

## Session Two // Distorted Bible Filters

**Watch the Film:** *Distorted Bible Filters* with Fr. Richard Rohr  
<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/distorted-bible-filters>

### Going Deeper:

*Most people don't see things as they are, they see things as "they" are.* —Fr. Richard Rohr

What is your history with Scripture? With courage and curiosity, consider the evolution of your relationship with the Bible. What has changed over the years? What has remained?

Is there anything to learn here about projection and/or your filter in which you interact with the world? How has anger, fear, and agenda motivated your approach to people, places, things (including scripture)? What about security and status? Consider topics you feel the need to be right about. What are they? What do you think that is about? What is the motivation underneath the need to be right? How are you motivated by security and status?

How have you seen the fallibility and errancy of human beings lately? How are you seeing things as “you” are?

Do you have a contemplative practice? If so, what have been the honest effects on your becoming? What is the hope of your practice?

How do you observe an evolution of consciousness in yourself? In your community? In the world?

As you consider Fr. Rohr's words, observe your own mind. Is there a story or a person that drifts to mind? Verbally, or in writing, share the story. Where is the presence of the Divine in this story? Write a one-word prayer that describes your new hope for this relationship or circumstance.

### Reflection:

Hey man, I love the rules. Give me a good set of policies and a sound training, and I am a happy camper! I love knowing where not to go and what is NOT good for the community. It puts me at ease to have an external set of guidelines that most of us agree on as I play my part...until the rules become outdated and needs of our culture surpass their functionality. Then it's time to rebel.

For many of us, scripture has been the basis of many rules and mandates that feel outmoded and cruel. My instinct has always been to distance myself from places and folks that use scripture to justify what is obviously inhumane and unfair. I know for people who have experienced levels of spiritual abuse or malpractice, part of that distancing has included creating space from scripture (and possibly a complete exodus from Christianity-as-they-knew-it) as well.

As humans, our interest in authority, inerrancy, and infallibility is really our desire for a certainty and truth we can rely on. The Catholics and the Protestants, though different in doctrine, share a human hard-wiring to seek connection to a deep truth, a Source. We want to be guided to a life of meaning, happiness, and at the very least, a life where our needs are met. Humans overlook the intelligent design of our Creator, who in Genesis 1:26 said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us."

The Source that we seek is already present.

When we lose connection with our inner guide, we feel a sense of fear. Our fear is unspecific and often irrational. We believe that something will befall us or that we will harm ourselves because of our lack of certainty and support. Sigmund Freud theorizes that we psychologically "project." Projection is when humans defend themselves against their own unconscious impulses or qualities (both positive and negative) by denying their existence in themselves while attributing or assigning them to others.

This distorted view of reality creates a preemptive paranoia that we put on like a pair of sunglasses. Laws, knowledge, and even the sacred texts get twisted to prove the biases we form out of fear. We spend time, energy, and our resources worrying and preparing for the disaster we fear. This plays out in our relationships, churches, communities, and workplaces as prejudices, bigotry, unfair advantages, racism, sexism—you name it. We build our lives using strategies based on fear of what could happen and the fact that "they" (whoever "they" are) will get us if we don't.

*"The lowest levels of consciousness are security and status."*

-Fr. Richard Rohr

Trappist Monk Thomas Keating says that we humans develop "programs for happiness" that include: esteem and affection, power and control, and security and survival." When we experience wounding in any of these areas, we experience panic, distress and desperation. He says we develop attachments to certain things

that bring us comfort and aversions to things that bring us discomfort; and calls these our “emotional programs for happiness.” The way we morph and contort ourselves to keep these programs up is what he calls “The False Self In Action.”

When we become so preoccupied with our security and our status, our energy and esteem follow our focus. This preoccupation, and usually dissatisfaction with what we have and how we are ranked among other humans, diminishes our contentment and joy—the states of consciousness through which we function most wholeheartedly.

*“The body of Christ is “becoming” and evolving...  
There is an enormous evolution of consciousness.”*

-Fr. Richard Rohr

In John 16:33, Jesus encourages the disciples to “Take heart.” The root word for courage is “Cor” a Latin word meaning “heart.” When we take courage, we take “heart.” When we en-courage people, we invest in their hearts. Conversely, when we discourage people we take away from or reverse their heart. Evolving one’s consciousness cannot happen without courage. The ability to move beyond what we already know to be true, whether it’s infallible or inerrant, and seek a deeper truth requires a deep strength of the heart.

If the body of Christ is “becoming,” our faith is long-game vision that pulls us through. Courage and faith work on kind of a loop; our faith in what is coming and true fuels our heartening and overflows into our action.

It takes courage to be willing and act towards one of our greatest hopes in our becoming: that our personal human evolution and expansion with, through, and into God will alter the posture with which we approach all things (including Scripture) for the healing of the world. That includes the healing of any past personal trauma attributed to teachings that came from undeveloped human thinking. As I have grown and healed from the trauma of seeing distorted use of scripture intended to control and manipulate, I am able to separate the goodness of the sacred text from the people who misuse it. “Take heart,” the words from John, encourage me more than ever. We have an invitation to return to these words from a matured spiritual stance and hear them in the loving, life-giving tenses in which they were originally spoken. From a healing, loving, ever-evolving stance that includes humility and willingness to receive, we can read the words anew to stir our imagination and guide our healing. Where can we find the safety and non-triggering space to do this? Contemplation.

Contemplation is the safe, serene space where we reconnect with the perspective of our creator and gain clarity of vision. Engaging a contemplative practice gives our bodies, minds and hearts a rest, and that restoration rebuilds our courage. It is where we piece together the stories of our lives and discover “all things [are] working for the good.” For the first time for some, and again for others, allow yourself to experience a contemplative sit, and observe your own experience.

### **Contemplative Prayer and Practice :: Lectio Divina**

The method of Lectio Divina consists of four phases: reading (lectio), reflection (meditatio), response (oratio), and resting (contemplatio). The goal is to go from distant acknowledgement and fear of God to deepening a relationship, and experiencing the presence of gentle, loving Creator.

1. Bring an awareness to God’s willingness to commune with you. Acknowledge the Divine Presence.

2. Read the scripture. Today, we will read a short passage:

*God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.*

*Ephesians 3:20-21*

3. Listen for a word or phrase that resounds within you. This is the Divine Spirit within you connecting with the sacred words.
4. What is your response? How do these words inspire you to move differently?
5. Breathe and pray into the sacred wisdom and how it wills you forward.

How did you feel after experiencing Lectio Divina?

How does your contemplative experience influence your thoughts or shift your attention?

What specific action does Ephesians 3:30-21 en-courage you to take?

**The Commission:** *I bless you to be en-couraged; that is to allow your faith in good to fuel your heart-filled actions in your world.*