

The path toward wholeness - what Brené Brown calls wholeheartedness - is an arduous path of honesty about our lives, the vulnerability to be exposed and the courage to walk in a new direction. One could say that the whole of the spiritual life is the path from shame to wholeness. The traditional Christian language is the path from sin to salvation, from estrangement to reconciliation.

In Matthew's view, Jesus imagines a communal practice for the community of believers. I think it works for all our relationships. There is definitely risk involved in going to the one who has wronged you. The risk is real: it requires vulnerability to name the wrong and expose the shame that resides hidden. This risk is why reconciliation is often ignored, leaving smoldering toxic passive aggressive emotions wreaking havoc on marriages, families, congregations and communities.

The path toward restored relations is the practice of honestly talking with one another. Jesus tells us it requires the courage to confront bad behavior. But if you can get to a place where you own your own pain and shame, humility arises. Humility with courage is the way to wholeness. The courage to confront without the humility of heart, rarely does any good and usually only increases the depth of shame. But humility with courage - risking being vulnerable with another - is the hard practice of reconciliation. Does it always work? Of course not; nothing always works. But that is no reason not to do what is right.

After all, doesn't Jesus say wherever 2 or three of you are gathered I am there with you? Remember that is the context of this whole practice of reconciliation, it's not just comfort for a gathering when only a few show up. The gospel reminds us that Jesus is mysteriously present with us even in these intimate encounters that show all the rough edges of our life together. To be vulnerable with one another, daring to speak truthfully, is implicitly an act of trust that Jesus is present with us.