



# Spirituality of the 12 Steps

## Step 9 “wisdom” or “skillful means.”

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON

RICHARD ROHR'S

*BREATHING UNDERWATER*

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

— **Step 9 of the Twelve Steps**

“Like apples of gold in a silver setting is a word that is aptly spoken. It is a golden ring, an ornament of finest gold, such is a wise apology to an attentive ear.” —

**Proverbs 25:11–12**

“To listen to the word and not obey it is like looking at your own features in a mirror and then, after a quick look, going off and immediately forgetting what you look like.” — **James 1:23**

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son, treat me as one of your paid servants.” — **Luke 15:19**



Commonsense wisdom, or skillful means, is no longer common sense. We are a culture with many **elderly people** but not so many **elders** passing on wisdom.

Jesus was a master of teaching skillful means, especially in his Sermon on the Mount, and in many of his parables and one-liners. Jesus' by far most common name for himself: "son of man," emphasizing what we have been afraid to emphasize. Its meaning was just what it said, "I am a classic human being" and one of you!

Jesus said, "follow me" and never once said "worship me." Full humanness leads to spirituality by the truckload...





Step 9 is telling us how to use skillful means to both protect our own humanity and to liberate the humanity of others. It also says that our amends to others should be “direct,” that is, specific, personal, and concrete, added “except when to do so would injure them or others.”



One often needs time, discernment, and good advice from others before one knows the when, how, who, and where to apologize or make amends. (If not done skillfully, an apology can actually make the problem and the hurt worse)



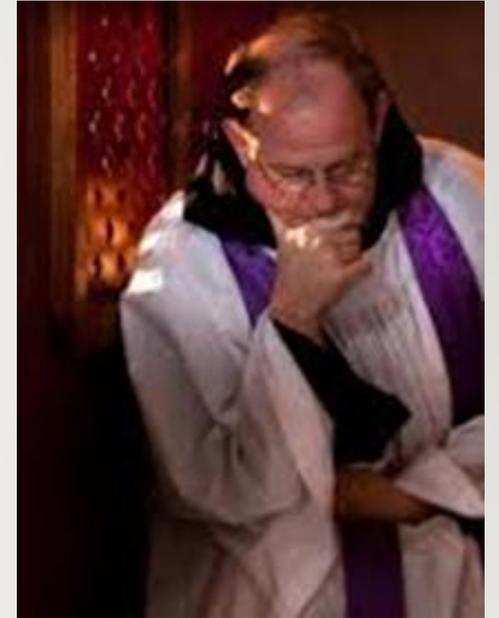
No, no...  
This isn't gossip.  
It's the truth.



Not everything needs to be told to everybody, all the time, and in full detail: (myth of “total disclosure”) Gossip! You need to pray and discern about what the other needs to hear and has the right to hear.

In training us for our work as confessors: we should not, and in fact it was wrong of us to, “demand a manifestation of conscience” from another person.

Truth is not just “what happened” but also what you or any party has a right to know — and can handle responsibly. (the Fifth Amendment)



**Skillful means is not just to make amends but to make amends in ways that “do not injure others.”**

## Questions for Reflection

Do you have a responsibility to share your insights (wisdom) with others?

Can you share an experience of “making direct amends”?  
Did you struggle with what the other needed to know or would be able to hear?

What do you find exciting or difficult about following Jesus?

