to attach to your pain."

If you are not careful you go down a vortex with them, especially if you are talking about someone else, this is very dangerous and should be avoided at all cost.

A good way to steer the conversation away from this toxic behaviour, is to see the good in that person and draw out the goodness in them, drawing away from talk that diminishes people.

So in conclusion, I want to be clear that facilitating a group is creating a safe and sacred place that allows people to speak from the heart without any fear of judgment. This attitude of seeing the good in others is one of the core values of a good facilitator.

It's not preaching at them, although you may have a big idea that you need to get across to stimulate discussion.

This is about the collective wisdom that resides within all people and drawing it out of them, and therefore their education or understanding on a subject grows.

This causes growth within the individual and the group, becoming mature followers of Jesus, not locked into rigid ego beliefs that exclude or reject others.

There is a bigger picture, that people start to rely on the inner teacher and while we learn from others, I have found our inner voice grows and the external teacher voice diminishes. Have we found a way to live in peace with ourselves and others, and not the narrow critical pathway?

Today we need large people of considered thought to move forward, this world its so complicated and confusing. Finally, if you are reading this, trust your self, be brave in your interactions with others, you have what it takes to grow in wisdom and understanding.

Philip Harback