

**ANOTHER
NAME
FOR EVERY
THING**

with

RICHARD ROHR

Season 3, Episode 2
Universal Christ Values (Part 2)

Paul Swanson: [music playing] Today on Another Name for Everything, we continue our conversation on values. And we're doing this a little bit different this season as Brie and I take a few moments to kind of share with you our process about how these questions came to be and how they relate to our lives and what we are bringing and what we are hoping to bring to our conversation with Richard.

Brie Stoner: As we pick up where we left off on values, one of the things that I am struck by, is how values tend to be weaponized, and so you'll hear us talking about that. And also, even just thinking about how growing up in the Christian tradition, values always felt like something external that you had to put on, like a garment, or something, in a way that didn't really feel authentic.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, and I think that's part of why I felt so much joy in this conversation, was we were trying to redefine how values could impact our life and they wouldn't have to be just that exterior garment that we put on to fit in the club, but rather live from something more internalized.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. I think it's so important for me to feel a sense of authenticity in what I'm doing in my spiritual practice, or what I'm hoping to live into, aspirationally. If I can't connect the dots between the goal and something that is already authentically a spark in my own heart, then it does feel forced. It totally feels fake. It feels like it's artificial, or like I'm performing.

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Brie Stoner: And this is so helpful, I think, because the way that Richard was able to frame values, put it in touch with that spark in your own heart, to say, "Okay, what is already taking shape inside of you and then how can you fan the flame of what's there, to keep going and to keep growing?"

Paul Swanson: Yeah. Especially in light of, you know, life happens, life occurs in ways where suffering finds us or sometimes we unfortunately seek out suffering in costume, and how values can help us on those rocky roads, where we're just trying to, in some ways, survive but also continue to orientate our life trajectory on a path that feels like one of integrity and authenticity to this path that we're committed to. And I think that was one of the gifts for me in our conversation here together in the things that came up as we were trying to think how this would this most resonate with folks who tune in as ways that it didn't feel separate from their own lives, whatever is going on in the midst of their joys,

Paul Swanson: and trials, and struggles. This seems to have an opportunity to set an arc from here to the end of this season of how these values relate to our entire conversation here on Another Name for Everything.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. That's right. In many ways, we're trying to figure out where the rubber meets the road between these big, metaphysical ideas that feel so huge, and then the very mundane, day-to-day reality of our lives. So, let's take a listen now to our conversation with Richard, Part Two of "Values."

Paul Swanson: So, Richard, we want to continue this conversation that we started here on values and how we integrate this into our daily life, in our way of being in the world. So then, we kick it off

with one of the things that those of us who grew up in the Church, we have analogy around the idea of trying to be good or trying to look good from the outside in instead of the inside out. What is the difference between aspirational creeds and lived reality? In other words, how do we have the integrity in living our values instead of just talking about them? It seems to be one of the things that we haven't quite learned how to do. How do we just live out of this place of value versus taking what others have put upon us, or trying to just fit the mold of what it looks like to be good?

Richard Rohr: You know, this is, I think, why I keep going back to the Falling Upward thesis: the first half of life, and second half of life. I don't think you have much choice in the first half of life, except some degree of, "How do I look?" So don't hate yourself for it. "How is this coming across?" Even Jesus, "Who do people say that I am?" You know. You don't know how to read yourself except from the outside in. So don't hate yourself. The integrity that emerges usually in your 40's-- You're not there yet.

Paul Swanson: I'm so close.

Brie Stoner: Just about.

Richard Rohr: --is, you get tired of that, or you realize the insufficiency of that; this preoccupation with what I'm going to call the "horizontal," the looking good instead of being good. Now, part of the reason is, the burden of being good is you have to let go of how you look to really sometimes be good. You've heard me tell the stories of Francis, when they started calling him Il Santo, coming into Assisi with a board, and he and Brother Francis just see-sawing all day, because he wanted people not to think of him as a saint. Or Philip Neri, who was the priest of Rome, who would come in holding a bottle of wine—I don't know if he drank, and I don't care—and telling rather off-color jokes, because they wanted to rid themselves of this need to appear good.

Now maybe that was just a stage in their own growing up. I don't know what stage that represents, but I know it's a breaking from the first half of life, or one of the earlier tasks in life, that wants people to like you too much, wants to be successful too much, that wants to be pleasing too much, and we've done a

Richard Rohr: good thing in giving a word to that. We call it "codependency." Americans psychologize everything, but there's a real gift to it, to recognize what codependency means. You're codependent on other people's image of you, and so you play to that. It's almost impossible not to when you're young. But you will get tired of it and you'll say, "Why did I really do that? What's really going on when I do that?" And those are the questions I think of your late 30's and 40's, that you seek a greater integrity, and you let the likability factor fall away. And after I finish that, did I answer the question actually? You don't have to say I did if I didn't.

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: Come back at me.

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Brie Stoner: I think you're getting at this question of how do we live with integrity, in integrity, to wanting to live these values, and oftentimes it's almost like, the image that's coming to my mind is like, we put our values up and in a head a little bit because it's aspirational, right, like, we know we want to live into this—

Richard Rohr: Yes.

Brie Stoner: --but to do it in a way that has kind of an authentic truth to it. It reminds me of what you were saying in the last episode about how you can't fake it, like it has to come from within in order for it to be authentic, but it's still just beyond us, right? Otherwise, we wouldn't be motivated to continue.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, that's it. I like your word "aspirational." That's the North Star again. You have to choose. I mean, that's what I did when at nineteen I took my first vows. Those are aspirational values that set me on a course that I failed in a thousand times. But you have to have those to set you on a course. Now, if you don't fall into the thing of hating yourself when you don't, which I did plenty of times. It's like when you see a mountain climber throwing his pick higher. Higher is dangerous. But anyway, you've got to have something that pulls you forward, and I think we see the lack of that in secular culture today, where there's really no aspirational values in our governments, in the ordinary secular crowd, beyond looking good, making money. So, those are their aspirational values, but they're just not very high, high level.

Paul Swanson: It seems like any true teaching, true spiritual teaching, should call you beyond where you are while also tenderly holding you in that space.

Richard Rohr: Perfect. Perfect, Paul.

Brie Stoner: Awesome.

Richard Rohr: That's it—while holding you, knowing you're not there yet. Because to sink into self-hatred is actually an ego response. "Why are you so shocked that you are not perfect?" Understand? I'm used to it now.

Brie Stoner: I want to stay on this, because that's like—

Richard Rohr: That's all of us.

Brie Stoner: --how do we as we look at values, and it's aspirational, how do we not become judgmental with ourselves—

Richard Rohr: Yup. It's so hard.

Brie Stoner: --and beat ourselves up when we don't live into it perfectly. That's like a thing, my whole life, I can feel how I have fallen into the pit of that kind of self-judgmental inner narrative of "You didn't do that perfectly."

Richard Rohr: Any of us who start religious or idealistic are subject to that. But nobody told us that the self-hatred is ego based too.

Brie Stoner: That's so good.

Richard Rohr: Yeah.

Brie Stoner: That's so good, because then it gives you a place to say, "Okay, the right relationship when I screw up is to somewhat be like, "Of course. Of course." That's a posture of humility: "Of course."

Richard Rohr: Anthony De Mello said, "I'm an ass; you're an ass." [laughter] And when you can just, "Yeah, here Richard goes again," and you're not shocked by that, then you're free. Then you're free. But it's the price you pay for being aspirational. If you didn't have that, you have this flatland, secular culture we have today, where there really are no values beyond personal success—egocentricity; grand egocentricity. So, don't hate yourself for having them even though there's a risk of egocentricity with them. So, that's why God allows you to fail.

Paul Swanson: Some of us on staff last night, we went to go see the new Ram Dass documentary—

Richard Rohr: Oh, tell me.

Paul Swanson: --and the director was there. He said something that I thought was so poignant, where he said he tries to look at every new failure as more adorable than the previous one.

Richard Rohr: "More adorable."

Paul Swanson: And he said it in such a playful spirit, I just think about humor and then that approach to failure.

Richard Rohr: What a neat word.

Paul Swanson: I wonder if you could talk about that? It seems to me that humor plays that role between the disconnect between how you think you look and how you actually are. And so, when you do have those moments of adorable failures that you can approach them with that levity and lightness and not get re-hooked and go into that self-hatred mode or looking down upon yourself, because I know you don't think you're funny, but a lot of us—

Richard Rohr: I'm not. I'm not.

Paul Swanson: --a lot of us enjoy—

Brie Stoner: You are, actually.

Paul Swanson: Your humor.

Richard Rohr: Well, I hope so. I don't. But see, there I am again. All right.

Brie Stoner: Case in point.

Paul Swanson: How has laughter and humor helped you in that way when you think of, you know, any stumbling or falling that occurs and the internal monologue kicks in?

Richard Rohr: I think my early years in intense Franciscan community with my peers—we were all the same age—for years going through, we knew one another backward and forward, any guy who couldn't endure being poked at, being mocked for his eccentricities, left. Franciscanism taught me that.

I remember once when I was giving a Benedictine—not to pick on the good Benedictines—but I was giving a Benedictine retreat in Illinois, and for some terrible reason, I used the word “shit.” Forgive me. My mother told me to never use that word. But I don't know, I thought it was appropriate in the usage. It wasn't said out of anger.

Brie Stoner: What a scandal!

Richard Rohr: But the prior—the prior is the second one in order of authority after the abbot—knock, knock, knock and with a very stern face: “Read *The Name of the Rose*. Did you ever read *The Name of the Rose*? Oh, god, that's a good novel. And this will ruin it for you, but the villain at the end is the monk who could never smile. He could never smile. Our president never smiles, forgive me. He knocked on my door, and he said, “Father, we're enjoying your retreat, but we're gentlemen here, and we would very much prefer if you wouldn't use that

Richard Rohr: word.” And I said, “What word?” And he said, “You know, that four-letter word.” Oh god, and they were Swiss, you know, they were not just Benedictine, but they were Swiss. And I have so many Swiss friends, and I have so many Benedictine friends, so I say that with a hesitation. But it is an example of how culture wins out, culture, over Jesus.

I would make it an absolute statement: anybody who cannot allow people to tease them, like you allow me—well, both of you do, you know, really—you have to worry about them. They're always hiding some major shadow material, and they're afraid you're teasing their shadow that what you said, you know, “Does he really believe that about me? Is that half true?” So, they can never laugh at themselves.

Now, there is another kind of laughter, that's nervous laughter, that's fill the gaps with laughter. I see that at staff meetings, where the whole room is filled with laughter that means nothing. Now, maybe you have to do that to get through the meeting, you know, [laughter] but there is a laughter that is genuine, cajoling, of the shadow, and enjoying yours and others' imperfection; not hating it, not trying to punish it, not trying to expose it, enjoying it. And your genuine friends can do that with you. I love doing it with Michael.

Brie Stoner: I like that you said, “enjoyment of it,” because when you center on joy, there is delight that can hold our imperfections with so much softness and tenderness, like, “Oh, how sweet. There you are, Brie, doing your thing that you do.” You know, it's like there's a sweetness about it. I think about how I enjoy my kids, right?

Richard Rohr: Sure. Sure.

Brie Stoner: When they do things or they don't live up to my hopes or standards, I'm not harping on them in a negative way. I can fully accept where and how they are. So, it's helpful to think

about how we can do that with ourselves when we're not living into these values perfectly or when we misstep. If we can have a little bit of that humor and delight to say, "Oh, this is what it means to be human. Isn't it tender?" It's like, precious.

Richard Rohr: It takes a while to build the trust. You know, I remember the first two years--Michael, forgive me for talking about you, but he thought I meant it. I sounded like the critical father, you know, and he'd start defending himself. And I said, "Michael, I didn't really mean that. I love that in you." And he tested it for two years, really. Now, when I tease him, he takes it one step further. So, yeah, I'm doing that. But it's five years of trust in a relationship to be able to do that.

Brie Stoner: So, speaking of—

Richard Rohr: Michael is our director here.

Brie Stoner: Oh yeah, we should probably clarify that.

Richard Rohr: Our beloved director.

Brie Stoner: Speaking of that tender, beautiful, vulnerable place where we learn to be okay with where our inner lives and outer lives match, or don't, I was recently looking through your book *Eager to Love*, which I love that book, by the way. In it, you say that Francis and Claire found both their inner and outer freedom by structurally living on the edge of the inside of both church and society. But here's the thing I'm fascinated by what you said. You said, "Too often people seek either inner or outer freedom, but seldom do people find both."

Richard Rohr: Yes, seldom.

Brie Stoner: And I'm so intrigued by this way that you're describing inner and outer, the inside and outside of integrity, and I wonder if you could describe the pitfalls of how we tend to only seek one instead of seeking the harmony of both?

Richard Rohr: That is really, I believe, a true statement in my almost fifty years of working with people. I think it has to do with temperament, and that's what got me involved in things like the Enneagram, the Myers-Briggs, to help you recognize that you're temperamentally inclined to start on the outside or the inside, and both of them have their weakness. People who are extroverted, for example, will start on the outside. People who are "sevens" will start on the outside, you know. And it works so well for them because they're good at it that they see no reason to change.

So, this is why I'm sure Teresa of Ávila said, the first mansion is self-knowledge. Now, when you offer this to, especially conservative Christians, they will love to dismiss it, and say it's just psychology. You can tell they're terrified of self-knowledge. They don't want any psychological language. They don't want their anthropology to match their theology, do you see? They don't want human love and divine love to be teachers of one another, or self-love, and human love, and divine love to all operate on the same circuit. That's, finally, the goal, but it's very, very common.

I see this even in the new conservative, young priests. They just, they hate the Enneagram, they hate any

typology, any discussion of feelings, they try to have a theology with no corresponding psychology, any recognition of their own filters, their own biases, their own preferences, where they're closed down. If you don't recognize those filters, you just don't go very far in the spiritual life because all you see is, frankly, yourself in very low-level form over and over and over again, and you interpret the outer world in terms of your own biases and your own filters.

And we don't just have to go to Teresa of Ávila, we go to Jesus. I mean, when he talks about the shadow self, seeing it in your neighbor, not seeing it in yourself,

Richard Rohr: he's being an astute Jungian psychologist, really. He really gets this whole use of the language of the "eye," the "eye with which you see."

So, this is not mere psychology, it's when theology comes together with self- knowledge. And if you do not know yourself as an image of god, you can't know God because there's no similarity between the seer and what is seen. And there has to be. If there's not a similarity-- We're thinking of entitling next year's Conspire conference, "Seeing from Oneness." I really like it. You probably haven't even heard of this yet. But, seeing from oneness implies every part of me is integrated, is forgiven, is accepted, is allowed. And once you stand in that oneness, you can not only see oneness over there, but you will create oneness over there, just by being who you are. So, maybe that's the change that changes everything—people who see from oneness. Creating of that inner oneness, not that it's, you know, totally sequential, but I think is the task of the first half of life, finding the beginnings of that oneness.

Brie Stoner: Tasting it.

Richard Rohr: Tasting it, yes.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. One of the things that I appreciate about what you just said is that without turning within, without doing that inner work, we're not really able to see that we are living values, and are living truths, and world views that are put there by the dominant, you know, culture around us, and we don't see it. We think we're such individuals and that we're, "Oh, no, I'm living my unique life."

Richard Rohr: There are people who think they are so original.

Brie Stoner: In reality-- I don't know anybody like that. I don't know what you're talking about, Richard.

Richard Rohr: This is the "four" on the Enneagram.

Brie Stoner: I think they all know that by now. But just, you know, the importance of that inner journey is that it helps us become acquainted with the different voices that are operating in there—

Richard Rohr: That's right.

Brie Stoner: --so that we can begin to discern, you know, all right, where's the deepest selfhood, the selfhood that is connected from that unitive place you've described?

Paul Swanson: That's so well said. And I think on this journey of self-knowledge, what also comes along is

suffering whether it's suffering from what arises as you look at the hard parts of your own life, or just the intrusions of life that come in that are unexpected. And even, I think, seeing from that oneness, suffering still arises

Paul Swanson: and it still is just a part of the day-to-day reality. And so, Richard, in this thread of conversation on values, how do you see suffering in relation to values?

Like, I'm thinking in particular about when life throws you curve balls or a rough patch of road, and you're trying to stay aligned to those values because you see them as that North Star, they're going to continue to help shape how you are on this journey of becoming, how do you relate to suffering, so that you don't lose sight of those values? Because part of what comes up for me, I'm thinking about when I have a misstep or I feel like I'm not aligned to my values, I almost go deeper into that suffering when I was trying to alleviate it, perhaps, by not being true to that value. Does that make sense what I'm trying to get to?

Richard Rohr: Of course, it does. You know, the quote I'm going to use from Thérèse, again my spiritual friend, "Whoever is willing," listen to every word: "Whoever is willing to serenely bear the trial of being displeasing to herself," she used the feminine, "will make a pleasant place of shelter for Jesus." That's the quote. And Scott Peck told me personally when we had lunch together—well, he said it at the beginning of *People of the Lie*—he said, "That line from a Catholic saint might be the most brilliant line of psychology I've ever read." And he said, "What most people will not do is serenely bear the trial of being displeasing to themselves. They project that displeasure on other people. They convict other people of their faults, of the very thing they hate themselves for, they hate in other people." It's called scapegoating. And then, how dearly she draws it together, "this is a home in which Jesus can live, because there's nothing expelled. There's no spirit of rejection, or denial, or expulsion, or punishment. It will be a pleasant place of shelter for Jesus.

How did this uneducated French girl come to-- That's not the way the French Catholic Church taught. You want to talk about perfectionism. It was sick, if you have a French spirituality of the 18th century. Forgive me, French people, but we're all evolving in this understanding of spirituality.

But it is the reason why, first Francis, and then Thérèse, are my favorite saints, that they both, against all expectations, learned to love their shadow; their woundedness. For Francis, it was, "I wear raggedy clothes because I want to look on the outside like I know I am on the inside," and he wouldn't wear a nice, trim habit like I do that was all cleaned and pressed, that absolute acceptance.

You all know his favorite prayer. It was said in his earliest biography. He would spend the whole night saying, "Who are you? And who am I?" To God, "Who are you, and who am I?" And in his marvelous study of mysticism—what's his name, the English, Baron von Hugel—Baron von Hugel says that he considers that the most perfect possible prayer: "Who are you, and who am I?" And to say that your whole life, you can't get better than that. Do you feel the open ended-ness of it?

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: It's, "I don't know who I am yet. I'm ready to let you reveal it to me. And I don't know who you are yet, but I'm praying here, naked before you and letting your love show itself to me." Those are the people who experience divine love, because they haven't got a preconceived notion of what divine love is. And then it can flow in, you see? Thérèse was the same way. You don't get much better than the biography of Thérèse of Lisieux. And remember, she died at twenty-nine? Twenty-six?

Brie Stoner: Quite young.

Richard Rohr: One of them; one of the twenties.

Brie Stoner: In the examples you're using of Thérèse and Francis, what I see is, and probably as a whole, why we look to the mystics, and the saints, and the prophets, is because we see examples of people who are willing to live their values all the way through. And to recognize, maybe in a foot point to what you're saying Paul, but to recognize that suffering is part of that package, that what we're signing up for isn't, this isn't an easy like, "Oh, I'd like to live a simple life. Done! Ding!"

Paul Swanson: Right. An escalator to oneness.

Brie Stoner: Right. But that somehow suffering, and this is not to glorify suffering, but to say that our ego is going to go through a process that feels like dying as we let go of everything that we've been told is reality, on behalf of embracing the real reality. It's like a refinement process that involves suffering in a way.

Richard Rohr: You answered my question so kindly. You are very kindly telling me I didn't answer the question.

Brie Stoner: No, you did! You did.

Richard Rohr: I didn't. I didn't. I meant to, but I danced around it and you got right to the point. Yeah. It is suffering to serenely bear the trial. It is suffering. Some people might miss that connection and you made it very well, thank you. True virtue will always somehow be a humiliation for your egocentricity, because you know you didn't do it perfectly. And if you can claim you did it, you know it was by grace that you did it, you see. So, you can't claim the victory. It's so subtle, it's so-- That's why interiority, quiet prayer, times of solitude are so important, or Francis's whole night in the cave. What was he doing? He wasn't saying Hail Mary's over and over again. He was saying, "Who are you, and who am I?" and waiting for an answer, and maybe waiting an hour and then something good always flowed in. Something always much better than an answer you can concoct or create.

Brie Stoner: I really love that line, "to bear serenely."

Richard Rohr: "Serenely bear the trial."

Brie Stoner: It's beautiful, and it's helpful because, I think, my question is in how we often turn values into weapons of judgment and righteousness. You know, you see that so much in our country right now, right, this way of saying, you know, this idolatry of values that isn't about serenely living into them—

Richard Rohr: No.

Brie Stoner: --but almost creating new, exclusive kind of communities of kind of, tribal kind of, "This is us, and that's," you know, there's a us and there's a them. So, how do we hold onto our values, or put them in front of us, without becoming self-righteous about it, or without using it as a tool to judge others?

Richard Rohr: It's very hard, and that's why it takes form on both the left and the right. And on the left is even more devious, because they feel they've outrighted the conservatives. And I'm glad we created that word, "political correctness," or "mean greens," or "spiral dynamics." It's even more hidden in liberal progressive and academic people; their need to be right, because, "I've studied. I'm smart. I read books."

So, their righteousness—precisely because it is a little more sophisticated—is a little better hidden. It's not wrong to be right, let me say that, it's the need to be right, and the need to think of yourself as right, and the desire to ping, zing, that other person by, you know, your little act of political correctness. And I've been burned by it enough over the years, just people who-- We call them "gotcha moments."

Brie Stoner: There's condescension in that, isn't there?

Richard Rohr: Yeah, patronizing, condescending. The example I used for years was, because we Franciscans in our province have worked here for a very long time with the Native peoples—and I started at Acoma Pueblo—I remember going to Toronto, and I was talking to this huge social justice crowd, and I said, "our Indians." Oh my god, every hand in the room shot up, "Our? Do you own them? Are they yours?" I thought I meant that as an endearment. "I'm sorry. No." It wasn't meant as an ownership, it was meant as a "we." And then the other half of them were "Indians? They're the First Nations." I said, "Now, I do like that you've really worked on that here in Canada, much better than we have, but come to New Mexico. They'd prefer to be called "Indians." They call themselves "Indians," and they ask us to call them "Indians." All the hands were withdrawn.

But I had to clarify what in Canadian culture was unacceptable, and that was fifteen years ago; fifteen years ago. I know they meant well, I'm so glad, but the protesting mind doesn't know how to not protest. So, you'll often find this in

Richard Rohr: social justice people. They have gotten their energy for ten years from correcting, correcting, correcting, refining, and they've so operated out of that negative energy, they don't recognize it's negative energy, and it's a righteousness trip. It's a major conversion for all people on the left, "Can you operate out of pure love?" And I'm sure there are people in that crowd who would have asked both of those or answered in a much kinder way, but the two people that I called on were just nasty, you know? And I understand, Canadians often, often, want to put Americans down, you know, to let us know we've humiliated them enough, which we have—*mea culpa, mea culpa*—but there's no point in returning the favor and now you're on top. So, the leftist doesn't recognize the ways they want to be on top.

Paul Swanson: It's like weaponizing truth.

Richard Rohr: "Weaponize," now there's a good word. There's a good one.

Brie Stoner: The way you talk about devotion as an orientation of the heart that can recognize the sacred heart of Christ in everyone and everything, if that was really our inner stance, we wouldn't be able to, or it would be antithetical for us to live in that kind of condescending way of self-righteousness, because there's a quiet humility that says the sacred heart is in you, and in you, and in you. Therefore, no matter what your values you're your opinions, there is something sacred in you that I can learn from. So I don't know, I feel like you're very value of devotion can almost help us have a different stance to our values. Does that make sense?

Richard Rohr: Yeah. You know when you've met a person of devotion, don't you?

Brie Stoner: They're not going to be doing the gotcha game.

Richard Rohr: No, no gotcha. Even when they might be challenging you, they'll say it in such a soft way, "I wonder, Richard, if maybe we should try saying it this way?" You know, they almost place it as a question to themselves, without any accusation. You've heard me say this I know before, but let's place it on this recording. Satan, the word, means the accuser. And the accusative instinct, "The accuser of our brothers and sisters has been cast down," the book of Revelation says. As long as we have any remnant of that accusing instinct that wants to—now we call it scapegoating—placing the blame over there, which is supposed to place me one step higher. They don't know they're doing that. They really don't know that that's what they're doing, "I'm going to find moral high ground by putting you down." It just takes growth and wisdom to not do that. I can only say that, because as a "one," I did it plenty of times, and I bet I still do it, but it's no good. It's no good at all. It really closes down dialogue and discussion. It sours the recipe of dialogue.

Brie Stoner: It also shuts down growth.

Richard Rohr: Yes. Yes. Now I remain the defeated person, because I called them Indians, and you remain the victor, because you're First Nations. Okay. Now, where do we go from here? It doesn't help.

Brie Stoner: I think that, you know, as we explore the ways that we can live into our values without being self-righteous, there is still also the example, again, bearing-- What was that phrase?

Paul Swanson: Serenely bearing.

Brie Stoner: Serenely bearing—

Richard Rohr: "Serenely bearing the trial of being displeasing to yourself." That is a trial.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. There's something so radically counter cultural about that.

Richard Rohr: That's what Scott Peck said. Yeah.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. Paul and I were discussing this, this element of people that we admire who have lived into their values in a countercultural way, but yet still remain faithful to bearing their own shit, to be honest, their own stuff, and I wonder if you could tell that story that you were telling me about Wendell Berry and the computer.

Paul Swanson: Oh, yes.

Richard Rohr: That will be good.

Paul Swanson: Have you ever read that essay of his, *Why I Won't Own a Computer*?

Richard Rohr: Yes, but years ago.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. Apparently, that was published in *Harper's Magazine* and they got the most letters from readers ever in response to that, because they were upset that Wendell Berry was not going to own a computer.

Brie Stoner: They were feeling judgment on themselves.

Richard Rohr: Oh, of course.

Paul Swanson: So they were weaponizing their own stances, and they were attacking every piece of his essay. It's almost like they completely forgot the title of *Why I Won't Own a Computer*, because it was not aligned to his own values of simplicity, he couldn't fix it with simple tools, and a person of regular intelligence couldn't fix it on their own. These are all things that matter to him and that the goods couldn't be made locally. And so, I'm always just amazed by when someone takes a countercultural stance like that from a place of their own set of values,

Paul Swanson: how others will kind of glob on as a way of saying, "No, you can't do that because that's not who I am."

Brie Stoner: They get threatened by it.

Paul Swanson: They're threatened by other people's values. So, I don't know, maybe that speaks to that question of how do we be in a relationship with those whose values are different than ours but not be oppositional to where they're at? Does that make sense? Like, I'm thinking about those who lean more in a conservative way or who lean more in a progressive way, and those on the opposite end of the spectrum, how do we be in relationship without forcing our values upon them?

Richard Rohr: How do we? How do we? I don't know that I still have an answer. I've searched for it all my life and so often I don't achieve it. It's more inviting language than didactic language. As soon as I feel myself wanting to shake my finger like the school marm, then I know I'm moving into this didactic mode instead of the invitational mode: "I wonder if— Would it be better if—" almost the asking of another question. And you've heard me enough; I don't always do that. And maybe if you did it every time, no one would take it seriously. Yeah. You know it when you hear it. You know when people are righteously standing above you and when people are lovingly standing with you, by the energy of your language and the words that you choose.

Brie Stoner: I'm laughing because I'm thinking of, let's just say hypothetically, two lovers are having a fight, hypothetical. of course, and the ways in which it just keeps escalating: "No, I'm right." "No, I'm right." "Well, you did this, and then you said that." You know, you just keep going, and going, and going. And then what is it about that one moment when one of you softens

and just kind of like, reaches out and touches the other and kind of has a little bit of a smile like, “Oh, hey. Hey. I’m here, can you feel me? We’re fighting about something really stupid right now.”

And it’s making me think about this question, because in a way, having a relationship with people whose values might be different than ours, it requires your values, Richard, of having an open heart. Like, the devotion that can see and be soft and put the heart first instead of ideas of the mind, and to be in simplicity with that, to say, “I don’t know,” and then to be devoted enough to the public virtue that recognizes being right isn’t the most important thing, but being connected is.

Richard Rohr: And knowing isn’t the most important thing. Someone wrote me just yesterday, and I answered the email. They wanted a list of virtues that we should be offering our students. And the only one I added was we need the practices we should offer our students, a practice that would train us in not knowing and not needing to know. Could I commit myself for the next three hours into willingly being able to say, “I don’t know”? I think a lot of people have never said that

Richard Rohr: and to notice your unwillingness to say it. I don’t mean to not be helpful to other people.

Brie Stoner: “Sorry, I don’t know.”

Richard Rohr: But I think we should develop some “I don’t know” practices, because it’s really giving up control, it’s powerlessness. It’s the first step of the 12 Steps. And Western culture, Christian culture, capitalistic culture, survives on control language. We’ve got to absent ourselves from that arena and make it acceptable.

Paul Swanson: It’s that temptation to look good, right, ersus being good.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, look good instead of being good. The people who most succeed at it is your type, my “nine” friends.

Paul Swanson: Let’s hear it. All the praises, here we go.

Richard Rohr: I lived in a household with a young “nine” back in Cincinnati, John Gerling. If he’s listening, I still remember you. And we had this big, long community process on what we thought New Jerusalem should be after Richard left. And it went on and on, ad nauseum. And good old “nine,” John Gerling, he gets his all typed out, one sentence: “A community that does not need to be important.”

Paul Swanson: Wow.

Richard Rohr: And he meant it: “A community that does not need to be important.” Wow. I think we’ve got to say the same about the CAC, you know? We’re going to do the best we can, and then let go of it.

Brie Stoner: But it’s so interesting, you know, again, it’s like this intersection between contemplation and action, and the ways in which if we just think about our action, if we’re just focused on social justice, it is easier to fall into the trap of self-importance, of like, “I’m going to fix the

world this way. I'm going to—" And we get caught up in that, in a desired outcome—

Paul Swanson: Yes.

Brie Stoner: --which is not the outcome that we desire or that we see of justice is good, but the ways that we can get stuck in that can become self-righteous—

Richard Rohr: That's right.

Brie Stoner: --because we forget this other modality of softening into, "I don't know, and I'm one piece of the larger body of Christ; therefore, it's not all up to me, and thank God." I mean, right?

Paul Swanson: Yeah, that willfulness of outcome, I mean, we see it in our politics, right? Like, if this isn't the outcome, then it was a complete failure. Or even just the nudging of the subtleties of life and trusting that intuition of, "This is what I'm called to do right now regardless of the outcome." And to your point about the CAC of, what if we just became some small little local organization, but we're faithful to that mission, that would have to be okay.

Richard Rohr: It would be much better.

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: You know in Gerald May's wonderful book—I think it's *Will and Spirit*—he goes at great length to distinguish willfulness from willingness. It sounds like just a simple play on words, but he said what you see in the saint is willingness, willingness of Mary, the "let it be." But you see in the pseudo-saint is willfulness, you know, pushing reality, pushing the river. It looks heroic. It looks generous- hearted. It looks hard working. We all hide behind that, "I'm hard working, and because I'm working hard for the cause, I'm the better staff member." Maybe not. If you never see willingness, willingness to admit your own fault, willingness to go the extra mile outside of your comfort zone, you have every reason to mistrust whether the person is led by the Spirit.

Brie Stoner: Wow, yeah.

Richard Rohr: It sounds almost too simple, but it's true.

Brie Stoner: That's so helpful and a very helpful frame for us as we wrap up this conversation on values, to orient ourselves toward a willingness as opposed to a willfulness, to soften to the work that's being done unto us, in a way.

Richard Rohr: To us and through us.

Brie Stoner: Through us as opposed to thinking that this is something we have to push up river.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, you don't have to push anything. You are an allower. You allow yourself to be used, and you allow yourself to be a conduit, and that's very different than making it happen. It's a completely different energy.

Brie Stoner: So, I wonder, Richard—

Richard Rohr: Mm-hmm. [laughter]

Brie Stoner: Here comes the last question. It's your gauntlet.

Richard Rohr: Give it to me. Maybe I'll think of it.

Brie Stoner: It's your gauntlet. But, this shift, I'm loving this shift from willfulness to willingness.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, it works.

Brie Stoner: It really works.

Richard Rohr: It's true.

Brie Stoner: So, where have you experienced that shift in your life this week in a concrete way? Where did you feel your heart soften, maybe some humor around your own humanity emerge and just a shift in your orientation to let it be?

Richard Rohr: I came back from a 4:30 parish Mass on Saturday, feeling quite good about my excellent homily on the prodigal son, and Corey's going to put it online very soon. But, you know, because of all the meds I'm on, I was feeling so tired, I just wanted to rush to my house and get in my chair and fall asleep. And I walked through the little parish grounds, and, oh, there's a fiesta going on, you know, with booths, selling hamburgers, loud sounds coming through my window. I said, "Oh, Jesus, what did I do to deserve this? Why don't they go somewhere else?"

Brie Stoner: A 'one's' worst nightmare: a street party.

Richard Rohr: And I asked somebody, "What's this money raiser for?" "Oh, these are the poor people who made it through the border, and who can't pay their bonds. And they're here to sell hamburgers and hotdogs and little rides." I said, "Oh, my god." You know, it's just, all I had to do was just change my attitude to where instead of, "I want a place of quiet now, so I can go to sleep," and I couldn't go to sleep anyway thinking these wonderful people are out there. But I had to change to a willingness to say, "This is really good. This is what I say I'm for, and it's come to my house." And I just preached on the prodigal son—the father running to the house, you know, or bringing me back to the house and there it was, happening in my own backyard. So, yeah, I still, to finish the story, I still took my little nap in my chair, but Elias took Opie out on the leash to give some money to these folks. So, I was able to be both willful and willing, I guess. I guess.

Brie Stoner: Fully human.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, fully human.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, the nap was calling.

Richard Rohr: Thank you. Thank you.

Brie Stoner: Thank you, Richard.

Paul Swanson: Thank you Richard.

Richard Rohr: You're welcome.

Brie Stoner: All right!