

**ANOTHER
NAME
FOR EVERY
THING**

with

RICHARD ROHR

Season 1, Episode 4

Love Evolves

Brie Stoner: Welcome to season one of Another Name for Everything with Richard Rohr exploring the core themes of his new book, *The Universal Christ*.

Paul Swanson: As mentioned previously, this podcast is recorded on the grounds of the Center For Action and Contemplation, and may contain the quirky sounds of our neighborhood and setting. We are your hosts: Paul Swanson.

Brie Stoner: And Brie Stoner.

Paul Swanson: We're staff members for the Center for Action and Contemplation, and students of this contemplative path trying our best to live the wisdom of this tradition, amidst mouthy co-workers, paying bills, and the shifting state of our world.

Brie Stoner: This is the fourth of twelve weekly episodes. Today, we will be discussing chapters five and six, titled, "Love Is the Meaning," and "A Sacred Wholeness." In this conversation, we explore the nature of love as so much more than a feeling. Is love the unfolding, evolving force of creativity in our world? Let's find out.

So, Richard, love has become such a romanticized word, you know? In our English language in particular, it feels so weak now. Because I can love somebody—

Richard Rohr: Yes, it really does.

Brie Stoner: --or I can really love carnitas tacos, you know? You have such a beautiful understanding of love, in the way you describe it in your book. You mention the paleontologist and priest, mystic, Teilhard de Chardin. I wonder if you could share with us how you understand love.

Richard Rohr: Oh, my goodness. Oh, what a question. All I can do is dip in in one little corner. You know, the word that first comes to mind that's the most comprehensive is given-ness. When a thing is giving itself to you, or a person is giving themselves to you. They are loving you.

You know, we all know the difference. We all know when people even say nice words to us, but it's from a cold place, or it's just being polite, or it's pro forma. I've had people challenge me or correct me, and I still felt given-ness. I felt respected, held, every step of the way. So, it isn't this superficial, "Oh, he likes me," or, "She likes me." That's just useless. You know? It doesn't have to do with

Richard Rohr: liking someone or not liking someone. You can actually dislike a person, and could still give yourself to them. You see?

We've got liking and loving all confused. That famous book that influenced me very early by C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*. He was wise enough to say that the Greek language had four words for love, and that English only has one. That's why, it's trying to hold so much that it ends up now being almost useless.

Brie Stoner: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Too diffuse.

Richard Rohr: I love my Cheerios. Well, I guess you can give yourself to your Cheerios.

Brie Stoner: As my kids say, they're like, "Well if you love it so much, why don't you marry it?" I'm like,

“Really?” It’s so annoying.

Richard Rohr: [laughter] Why don’t you marry it?

Brie Stoner: Oh yeah.

Richard Rohr: Isn’t that interesting? That they’ve got an insight there already. We just use it far too easily. If you remember, he said, “Storge love is the love of things.” When you say, “That’s a cute little teddy bear,” the Greeks would use the word storge for that. That’s what your little boys are making fun of. “Oh, that’s storge love.” They already have a hint there’s something bigger than that, you know?

Then there’s philia, the appreciation. It’s a little higher level, where there is a valuing of the quality and beauty and truth. It’s the love of friendship. It doesn’t have to be intimate friendship, or profound friendship. But nevertheless, I’m kindly inclined toward that person, or that plant, or whatever it might be.

Then there’s eros, which again is the great confusion, although we do use the word somewhat that way, erotic, it specifically means physically embodied love that has a character of fascination, infatuation—

Brie Stoner: Attraction.

Richard Rohr: --addiction, attraction, all those words; erotic love of things. So, it’s considered the most dangerous and the most powerful, because it has such power over us. There’s this infatuation element, which the first two don’t have. I’m just remembering what I can. You know, the very word infatuation from Latin means false fire. Don’t get too attached to that, because it won’t last. It’s a false fire.

Brie Stoner: I didn’t know that.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, ignis fatuus, false fire. Then the one that Paul chose to use in first Corinthians 13, is agápe, or ágape. It’s pronounced both ways. That was

Richard Rohr: considered disinterested, altruistic love, that was given undeservedly, unmerited, and unachieved.

Now, we’ve got to keep holding on to that as the highest love, as the divine love. I think the Greeks even called it divine love. They didn’t have our idea of Jesus or God, but they still knew there was a love that was perfect, that didn’t depend on the worthiness of the object, but was given-ness irrespective of whether that deserves to be given to—pure given-ness for its own sake.

So, we’ve got to keep that definition. Now, you’ve heard me in other places. I distinguish it from what I call Valentine’s Day love. Valentine’s Day love, which is the American use of the term, is a flimsy combination of eros and storge. Not even that much philia. It’s just this game-playing thing of attraction, very unstable, very unreliable.

And so, you have, the largest percentage of people who come to you for counseling are

people who have been wounded by this kind of love. Expecting agape, because their girlfriend or boyfriend said, “I love you,” when all it was was eros and storge.” Storge love because, “You’ve got a cute face. I love you.” Well, that doesn’t last.

Brie Stoner: Some of us have a cute face.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. We’re doing culture, and relationships, and family a favor to make such distinctions. If we wouldn’t think, “Oh, they’re laying their Christian trip on me.” If we don’t preserve the higher levels of love ourselves, I don’t know that we have anything to teach or offer civilization. But the thing is, we do have something more, and darn it, we have regressed to the lower levels our self. We use the word love to largely mean storge, philia, and eros, not agape.

Paul Swanson: The way that you use love in *The Universal Christ*, you talk about how love creates future possibility.

Richard Rohr: You listen so well. Go ahead; go ahead.

Brie Stoner: We maybe took some notes.

Paul Swanson: Yes. That it works for the good of all, even when it goes wrong and awry. Can you unpack that further? I think it’s just such an important powerhouse thing to lean on in this discussion of love, especially considering the distinctions you just made.

Richard Rohr: Yes. When you give yourself to an idea, a person, an event, you tell it, “I’m so happy that you exist. I’m so happy that you are what you are.” When we get that kind of mirroring, or even give that kind of mirroring to an idea, its possibilities explode. When you immediately introduce the negative, critical

Richard Rohr: mind, which I’m tempted to do as a “one” on the Enneagram, you immediately limit possibilities.

“Oh, well let’s think of that criticism that Richard just offered.” Then you stay in that little world of criticism, or what it isn’t. What it isn’t. So, love is always telling a thing or a person what it is, and that this is good.

I used to use this as my standard wedding homily when I used to have a lot more weddings. I said, “What you have to say to one another for the rest of your life is, “I’m so happy that you exist,” in one way or another, “I’m so happy

that you exist.” When you can’t say that to one another, you’re not helping one another grow anymore. So, growth happens inside of allowing, mirroring, permission-giving, because what that does, it gives you the freedom to be wrong and to make mistakes.

If you’re terrified of making mistakes, and you create that fear already in your children, their arena for growth is going to be rather small, because they’ll always live in fear of being wrong. When you think that the punitive model of parenting really persisted worldwide, and is still in much of the world until very recently, you

can see why we understood the Gospels that way, because that was the way we raised children, by threat of punishment, by withholding of love, not by giving ourselves to the child, but withdrawing the love from the child.

I think parents thought they were doing good things. They'd stop talking to the child, and the little child sits there, "What did I do wrong? What did I do wrong? Why isn't Mommy talking to me? Or Daddy?" Withholding of that given-ness, it didn't look like punishment, but it was maybe the most common form of punishment of all.

I'm sure when you're dating, you do it to one another, to your partner, "Well, I'm going to treat him cold, or her cold right now." So, we learn these methods early. To be able, of course, to still give ourselves when we've just been hurt is heroic. I'm not making that easy or light. You have to do it wrong an awful lot of times and get trapped in that little hole of negativity, before you eventually buy out of it. I'm not helping myself by living in this stingy place, because that's what it is. It's real stingy.

Brie Stoner: Walled off.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, withholding, withholding, withholding. "I'm not going to smile at her. She might think I wasn't hurt by what she just did." Once you're in that mode of non-smiling, non-caring, non-touching, non-responding, it only gets worse, doesn't it?

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I can hear my wife saying "Amen" right now, because that is, for me, my temptation when I'm in that place, is to withdraw.

Brie Stoner: Shut down, yeah, me too.

Paul Swanson: --and not give of myself. That's been—

Richard Rohr: Me too.

Paul Swanson: --the best mirroring for me, is learning how destructive that is not just for my wife but for myself.

Richard Rohr: It's terribly dangerous when you're considered, like I'm afraid I am, a person of importance, or significance, or authority, use whatever word. When you're considered that, you know that your non-smile carries a lot of weight. Do you understand?

Brie Stoner: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Paul Swanson: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Rohr: It's hard not to use it. It's terrible. It's just terrible.

Brie Stoner: I know we've been talking at the personal level here. But I also think it's interesting what you just said about love allows mistakes. It makes room for that. Even at a cosmic level, even thinking how Teilhard uses that phrase that, "The physical structure of the universe is love." You know? To think that in evolution, we're kind of still figuring stuff out. That gives me a lot of hope.

Richard Rohr: Doesn't it? Doesn't it? Well put, yes.

Brie Stoner: It helps create a sense of trust, that maybe this great experiment that we're all part of and are participating in, there's room for these moments right now that can cause so many of us to lose hope when we look around us politically, or in the world, and have that moment of, "How could this possibly be good when things are this dark?" But that frame helps me, I guess is what I'm trying to say to put it in that frame of love and evolution.

Richard Rohr: Evolution is the language of growth and change. You would have thought we would have always had it. You would have thought it would have come naturally to us. Now, our theological way of saying, what Teilhard said, "The physical structure of the universe is love," is, "Let us create in our image," that God who is a cycling of infinite outpouring and infinite receiving between three, that's saying, "The physical structure of the universe is love" in theological language. Now, I know most people don't think in a Trinitarian way. I probably think that too easily, too quickly, but we had it. But is it any surprise that most of Christianity was not very Trinitarian? Theoretically, yes; practically, no, because

Richard Rohr: we didn't understand that the very physical nature of the universe is love, and this is where science and theology are coming together. My God, we're good friends. We're saying the same thing. What a gift.

Brie Stoner: I like this line that you say in your book. You say, "Forgiveness might be the very best description of what God engenders in humanity." You also say—

Richard Rohr: I'm so glad I said that.

Brie Stoner: It's a good line.

Richard Rohr: I am. I didn't know I said that. I'm glad I did.

Brie Stoner: You did a good job with that one.

Richard Rohr: All right.

Brie Stoner: You also say that, "Without forgiveness, there's no real hope for a future for us." You just brought up the Trinity. I just wonder, how does understanding the Universal Christ allow us to have a greater capacity to forgive, and have that forgiving nature?

Richard Rohr: Well, if we really begin to experience that all that our eyes see is the given-ness of God, the absolute self-emptying of God into visibility, when we start experiencing God as operating from a worldview of abundance and not scarcity. Basically, a forgiving person—for-give means to give ahead of time, to give up front, to not wait for the moment where it's earned.

We were given an image of God who was withholding, who was punitive, who was even torturing. Can you realize how—well, of course you can—how a creation spirituality—I'm looking at those leaves outside the window right now—there's no withholding on God's part. That creates in the soul a worldview of abundance, not a worldview of scarcity. And I dare say, I think most of us were raised with a Christian worldview of scarcity. There isn't enough grace to go around. There isn't enough forgiveness to go around. It has to be earned. We

could not imagine an infinitely loving God. I'm told the brain can't imagine infinite notions. So maybe it's not even our fault.

But again, here's where science is helping us, just the extent of the universe. trying to imagine a single light year. The mind can't imagine it. We're talking about 176 light years from here to there. "Oh, come on." It's just, our mind has been blown by astrophysics now. It's allowing us to think in infinite concepts.

We've got to believe that God is bigger than what God created. We've got to have a God at least as big as this infinitely seeming universe. So, now to understand God as for-giving, giving given-ness itself; forgiveness itself. God

Richard Rohr: doesn't choose to forgive now and then when people have earned it, or it isn't forgiveness anymore. Forgiveness is this permanent state of God toward reality.

That would convert any heart that spent a long enough time reflecting on it. Who wouldn't fall in love with such a universe and such a God? So, that's what I keep saying that we're still in baby Christianity. We're trying to fit an infinite God into a worldview of scarcity, which is meriting, accomplishing, achieving. It's always a zero-sum game, and there's never enough to go around, never enough. Wasn't enough grace for gays, you know? Not enough forgiveness for people in a second marriage. Come on, just stop it. That's you talking. That's not God

talking. "Oh." Would you respect any god who was less than that? How could it be God if it's picking and choosing? You know?

Brie Stoner: Yeah, that feels—

Richard Rohr: Liking white skin but disliking black skin? You know when the fathers of our country made statements to that effect, they were permanently "marked," and these were the enlightenment people, the deists. There are people that are simply stamped for all eternity with inferiority.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. That's why I think, I mean evolution is so helpful. I love how you say that, too, that we're at baby Christianity. That's exciting for me, because it makes me think that there is hope that we are shifting into a new paradigm, that we could participate in changing the limitations of religion—the small thinking, the exclusive thinking.

I think so many of us who have grown up with the internet had this weird experience of already having a felt sense of we-ness, because the borders that used to work to keep us separate from each other, we transcended those. The internet helped us transcend those.

Richard Rohr: Yes, well put. Well put.

Brie Stoner: There's a sense of planetary belonging. And so, I often feel discouraged with thinking that there's any hope that Christianity can catch up to what you're talking about.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. Well see, here's one, I hope gift, of this notion of the Cosmic Christ or the Universal Christ. If God and grace are inherent in creation, then this unfolding is going to happen with or without its formal proclamation. Now, we in the church might be the formal proclaimers, but when you see how poorly we've proclaimed it, how stingily we withheld it, I

think God's work is going to continue to be done under a secular banner in many cases.

People will still be healed. Because I've gone through so many health issues in the last year, I'm just so aware of the generosity of a lot of doctors and nurses. I

Richard Rohr: suspect they're earning huge salaries. Okay, maybe they're not. I don't care. But, boy, I experienced a lot of gratuitous caring.

This one nurse calls me every week just to check on everything. One called yesterday to go through all of my meds, "Now this one will have this side effect. This could have that side effect. Don't take this with that." Oh, it's horrible. But it's wonderful, because I was getting impatient. I kept saying on the phone, "Are we done yet? I don't care about all this." She, "Now just stay with me a little longer. We want to help you." She really did, you know? She doesn't even know me. She's the Universal Christ. I'll probably never meet her face to face.

This is what's going to win the day. That's the Universal Christ. It doesn't have to have the label, "Christ." Now, I'm still going to say, you're quite blessed if you have the ability to name what's happening. That's bringing it to consciousness. I'm not saying organized Christianity should throw itself out, but that it's always going to be what Jesus said at the beginning it would be, a "leaven," an illumination, and a salt. That isn't the whole meal. Salt isn't the meal; leaven isn't the dough. The light is that which illumines, but it isn't an object in itself.

Jesus gave us metaphors to tell us to expect a humble role in society. We don't have to convert everybody. It's a privilege to me to be a Christian. It's no burden. It's not fear. It's a privilege. But by the same token, I don't feel I have to talk other people into carrying my privilege. If they don't want to, that's okay. As long as they let the flow happen through them. Like that nurse on the phone with me for almost an hour yesterday talking about stupid pills.

Okay, what else?

Paul Swanson: So, Richard, as we've been going through and talking, we've gone to universal metaphors and then to personal, back and forth, and trying to hold both. In your book, you talk very personally about having very little sense of spiritual feeling during recent seasons.

Richard Rohr: Oh, yeah. Really the last ten, fifteen years. Go ahead, yeah.

Paul Swanson: Can you speak a little more to that, because I think a lot of folks go through seasons where, sometimes it's very short—

Richard Rohr: Yes, thank you.

Paul Swanson: --sometimes it's very long, but it's all part of the evolution of our own journey. I wonder if you could speak to that?

Richard Rohr: You know, I think perhaps because I had so many strong rushes of feeling, and desire, and hope as a young man, I probably unknowingly presumed, "Well, this will just continue and increase." Certainly, that has not been the case in the last ten to fifteen years. I have very

little high, warm emotion. It really is pretty

Richard Rohr: much putting one foot in front of the other. I would say when I left the house this morning, “Oh, God, they’re going to interview me for— [laughter]

Brie Stoner: Sorry.

Richard Rohr: --more talking.” So I do it not out of oppressive duty, but more just because I know this is what I’m supposed to do, and God has given me the grace to talk

Richard Rohr: this way that seems to help people. So I should do it. But I won’t leave here a few minutes from now feeling real gooey about how wonderful I am, or, “Wasn’t that wonderful what I just did?”

Brie Stoner: We’ll get gooey for you.

Richard Rohr: Gooey, what a word, huh?

Brie Stoner: We’ve got you covered. A lot of gooey-ness.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. [RE-PHRASE? @ 26’32”] So, most of it is just like you—duty, obligation, but it’s much less burdensome, because now I’ve found a meaning and a beauty in it. But I don’t want to give people the impression I walk around just, “Everything is beautiful. Jesus loves me.” I don’t feel Jesus/God’s love most of the time. It doesn’t mean I’m not enjoying it, its fruits. I’m enjoying its fruits, and that’s why I can be easily pulled into a moment of negativity, resentment, where I’m not enjoying the moment, because I live without a lot of ecstatic feeling when you go through years of saying, “What am I doing wrong? What am I doing wrong?” But, thank you for giving me a chance to say that, because I think that’s true of every marriage. That’s true of every relationship with anything you love. If I’m to believe the mystics, it’s totally predictable in one’s relationship to God, that God must withdraw all feeling, or you don’t really learn to love the other. You don’t love the other, you love what the other is giving you. Until you make that distinction, “Oh, well, of course I love God. I get these gooey feelings all the time.” Well, that’s not loving God, that’s loving the experience of God.

Now, I don’t think you’re ready for that until you’ve been on the journey for some years. But there’s little days of practice, I’m sure. You’re both young people, there’s still probably many days, where if you had your druthers you wouldn’t be changing diapers or watching the kid, you know? Watching the kid. But you do it. You do it for love, and you don’t feel it.

That’s when you become a pure conduit, a pure-er conduit at least.

Brie Stoner: That’s so helpful, because I think we’re so conditioned to look at happiness as the goal of everything.

Richard Rohr: Everything.

Brie Stoner: You know, and you say—

Richard Rohr: That’s narcissism, actually.

Brie Stoner: Oh, yeah. We're very narcissistic but even spiritually narcissistic—

Richard Rohr: Yes, we are.

Brie Stoner: --because you talk about contemplation as, and this is a quote, "Allowing us to stop our superficial minds long enough to see the beauty, allow the truth, and protect the inherent goodness of what is, whether it profits me, pleases me, or not." I just think, that's so profound for me.

Richard Rohr: Is that in the book?

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: Well, I'm glad I wrote it. Thank you. I listen to it, and I say, "Oh, that's good."

Paul Swanson: "Sounds like a good book."

Brie Stoner: But that part of, "whether it profits or pleases me, or not."

Richard Rohr: Yeah, it doesn't have to please me.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. That seems to be so much more of a healthy perspective—

Richard Rohr: It really is.

Brie Stoner: --of what contemplation engenders in us, to stop being obsessed with, "what pleases me"—

Richard Rohr: Yeah, what pleases me.

Brie Stoner: --or my personal bliss. You know?

Richard Rohr: Because then you're unhappy when it doesn't please you, and most things are not going to perfectly please you. So, do you want to go through life unhappy most of the time? Then stop stating your preferences.

Now I know we say, "Oh, I love that." Like you apparently say to your kids, and I do it too. "Oh, I love this meal." Or, "I love this beautiful painting." But just don't get too attached to that it matters to the world whether you love it, or not. If it keeps you positive and flowing, good. But if it's just, "Now I have to have that piece of art, because I love it so much, and I'm going to love it every day hanging in my living room." No, you don't.

Brie Stoner: That's helpful, I think, for so many of us. I think about the last several years in my own life. I've gone through a divorce. I've gone through lots of life changes. There is this kind of sober growing up that's happening right now. Of learning to

Brie Stoner: accept my responsibilities, and even life being difficult as part of it. That I can feel that there's that little piece of me that's like, "Wait. Wait, this isn't fun."

Richard Rohr: "Wait, I didn't buy into this."

Brie Stoner: “This is really hard, and I’m falling apart.”

Richard Rohr: The ordinariness of holiness, yeah.

Brie Stoner: Yeah, so thank you for that perspective.

Richard Rohr: You know, I think that’s one reason, if I can say so, that the Charismatic movement died for the most part. It was way too tied to gooey feelings. That’s just a sure recipe to keep people at stage one. It’s an authentic stage, but it’s not supposed to be a permanent stage. It’s like thinking the Church can exist on a perpetual Pentecost Sunday. You don’t love God anymore, you love what God does for you.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. This is a word that’s kind of out of fashion, but the one that comes to mind for me is “obedience.” There’s an obedience that you’re living into, when it’s not out of response to what you’ll get, but it’s just out of response of being in that field of love. Would you say that is a helpful reframing, or am I off my rocker?

Brie Stoner: I mean, you normally are off your rocker—

Paul Swanson: I know, true. True.

Richard Rohr: If I understood you rightly, that’s exactly it. Again, because I had to study Latin and Greek, I so often get the roots of words. Obedire is the word obedience. It means to listen to. So, an obedient person is a person who’s listening to reality. It’s more than being dutiful, but just letting it have its way with us, letting it give us its messages. It’s being responsive, maybe that’s the best word, instead of commandeering reality.

You know, I hate to pick on politicians so much, but they’ve just become such a living example of how not to do it. By their very profession, they think their job is to commandeer reality. It leads them to tell lies about almost everything. To make reality into what they need it to be to win, however they define winning, which is usually very superficial. That’s the opposite of obedience. They’re not obedient to reality. They’re not listening to the separated mothers and children on the American border. They’re not listening at all. They might think, “Oh, I’m

Richard Rohr: obedient to Church law.” Well, you’re not obedient to divine law, and divine law is written in reality.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. Pay attention to the law that’s written, versus the spirit that is actually trying to be manifest.

Richard Rohr: Yes, exactly. Exactly. It’s so ironic, they’re the very people imposing the law, who have such incapacity to listen to reality.

Brie Stoner: Speaking of politicians, can we talk a little bit about the idea from Ken Wilber of growing up and waking up that you mention in the book?

Richard Rohr: You know, there’s more than that too.

Brie Stoner: Yes.

Richard Rohr: You just want to concentrate on two?

Brie Stoner: Well I mean, you can share the whole enchilada, Richard. We have nowhere else to be. Just saying.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. He goes on to growing up, waking up.

Paul Swanson: Cleaning up?

Richard Rohr: Cleaning up, well, cleaning up is normally the first one. That's why I was forgetting it. Most religion stops at cleaning up just trying to feel like you're moral. "I don't gamble. I don't look at Playboy. I don't steal." That's good, but most religion never goes beyond cleaning up. Even the wonderful Jewish books of Leviticus and Numbers are all about cleaning up. There's no waking up yet, because that takes a while to get there.

Growing up is what we would now call psychological, moral, mental development, intellectual development, stages of consciousness. Education would probably be the best word. Waking up is overcoming your sense of being a separate self. Waking up is rather rare. In fact, it's as rare among liberals as it is among conservatives, because liberals think of growing up as waking up, and they aren't the same.

Just because you have a PhD, just because you're a supreme court justice, I mean, the very fact that we can have liberal and conservative supreme court justices tells us it's not a high level of consciousness. If it was absolute truth, they'd always agree. We're not dealing with absolute truth. We're dealing with relative truth. But they don't know that. They think it's absolute truth, and they are the purveyors of conservative absolute truth, or liberal absolute truth.

Richard Rohr: The mystic is the one who move beyond that, and again, reads things in their wholeness. I doubt if you could survive very long as a supreme court justice-- Well, that's right, they're in for life, so you could survive, but you wouldn't be

able to work with the team too much if you were at the mystical level, because you would have a critical statement to both the liberals and the conservatives.

You would say, "I critique you on this. I agree with you on this. I critique you on that. I disagree with you on that. I don't think I can vote." You know? Maybe that's what you'd have to do.

That's waking up, and that's a small percentage of humanity that lives in what we call the body of Christ, the collective, the historical social, the unitive, the communion of saints, where your we is more real to you than your I. That's high-level conversion. I don't know that I'm there yet. I know I dip into it now and then.

Now, showing up can probably happen in all three stages, where I give away to the world. I show up as a helpful person, a contributing person. I pay back. Someone who's cleaned up, and stopped stealing, and stopped lying, they can probably belong to the Rotary Club or the Lions Club, and really contribute to the society. You don't have to be a mystic. I'm not putting down the Rotary Club or the Lions Club. These are just social organizations that are

good for society. They don't demand a high degree of mystical union. That's waking up.

Growing up has largely just emerged as a science in the last few hundred years. The real maturing of people. It's almost coterminous with the development of psychology, and all of the things like the Myers-Briggs, the Enneagram, Spiral Dynamics. All of these wonderful tools are tools that help us to chart growing up, to guide growing up.

So, I think that's why we're so infatuated with growing up, that you can see why a lot of people substitute it for waking up. But you've heard me say, this is why I can't give up on religion, as much as I'm critical of it, because in its higher sense, religion alone is prepared to talk about waking up. There's nothing to unite with if we're all separate beings except you will be nice to your friends. It'll go out a few degrees, hopefully.

But was it Carol Gilligan who said, "Self-love, to love of group, to universal love, is the normal sequence"? We're not even good at self-love, so how can you be good at group love much less universal love?

My critique of organized Christianity, or any religion, is I still think it's getting less—I'm going to pick a number—less than 10 percent of its people to universal love. Most think they're wonderful because they've gotten to self-love or group love.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I had never thought about what you just said, about—

Richard Rohr: What?

Paul Swanson: --the growing up, how the toolkit has really arrived in the last hundred years.

Richard Rohr: Oh, yes.

Paul Swanson: --and here, religion's been around for so long, and the toolkit is much more effusive. It's not as concrete in a way. You kind of just cultivate a sense of who you are to receive, to be on the path of humility, to be open to waking up. Would you say that's true, and are there ways that we can, those within religious circles, could help till the ground for waking up?

Richard Rohr: We have to both point and exemplify the larger stages. That's what Gandhi was doing. That's what Martin Luther King was doing. You have to have people who are living models of it, or you can't imagine that it exists.

Paul Swanson: Mm-hmmm (affirmative).

Richard Rohr: Now, most think, most progressive people think, they were just educated into that by more information, more information, more information. I've met too many arrogant university professors to believe that anymore. I've met some wonderful university professors, but the confusion of education with transformation is rather common among those of us who are educated.

It's hard not to. The ego is so inflated by having an MA or a PhD. I mean, I've recently met people who have four and five PhDs. At least one that I'm thinking of isn't a very loving person. He's just into his PhDs. So, it's important we keep saying that, without

putting people down. They just don't know about waking up. They don't know about the higher levels. They've seen so much cheap religion, they think it's all cheap religion. That's unfortunate.

Did I respond to your question at all?

Paul Swanson: I think so. I think you responded to, I mean, even in the response itself, the way you were framing it, it's not something that is, "Do step one, two, three, and you're going to help Johnny over there wake up."

Richard Rohr: Yeah. No, it isn't.

Paul Swanson: It's not a part of a Sunday school program. It's, again—

Brie Stoner: It's a different mind.

Paul Swanson: Yes. --a contemplative mind and the wholeness of it.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, and that's why life, and suffering, and love will be better teachers than Sunday school or catechism class. I'm not against Sunday school, but it's still based on the education model. In the, "Give them correct information." Now, all three of us, we're glad we got that correct information given to us very young, but look how much un-learning, all three of us from different denominations.

Richard Rohr: But, my gosh, we've spent much of our life un-learning, while still more deeply appreciating the core. Isn't that wonderful?

I still deeply appreciate my Catholic beginnings, even though I would understand almost all of it very differently than the way the nuns taught it to me, but you have to start somewhere.

Brie Stoner: Yeah, and you have that. I mean we've been talking about this. But you have this line where you say that, "We actually avoid God, while talking religion nonstop. "It's kind of what you're talking about, right now.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, I'm afraid so. Religion is, and I'm not being clever, is the best substitute possible almost for the exact experience of God. Because it's like an inoculation where you get just enough of the disease, so you don't get the real thing, you know?

Brie Stoner: Oh, my gosh, that's good.

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: But it is. Much of religion is an inoculation from the real thing. Because, "Oh, okay. I talk Jesus. I go to church on Sunday. I read the Bible," and there's not been a moment of transformative experience sometimes.

Brie Stoner: I remember sharing with you not long ago, just some of my challenges and some of my story. You said, "These experiences are experiences of God at a cellular level"—

Richard Rohr: Yes.

Brie Stoner: --at such an embodied way. For somebody who's grown up in the Christian tradition, in that heady religion, that helps me, because it is a shift.

Richard Rohr: Yes, it is.

Brie Stoner: These experiences of great love and suffering are kind of that cellular experience.

Richard Rohr: I'm convinced that women of the species come to that easier and earlier. I don't know if it's menstruation, labor, menopause, seeing their bodies made into an object by men so often, but they have to pay so much more attention to their

Richard Rohr: body. We men can basically grow up ignoring it, as long as we're good at football. We don't need to really listen to it.

Richard Rohr: I don't know what it's like to count the days between your periods. You have to be listening to your body. I don't have to do that. There are no periods in my—well, there is now. Now, I'm having hot flashes.

Brie Stoner: Careful. Careful.

Richard Rohr: I've had three today already. But even that, the hot flash phenomenon, I've become, in a different way, listening to my body, "Here it comes. Now I know what it's going to mean for the next three minutes." It's a different way of accessing the moment, listening to your body, but I had to wait until seventy-five. What else?

Paul Swanson: Well, I think that we are running out here, Richard. Do you have any other questions before we conclude with our final?

Brie Stoner: Well, I mean, you bring up the body. I think that that's one of the shifts of contemplation that I so appreciate right now, is just how we're focusing so much more on embodiment.

Richard Rohr: Embodiment.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. So, I guess as we round out to a close, to shift our question of, "When have you encountered Christ today," how have you lately encountered Christ in your own embodiment? I mean you're talking about taking these pills, and having these hot flashes, and all these side effects.

Richard Rohr: Well, it's been really humiliating this year or two both because of cancer and heart attack, and being put on all these medicines, to just constantly experience, my body as weak. I think of all my life as a young person, where I saw old men and old women walk down the street. But that was always—

Brie Stoner: Someone else.

Richard Rohr: --someone else, and how I lacked in sympathy. But you know what? I could not have sympathy, because I didn't know how helpless that feels. I'm much more noticing of old people now, because now I know, "Oh, my gosh," how they feel. You know? Isn't it sad that we have to sort of come to the embodiment moment ourselves before we can normally have an empathy for what other people are going through?

So, yeah. I mean, already, now it's a daily thing. I'm just dealing with my body. Whereas most of my life, celibacy included, I just ignored my body. It was just a bother. Again, I wasn't into competitive sports. People always liked me for my ideas. So, I just lived in my world of ideas, and pretended I didn't have a body.

Richard Rohr: But this is a gift God's giving me in my final years, that I have to pay attention to it. I have to listen to it. I have to take the pills at the right time of day. Now I have to go and get on a treadmill. I mean, just the word of a treadmill, oh, God, but it's my spiritual practice now. It is very much tied to embodiment.

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