

Rohr, Richard. *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*. NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999.

Introduction

Richard Rohr's *Everything Belongs* is an introductory primer to Christian spiritual life and practice. He presents his ideas in outline form. It is left to the reader to work out the full implications of these ideas in their own lives. This study aims to assist you in that process.

Everything Belongs is a challenging book. It requires a willingness on the reader's part to take a deep and critical look at some cherished beliefs. You will not agree with everything you read here. Rohr would hope that this is the case. He aims to shake up our thinking, to encourage us to let go of old, tired ways of seeing. He wants to help us open our eyes, to see in new ways.

If we become stuck on those things in this book with which we might disagree, we will miss the benefit of examining our own faith in deep and fresh ways. We will lose an opportunity to grow in our knowledge of the truth and our understanding of the gospel. Rohr's purpose is not to convince us that he is right but to encourage us to be open to questions. It is important that we try to avoid rushing too quickly to the security of easy and familiar answers.

The most important thing about this book is that, like the Bible, it is a book that is intended to be lived. This book is not simply about ideas. If we leave the words of this book on the printed page, rather than allowing them to transform our lives, we will have missed the point of Rohr's words. Christianity is not simply ideas about God and life. Christianity is a new way of living. Jesus said, "I am the way." In its earliest years, Christianity was known simply as "the Way."

The new way of living to which this book calls us, is a way of living that stands in stark contrast to the ways of the world. Rohr calls us to be willing to see how the ways of the world may have infiltrated the way that we think and live. He encourages us to live by the radical way of Jesus rather than in conformity to the patterns of this world.

If we are able to approach this book with an open and inquiring mind, we will find that our own faith is deepened and our practice of the Christian Way is enriched. Our vision of the Christian life will be expanded and our understanding of God's ways in the world and in our lives will be deepened.

Rohr's chapters are divided by an * into sections. I have numbered these sections within each chapter. Occasionally I combine two or three sections for purposes of study.

Each section of this study contains suggested Scripture quotes. You are encouraged to read these passages before reading the designated section in *Everything Belongs*.

After reading the appointed section consult the questions which aim to help you reflect upon Rohr's ideas. Do not seek right or wrong answers in response to these questions. Use them to deepen your openness to the ideas in this book and to help you to engage in a deeper conversation with others about Rohr's thoughts.

At the end of the questions is a single "Task" to reflect upon throughout the week. These "Tasks" are the core of this study. The "Tasks" are the means by which your reading of this book will move from the page to your life. Rohr intends to lead us, not just to new ideas about life, but to a transformed way of living. The tasks are the heart of this transformative process.

Evagrius, the ancient desert monastic said, "If you want to know God, learn to know yourself first." The "Tasks" in this study will help you to see your life honestly and deeply. As we are willing and able to be fully honest with ourselves God's truest intention for our lives will begin to emerge. We will discover more deeply the likeness of that image in which we were created.

Through exercising these tasks, you will begin to see your life in spiritual terms. You will discover that your life **is** your spiritual practice. The circumstances of your daily life are instruments God uses to enable us to learn the essential lessons of living in awareness of God's presence.

Keep these "Tasks" before you all week. Try to remember to reflect upon these "Tasks" during your day. Each week in class we will allow time to discuss your practice of the task. This will be an opportunity to share personally about your personal experience at whatever level of depth you feel comfortable.

In following these "Tasks" there are no right and wrong answers. They only aim to help you reflect upon your experience and to come to know yourself and God more deeply and intimately.

“INHERENT UNMARKETABILITY” p.11

Read Matthew 5:3-11 – How does Rohr’s thought parallel Jesus’ teaching in “The Beatitudes”?

What is there that is not “attractive” about the gospel?

How do we feel about “emptiness, vulnerability, and nonsuccess”? What place do these qualities have in our understanding of the gospel?

In what sense do we understand the gospel to be about “descent”^{*}?

What is the conflict between “letting go”^{*} and “a capitalist culture”? How do we see this conflict in our own lives?

What is the conflict between Jesus and “a Promethean mind”? (nb: Prometheus is the god in classical mythology who stole fire and gave it to humans. For this act he was chained to a rock and had his liver eaten by an eagle. He refused to repent and became a symbol of lonely and valiant resistance to authority.)

What part does “dying” play in my understanding of the Christian life? Where do I encounter the challenge to “die” in my own life?

Why might that which “is not going to work”...“be my first step”?

TASK: Notice ways in which you try to be “attractive” (eg. living by others’ expectations, conforming to societal norms) - what are you trying to accomplish when you try to make yourself “attractive” to others? When you give in to this need how does this affect your freedom?

CHAPTER 1 “Center and Circumference”

SURFACE, SEEING, CENTRE 1:1 pp. 15-21

John 10:16

Matthew 6:22,23,13:16; Mark 8:18, 22-25; Luke 2:29-32, 10:23; John 9:1-7; Ephesians 1:18

Matthew 25:13; Luke 12:37; Mark 13:32-37

* indicates that a term is referred to in “Richard Rohr Definitions” at the end of this study

CIRCUMFERENCE – *a fundamental problem for all human beings is our tendency to live on the surface of life.*

What are “circumference people”? What characteristics of “circumference people” do you see within yourself?

How do you know when you have shifted from centre to circumference?

What happens if you stay too long on the circumference?

What factors make it difficult for you to “break through to the centre”?

TASK: Notice when you are moving to the circumference and what causes this movement – Can you feel the difference between circumference and centre? How do they feel different?

TRUE SEEING – *we need to see that there is something beyond the surface of life.*

How do you understand Rohr’s term “true seeing”*? (p.19)

How do “true seeing” and “living and fully accepting our reality” (* “acceptance”) help us get back to the centre?

What obstacles are there in our lives to true seeing? What conditions encourage us to truly see?

TASK: Spend a short time each day simply paying attention without self-evaluation to what is the “reality” of your life – focus, stay present to a task, person, conversation - notice details.

CENTRE - *human beings are created with a deep inner essence, a centre, a true self*.
When we live in tune with this deep being we live more healthy and balanced lives.*

What are your paths back to centre, to essence?

What do we need to learn about the edges before we can come back to centre? How does this lesson feel?

What do we find at the centre? What is the impact upon our lives of this discovery?

TASK: Identify a time this week when you responded from the centre – How does it feel different from acting from the circumference?

IDENTITY* (1:2 pp. 21-26) – *when we are threatened and fearful we create a surface identity in order to deal with the perceived danger.*

John 17:22,23; Romans 6:5; Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 2:9, 10

Colossians 3:3; I Corinthians 3:16

How do people who have “a very fragile sense of their own identity...rush to manufacture their own identity”? Where do you see this taking place in your own life?

Discuss Rohr’s examples of “manufactured identities.” (p. 22) Rohr gives two examples of living with a self-constructed sense of identity. Identify other ways we might create manufactured identities.

What does a life look like which is lived from the centre? How does it feel to live from the centre rather than the edges?

TASK: Pay attention to a circumstance this week in which you felt the need to defend your identity – How did you react? How might you have responded differently? What is it in you that motivates this need?

CHAPTER 2 – “Vision and Enchantment”

PRESENCE (2:1 pp. 27-30) 2– *the core of the Christian spiritual life is knowing that we are at all times held in the presence of God.*

Psalm 139:7-12

Matthew 26:40

Matthew 23:16-26

How does my perspective change if I become aware that I am “already totally in the presence of God”?

What things, situations, attitudes make it difficult for me to experience myself as “already totally in the presence of God”?

What disciplines help me to be aware that I am “already totally in the presence of God” and the Presence is already in me?

How does my understanding of prayer* change if I know myself to be living in the Presence?

TASK: Throughout the day stop and momentarily recall, “I am in the Presence” – notice how this feels in your body.

BEGINNER’S MIND* (2:2-3 pp. 30-39) – *the beginning of wisdom is accepting the profound limitations of our knowledge of the deepest realities of life.*

Matthew 18:1-4

I Corinthians 2:7-13

Matthew 13:33,44; 18:12; Luke 15:8; Mark 4:26-29

Ephesians 5:13,14; Luke 12:35-40

What is “beginner’s mind”? How does “beginner’s mind” feel? Why might I resist “beginner’s mind”?

Why is it important to stay in “beginner’s mind”?

What happens when we abandon “beginner’s mind”?

How does Rohr describe Jesus’ kingdom? How does this description differ from our usual understanding?

TASK: Practice seeing the world through child-like eyes – How might this kind of seeing be different from your normal way of seeing?

TRANSFORMATION* (2:4 pp. 39-42) – *in Jesus we see the process of transformation which all human beings must experience in order to be truly alive.*

II Corinthians 3:18

Matthew 10:38,39; 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25

Romans 6:5-11

Compare Rohr's statement, "The beginner's mind knows it needs something" (p. 39), with his statement, "We have nothing to attain or even learn," (p. 29) – how can both be true? What does "beginner's mind" need?

What obstacles does our culture put in the way of our realization of "beginner's mind"?

What is the sign of Jonah and how does it relate to the process of transformation?

What are we trying to do when we rush to answers? What am I looking for when I want answers and find it difficult to remain with the questions?

What is my response to pain? What is the gospel response to pain?

TASK: Practice letting go and receiving your life circumstances as they present themselves to you – how does life look different with this approach? How do your feelings change when you open and receive rather than resisting?

LIMINALITY* (2:5,6 pp. 42-46) - *life is not fixed and rigid. Life is a fluid unfolding process. In order to truly live we must accept that life is always unfolding.*

Matthew 22:29; Isaiah 45:15; I Timothy 6:13-16; John 1:18; I John 4:12

Describe a liminal experience you have had – how did it feel? How did you respond? What did you learn from this experience and the way you handled it?

What lessons are liminal experiences intended to teach us?

Why might we be tempted to resist liminal experiences? What do we lose if we resist liminal experiences?

TASK: Be aware of empty spaces in your day which you might be tempted to fill with distractions. Pause and sit with the empty space – how does this feel?

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE (2:7 pp. 46-49) - *we create problems whenever we try to trap and hold anything in life. The spiritual journey always moves forward by letting go*.*

Matthew 4:21,22; 19:16-30

What does Rohr mean by the difference between "the language of descent"* and the "language of ascent"?

What potential misuse can the ego make of religious experience? What is the danger in this misuse?

What alternative does Jesus propose to the misuse of religious experience?

How does Rohr define “conversion””? Does this differ from your usual understanding?

Give examples of “liminoid” experiences – what is the problem with these experiences?

TASK: Notice how the situations of your life may be able to teach you the lessons of the spiritual life. Watch this week and notice if there is a lesson for you to learn through the circumstances of your day.

CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW (2:8 pp. 49-52) - *Christian faith calls us to see connection. Wherever we fail to see connection we fail to see Christ.*

Matthew 25:37-40

What is the Christian vision of the world? How do you experience this vision as real?

What are the implications of this vision? To what extent am I willing or unwilling to embrace these implications?

How do prayer and religion reinforce this vision?

Do you agree with Rohr’s statement that “At the bottom of *what is* is always goodness” (p.50)? What are the implications of agreeing or disagreeing?

What might be the effects in your life of believing and living by Rohr’s “mantra” at the bottom of p. 50?

Do you agree with Rohr’s statement that, “*Either we see the divine image in all created things, or we don’t see it at all*”? What are the implications of agreeing or disagreeing?

How does this statement relate to the title of Rohr’s book? Is the title true to your experience? How does your experience bear out the title or contradict it? What might we do to encourage the title of Rohr’s book to be true for us?

TASK: Work at embracing everything – how does this look in your life? Practice seeing Christ in all things, in all people, in all circumstances. How does this affect your relationship to the other?

CHAPTER 3 – “Ego and Soul”

THE NOW (3:1 pp. 53-54) – *God is known in the present moment.*

Matthew 6:25-34; John 8:58

How does the Zen story at the beginning of chapter three make me feel?

What is the definition of “enlightenment”* implied in this story? Does this definition parallel the Christian understanding of the goal of the spiritual life?

How does this teaching relate to the Christian concept of grace? How do I feel about this understanding of grace? Is it threatening in any way?

What does it mean “to live in the now”?

How do we know when we are or are not living “in the now”?

What takes us out of “the now”?

What helps us stay “in the now”?

TASK: Make a conscious effort once a day during a particular event or task to practice staying present in the Now. How does this feel? What helps you stay present? Feel your feet on the ground, your presence in this place and this moment.

On page 54 Rohr suggests a prayer based on Psalm 46:10 – use this prayer each evening or at any time when you might have a quiet moment. End the prayer by sitting briefly in stillness.

THE EGO* (3:2 pp. 54-58) – *ego tries to construct our world rather than receiving life as it comes.*

Romans 7:21-24

How does Rohr understand “ego”?

What is the problem with “ego”? How does “ego” function? How do I know when I am functioning from “ego”?

What is the religious expression of this ego-problem? Where have I seen this?

What is “the core of all spiritual teaching”? If this is true, what are the practical implications for people who are followers of Jesus?

What game do we play as a substitute for the spiritual path?
What are the indications that we are playing this game?

TASK: Watch for an opportunity to give up your power, your need to be right, to prove your point, or to “win” – What might be the affect upon an event, conflict or relationship when you choose this alternative stance towards life?

THE BODY (3:3 pp. 58-62) – *when we lose touch with our bodies, we lose touch with deep wisdom.*

I Corinthians 6:13-20

What is kinesthetic knowing?

How have I experienced this kind of knowing?

What experiences have diminished our ability to function be kinesthetic knowing?

What happens when we lose kinesthetic knowing?

What are the effects of fear and anxiety in our lives?

What gift does “true religion” have to offer when we have lost deep knowing?

TASK: Notice your body. Observe your stance, your hands, the feel of your back. Try to stay present in your body especially in conversation with another person, or any situation which might make cause tension – how does this feel? Notice the tone, speed and volume of your voice – do not judge but ask yourself: what is my voice telling me?

SOUL* AND EGO (3:4,5 pp. 62-65) - *soul understands that all real work is inner work. Ego works on the surface of life and therefore never accomplishes real transformation.*

Romans 12:1,2

What is the difference between “soul” and “ego”?

What are the consequences of living by “ego” or by “soul”?

What is essential for true transformation?

What is the danger in change that lacks this essential ingredient? Where have I seen this happen? How did it feel? What was required to get back to true transformation?

TASK: Can you tell when you are responding from your ego? How does it feel? Are there practices which can remind you to stop and respond from a more real and deeper place within yourself?

OVERCOMING ILLUSION (3:6,7 pp. 65-69) – *the illusion that prevents spiritual growth is the belief that I can and must create myself.*

Matthew 4:1-11

What important function does silence play in helping prepare us for true transformation? Why is this true?

What do we usually do in response to a “sense of disappointment with ourselves”? Where does this sense of “disappointment” come from?

What is the illusion at the heart of this response?

What role does “thinking” play in relation to this illusion? What is the proper place of “thinking” in the spiritual life?

How does the desert/silence help us deal with illusion?

What is the problem with “individualism”?

TASK: Try to spend five minutes each day in silence, not trying to achieve anything or do anything, simply be. This quiet time is simply an expression of your innermost intention to trust in God. As we express this intention with our bodies and our time, trust will deepen.

PRAYER (3:8 pp.69-72) – *true prayer is resting in God.*

I Thessalonians 5:17

What is Jesus' first priority in his Sermon on the Mount?

How does Rohr suggest Jesus understood prayer? In what ways is this different from my usual understanding of prayer?

What knowing does prayer lead us to? (p.71)

TASK: Continue your five minute silent prayer time each day. You might try two periods a day. Think of your silent times as resting in the presence of God. Allow all thoughts and feelings to float by. Do not attach yourself to them. Simply return to your intention to trust in God.

TOO MUCH "I" (3:9 pp.72-75)– *I am not the centre of my life. When I put myself at the centre, I am compelled to fight to defend my sense of self.*

Isaiah 40:6-11

What function does my self-created identity serve in my life?

What will happen to this self-created "I"? What attitude towards life might this awareness be expected to create in me?

Why is it so difficult to let go of my self-created "I" (*"false self")? What helps me to let go of this false identity?

TASK: Increase your silent prayer time to ten minutes once or twice a day. During these prayer times, practice letting go of all wants, needs, desires into the silence. Surrender the "I" into the loving arms of God.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE* (3:10 pp.75-77)– *spiritual discipline is the means of opening my eyes to see the reality of the deep connection that is at the centre of all life.*

Genesis 1:3,10,12,18,21,25,31

What is the difference between therapy and prayer?

Where will prayer lead us?

According to Rohr, what is the function of “all spiritual disciplines”? Is this a surprising idea?

What place does self-trust have in my life? How might my life look different if I develop deep self-trust? What hinders or supports the development of self-trust in my life?

On page 77 Rohr says that the great commandment is not “thou shalt be right” but “be in love” – what does this mean to me?

TASK: Continue your practice of silent prayer each week throughout this study with the goal of making such a practice a permanent part of your daily routine – how might this prayer increase in you an awareness of the deep connection that exists in God at the core of all life?

In order to deepen your practice of silent prayer, you might want to seek instruction in one of the traditions of Christian prayer such as “Centering Prayer.”

LIKES AND DISLIKES (3:11 pp. 77-79)– *my likes and dislikes are not an adequate motivating force for a fully authentic human life.*

Philippians 4:11-13

What role do likes and dislikes play in my life? What effect does living by likes and dislikes have in my life?

What is the problem with likes and dislikes? How might this restrict my inner freedom?

What is the alternative to viewing all of life through the lens of likes and dislikes?

TASK: Be aware of time when you are being driven by your likes and dislikes – is it possible to respond from a deeper place? Practice non-judgment.

CHAPTER 4 – “Cleansing the Lens”

RELIGION* AS IDEOLOGY (4:1 pp. 81-84)– *when I succumb to religion as ideology, I fall prey to idolatry and cannot be free.*

Matthew 6:24; 22:23-29

What are the problems with presenting religion as just one more competing ideology?

How is the gospel understanding of spirituality different from the ideological view?

What is the essential attitude to flourishing? What supports or hinders this attitude?

TASK: Watch for the need within yourself to be on the winning side. Instead of choosing to assert yourself in this situation, choose to surrender – how does this change the dynamic of what is going on?

FEAR* AND FREEDOM* (4:2,3,4,5 pp. 85-95) – *fear and freedom tend to work in opposite directions.*

Matthew 8:23-27; 10:26-33; John 14:27; I John 4:18

Luke 4:18; John 8:31-36; Romans 8:20,21; II Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1

How does my “ego-agenda” get in the way of true seeing?

What drives my “ego-agenda”?

What is the environment in which “love flourishes”?

What trend in our culture works against the development of this environment?

What is the difference between healthy fear and sick fear? Where do these different fears lead?

What are some things I am afraid of?

What is the alternative to fear?

What is true freedom?

TASK: Rohr encourages us to develop “the ability to stand away from ourselves and listen and look with some kind of *calm, not judgmental, objectivity*” (p.89).

This week try this practice in different situations, particularly in relation to fear. Sit with your fear. Watch your reaction without judgment – what happens to your fear when you watch it?

RESISTANCE (4:6,7,8 pp.96-99) – *resistance is the source of pain in my life and inhibits growth and change.*

Matthew 2:16; Revelation 3:20

Where do we notice indications within ourselves that we may be resisting change and growth?

How do I know when I am resisting? How does my body react? What is the effect of my resistance upon myself and those around me?

What helps us let go of this resistance?

TASK: Notice when you are resisting an action, relationship or feeling during this week. Practice feeling the resistance in your body, try to choose to relax rather than tensing.

INCARNATION* (4:9,10,11 pp.99-102)– *the Incarnation provides a realistic vision of the nature of all creation.*

Colossians 2:9

Romans 8:9; Colossians 3:11

What implications does Rohr see in the Eucharist*?

How is this understanding supported by the role Jesus played in human history?

What are the implications of the Incarnation for our view of the world? How does this relate to the title of the book? How will this perspective change my approach to other people?

TASK: Practice looking at all being as bearing the sacred – What are the implications of this attitude to how you view yourself? others? the world around you?

TRUE HUMILITY* (4:12 pp.102-104) – *humility is not feeling bad about myself but accepting myself as I truly am.*

John 8:32; II Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 4:15,16; James 5:16

What does Rohr identify as the two essential qualities for spiritual growth? (p.103)

How does Rohr define “humility”? What are the implications of this definition for the spiritual life?

Why might I resist embracing humility in my life?

What do I need in my life in order to help me embrace Rohr’s vision of humility?

TASK: Rohr says that humility comes about by being “brutally honest” (p. 103). In the next paragraph he mentions the importance of releasing “our current defense” posture – watch without judgment the ways in which you act out of a defensive posture this week.

CHAPTER 5 – “Don’t Push the River”

“SMALL MIND”*/“BIG MIND” (5:1 pp.105-110) – *“small mind” and “big mind” are different but equally valid ways of viewing the world.*

I Corinthians 1:17-2:16; 3:18-23

How does Rohr define “faith”*?

What is the difference between “small mind” and “big mind”? How do we experience both of these?

What problems are created if we over-emphasize one or the other?

How do we keep “small mind” and “big mind” in balance?

TASK: Observe when you use “small mind” – what things do you cling to and try to control? Notice which situations push you into control mode? Practice pausing for a moment. Try to respond rather than merely reacting.

FORGIVENESS* (5:2 pp.110-121) – *forgiveness is God’s means of reconciling the world.*

Mark 11:25; Matthew 18:31-35; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12,13

What quality does Rohr identify in Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman? Does this seem to be characteristic of Jesus’ other encounters in the Gospels?

How does Rohr define “forgiveness”? (p.112)

How far does God’s forgiveness extend?

What difficulties do we have with forgiveness?

What does forgiveness accomplish in our lives and in our relationships?

What attitude towards the physical realm does forgiveness encourage?

TASK: Are there people in your life (including yourself) against whom you are holding unforgiveness? Rohr says that unforgiveness is about power – how might this understanding of unforgiveness be true? How might you express forgiveness in a difficult situation?

TAKING CONTROL (5:3,4,5 pp.121-126) – *my control is always an illusion.*

Matthew 27:43a

What causes me to feel that I need to take control of my life and circumstances? What happens when I determine that I must be in control?

What are the alternatives that the spiritual life offers to my need to control?

TASK: Watch through the week your need to fix or solve problems or to find answers for questions – how does it feel to just sit with questions and unresolved situations? How might the willingness to stay without an immediate solution be helpful? or unhelpful?

PRAYER OF SILENCE (5:6 pp.126-130) - *the prayer of silence is a prayer of rest and trust.*

Psalm 62:1; Isaiah 47:5; 30:15; Matthew 6:6-8; I Peter 3:4

Hebrews 4:1-11; Mark 6:30,31

How does the prayer of silence differ from the prayer of words?

What gifts does the prayer of silence offer?

What is the value of tears and laughter in the spiritual life? Why might I be uncomfortable with either or both of these gifts?

TASK: Extend your time of silent prayer to 15 minutes – let go and rest.

CHAPTER 6 – “Return to the Sacred”

SACRED SPACE (6:1 pp.131-134) – *sacred space helps us in the process of transformation by moving us to new places.*

Luke 19:1-10

What is sacred space?

What happens in sacred space?

What is the function of religion in relation to sacred space?

What happens when religion fails to fulfill this function?

What must I do in order to be able to make the “transition to a new level of faith”? (p.134)

TASK: How might you step out of your familiar comfortable circumstances and experience liminal space? Watch for situations throughout the week in which you are being challenged to break out of the routine.

THE VISION OF THE WHOLE (6:2,3 pp.134-138) – *all of life is united (*union) in God.*

Colossians 1:15-17; Galatians 3:28

What is the meaning of the temple?

What is the implication of Jesus’ statement that the temple must fall?

What do we need to do in order to see “the vision of the whole”?

How does the ego-self respond to the need to let go?

What is the shadow of our culture?

How does our culture encourage us to avoid facing this shadow side of our nature? How do I see this in my own life?

TASK: Watch for ways in which you try to accommodate what society names as “successful” (p.137). See how this vision of “success” causes you to ignore your true self – how might you respond differently?

GOD’S VIEW OF HUMANS (6:4,5 pp.138-143) – *God sees the human intention to say “yes.”*

Genesis 1:27, 31; 2:7; I Corinthians 3:16; Colossians 1:27; 2:9,10; Galatians 2:20

How does Rohr suggest God views human beings?

How is this different from the way we tend to view one another most of the time?

How would our lives change if we were able to experience life from what Rohr suggests is God’s point of view?

How would our view of suffering* change?

TASK: Rohr says that it is through our weakness, rather than our strengths that transformation happens. Practice observing times you feel irritated with yourself or with others. Observe your thought process when you feel that you have let others down, or frustrated your own expectations for yourself – practice loving kindness and non-judgment towards everything you see.

ATTACHMENT/DETACHMENT* (6:6,7 pp.143-149)– *attachment recognizes the Christian call to love. Detachment sets us free to fulfill this call.*

Matthew 14:24-26; John 10:17,18; 15:13

What is the relationship between attachment and detachment?

What happens when we lack either?

What might cause me to move more towards attachment or detachment?

How does the “Third Way” balance attachment and detachment?

How do we see this balance in the cross?

What must I be willing to do within myself in order to maintain this balance?

TASK: Watch your tendency to resort either to fight or flight in uncomfortable situations. Try to hold the third position standing firm and holding the tension between fight and flight (pp. 144,145).

“Coda and Conclusion: A Contemplative Seeing of the Doctrine of the Cross”
pp.151-155

In this final section, Rohr offers fourteen paragraphs summarizing the main themes of the book.

Read each paragraph carefully, seeing how each sums up a theme of the book and being aware of how you have seen this theme applying in your own life.

RICHARD ROHR DEFINITIONS

- acceptance** fully accepting our reality, the means whereby we come to awareness of what is already within us
- attachment** the process by which we struggle to develop an identity by identifying ourselves with our thoughts, feelings, opinions, self-image, leads to addiction and the necessity of being right
- baptism** the rite in which we identify the face we had before we were born naming that which is already there in childhood
- “beginner’s mind”** spacious emptiness in which we know that we don’t know and don’t need to know which allows true wisdom to emerge
- contemplation** a loving look at what really is, that spacious place within ourselves where we no longer need to resist life at it is
- conversion** movement towards a reconstituted sense of self accomplished by repeatedly letting go, process of collapsing into the “true self” usually brought about by pain
- descent** the process through which we must pass in order to release the work of transformation in our lives, dying, letting go, releasing our determination to be in control
- detachment** purifying of attachment, knows that I am not my feelings, thoughts, opinions, but that I have feelings, thoughts, opinions, creates the freedom that enables us to attach ourselves more passionately in love
- dualism** the dominant thought pattern of Western culture which views life in terms of polarities: either/or, good/bad, in/out, places God “out there” and tends towards domination and control

- ego/small "I"/** knows itself by comparison, by image, by how we look, operates in judging mode, loves control, comparison, competition, wants either/or, win/lose, good/bad, created by thinking based largely on fear, makes love impossible
- enlightenment** seeing and touching the big mystery, given in moments of epiphany
- Eucharist** looks like bread and wine but we say it is something more, says God is hiding in physical reality, in everything of this earth
- faith** ability to trust the flow as a process we don't have to change, coerce or improve, willingness to move into darkness, into not being sure, letting go of control, living with mystery, believing and knowing without experience and without feeling
- fear** the basic thinking pattern of the ego, drives us to protect our small false self and dominates the world system
- forgiveness** the final breakdown of human logic, God's entry into powerlessness, says we are much larger than the good or bad stories we tell about ourselves
- freedom** *wanting* to do what you *have* to do, the ground of love
- humility** brutal honesty
- identity** a manufactured sense of self which gives the illusion of control and serves as a defense against the unconscious, becomes fixed in "identification" which is attachment to any external thing in which we seek a sense of identity
- Incarnation** God's disguise in the material world, the beginning point of the Christian experience of God

- letting go** the core of all spirituality, the discipline by which we release our fears, our need for control, our determination to protect ourselves, makes us free to grow
- liminality** threshold between two places which relativizes our experience and in which we must be willing to wait in order to experience transformation
- love** the healthy attachment which flows naturally from detachment, the willingness to give ourselves to feel the pain of the world, impossible without true freedom
- paschal mystery** the dying and rising pattern that is the path of transformation
- prayer** a stance, awareness of and way of living in the Presence, trusting, allowing and delighting in the Presence, receiving and returning the divine gaze, rest
- priest** confessor, one whose job it is to tell everyone “It’s okay”
- religion** “re-binding,” reconnecting us to our true identity in God and making us aware of the deep connections that are inherent in a world that is filled with the presence of God, conventional “religion” usually concerned with offering people consolation as a substitute for true transformation
- salvation** being reconnected at our core, from Latin *salus* = healing
- seeing** the heart of all spirituality, awareness, the ability to see truly, results in respect for the outsider because sees the image of God in all
- self-false** the autonomous self which the ego spends its energy dressing up and looking after because it does not really exist, inherently threatened and insecure, functions from sense of scarcity, disconnected from God, needs to be destabilized before we can recognize the “true self”

- self-true** the still centre that is the core of who I am which is able to embrace all of life, essence, who I am in God before I do anything, has nothing to protect, preserve, or attain, the free self, cannot be hurt, experiences “enoughness,” does not look for answers because it is the answer
- sin** the refusal to exchange either to receive or give back, always a type of self-absorption
- “small mind”** the calculating mind driven by ego, tries to explain, analyze, organize, fix, needs to be balanced by “big mind” which sees the larger context of deep connection
- soul** see “self – true,” a spacious place within
- spirit** aware of universals, absolutes, connections
- spiritual discipline** means of getting rid of illusions so we can live with the awareness that we are already totally in the Presence of God
- suffering** one of the means God uses to get my attention, one of the two Great Paths of transformation, other is prayer/love, takes away self-sufficiency, usually caused by resisting pain
- Third Way** dance between attachment and detachment, middle way between flight and fight
- transformation** moving through the dying and rising path of Christ to a different form of consciousness which is aware of connectedness
- union** the reality of our objective relationship with God, the awareness of which enables us to see that all reality is One
- watcher** that part of ourselves which has the ability to stand away from ourselves and observe with a calm nonjudgmental objectivity