

The Apprenticeship Way Podcast

Episode 045

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Let's Normalize Being Wrong

Interview with Matt Tebbe

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Marc Schelske 0:00

Did you know you don't have to correct other people? Did you know you can be wrong, and the world won't end? Hey, friends, I'm Marc Alen Schelske. This is the apprenticeship way, a podcast about spiritual growth following the way of Jesus. This is Episode 45. Let's normalize being wrong.

TODAY'S SPONSOR

Now, before we jump into that conversation, I'd like to tell you that today's podcast is made possible by The Writers Advance. I'm a writer, I write this podcast. I write blog posts. I write sermons, I've written three books. I've got two manuscripts in the oven right now. I think I've written something close to a million words at this point. And all of that writing, I have learned that there really is only one significant obstacle to writing just one. Life. Life and all its business, obligations, responsibilities, chores, people who need you to do stuff right now. And all that stuff, it takes time. And even when you sit down to write and try to focus at all intrudes into the space into your emotions.

So, one of the disciplines that I have learned over the years of writing is that periodically, I need to get out of my life in order to focus. Not an out-of-body experience, I just need to get off the grid, I need to be out of the reach of my schedule and phone, I need to retreat so that I can advance my writing. That's why I created the writer's advance.

This is a very unique event for writers. It's a small group hosted in a fantastic inspiring, quiet venue. No chores, you don't have to make the bed or dinner or run anyone to the store. You get a weekend just to focus on writing. You'll get gentle motivation to move forward, you'll get encouragement from others who know this work. And if you want it, you can get one-on-one coaching or even group feedback. But most importantly, you will get undistracted time to write. I lead this event twice a year. The sixth Writers Advance is coming up soon, November 12 to 14. That one has just a couple of spots left, and then there's one in the spring in April. Both of these are open and available for registration. I would love to help you kick that writing project into high gear. You'll come away energized, creatively refreshed. And best of all, you will have a whole bunch of words you didn't have before. Check out all the details, see if this is a good match for you. register at www.MarcAlanSchelske.com/writersadvance.

INTRODUCTION

A while back I read an intriguing post on Facebook. First, you need to understand who was writing this. The author of the post was an Anglican priest named Matt Tebbe. He's a co-rector of a church in Indianapolis, Indiana called The Table. He's got all the normal theology degrees you'd expect from

someone in that position. He's written for various leadership and theological journals. He's co-founded a leadership development organization. Oh, he's also--this will be relevant for the conversation--He's also a middle-aged white man.

Matt posted something on Facebook that was intentionally provocative. He was stirring the pot, he wanted to get people to react. Now the body of his posts really isn't important. It was about something that was happening at the time. But what struck me was how we ended the post. He wrote, "Normalize being wrong. Make repentance great again." Those words have been bouncing around in my head for months. Normalize being wrong. Now I think I'm similar to Matt in many ways. I'm a pastor, I've been trained in how to read and interpret scripture. I've got decades of pastoral and leadership experience under my belt. I am also a middle-aged white man. And being wrong is not something I like. I mean, none of us do. But in my case, it's something I've been expressly trained to avoid. I've even had some identity issues tied up with being right being the person in the room who's right.

I suspect that a lot of us struggle with this, particularly people like Matt and I. I mean, being right is sort of the target on the wall for pastors and quite honestly, middle-aged white men. So Matt's words felt jarring, uncomfortable, but at the same time, they felt like truth. So after thinking about this for a while, I asked Matt to sit down with me and talk about being wrong.

One technology note--partway into our conversation, which was recorded by remote video, the main HD video recording failed, and we didn't know that had happened. So when we went to edit the video, we had to use rescue video footage that is of much lower quality. The audio is fine all the way through. You shouldn't even notice a difference in the audio, but my apologies if you're watching this on YouTube because the second half of the video is not ideal. Thank you very much for sticking around. Let's talk about being wrong.

Marc Schelske 5:00

You're a priest, actually. you lead a church, you train ministry leaders, you study and teach the Bible, I assume that you think there is such a thing as right theology. And that right theology is not only true but has good outcomes. And if that's true, then I would not expect someone in your position to say that we need to normalize being wrong. But that's, that's what you said. Those are your words. Okay. what in the heck do you mean by that?

Matt Tebbe 5:29

Well, Marc, I am a 45-year-old white man who has started two things that I lead, I'm relatively affluent, I am able-bodied. I am cis-gendered. And so every single heap that I could be on top of in America, I'm on top of it. I want to normalize being wrong for people like me. This phrase...

Marc Schelske 5:57

We're not telling other people, "hey, you're wrong. And I'd like to normalize your wrongness."

Matt Tebbe 6:03

...Exactly. Right. They just weaponize it as a mechanism of control. No, I'm trying to cast vision for why I want to normalize being wrong. And you know, if Marc is listening, and Marc goes, "Dang, there's something in that for me," then great, rather than telling other people that they should be wrong. Right. Which is, which is actually a really perverted power play. Somewhere along the line, Marc, as a, as a Christian, I lost vision of how good of news repentance was, okay. Repentance became shameful or

embarrassing. And I, you know, as I went back to the Gospels... (I still read the Bible. I know. I know, that might be out of date. I still read the Bible) ...And I kept seeing all of the breakthrough and transformation and blessing came to people when they change their mind. Yeah, when they went from something they were thinking, to something God was thinking, and I thought, you know, repentance is actually the best thing that could happen to me today.

Marc Schelske 7:03

I was gonna ask you the question, "how did you come to this belief," but as I was thinking about that, it occurred to me that I wanted to talk about first how we came to the opposite belief. Because when you talk about those different piles that you're on top of, and the idea that you have some privilege, what occurred to me was that well, in the piles that I have, being right is part of the privilege. The way my family raised me in middle-class America, there were certain things that you do, certain assumptions about how you live, and those are the right way to live. And when we saw other people whose lives weren't turning out like ours were, our assumption was they had made wrong wrong decisions along the way. They'd done unwise things. And then in my academic training, that's all about learning the handed-down knowledge, the right way of thinking. My theological training was largely about equipping me to articulate and defend correct doctrine. So the whole goal of that is being right. And then even in pastoral ministry, growing up in kind of evangelical and evangelical adjacent churches, we talked about repentance, but repentance was a one-time thing. Repentance was you crossing the line to follow Jesus, repenting from your sinful ways, and accepting Jesus' way. That's repentance. But once you've crossed the line, once I agree with that, now I'm right, I'm on the right side. And so from now on, being wrong is actually bad.

Matt Tebbe 8:31

Yes. So how do we get here, I want to maybe like throw a caveat in here. To normalize being wrong isn't to valorize or make a virtue of being wrong, okay. But normalizing being wrong is the only way that I know to personally on a moment-by-moment basis, become the kind of person who is capable of learning. From a New Testament perspective, and I think modern neuroscience backs us up, it always is about you becoming more than you. Okay? There's some kind of joining, some kind of connecting, some kind of moving towards another in a way that transforms who you are.

So Paul contrasts knowledge with love and wisdom. And I think he's trying to get at this in First Corinthians eight, where he talks about how love, or knowledge actually, tends to tear down community. I've been formed, shaped, catechized, by... I don't know, I mean, there's so many ways to describe it, colonial white supremacy, which is the dominant orienting norming force in the United States in the West. I happen to be a white man, you could throw patriarchy in there too, a lot of my adult life is waking up to how almost everything is normed to my preference,

Marc Schelske 9:52

To my preference, being that person at the center of all of that?

Matt Tebbe 9:56

Yeah, normed to a white guy's preference. Normed to my... to what I is, what occurs to me is good, right, and true. Usually, my socio-political-cultural landscape is ordered by that. And you'll see, you know, just parenthetically, you'll see that that's usually the case. Because when that stops being the case, when let's say, lots of non-white people get registered as voters somewhere, people lose their biscuit,

Marc Schelske 10:23

I start to feel uncomfortable. Because the thing that feels normal to me is actually just the experience of my position and privilege.

Matt Tebbe 10:31

Exactly. If this is going to unravel, and be deconstructed, you will feel like you don't know what you're doing. Your assumptions won't be right. The way you want things, you won't get them. Sometimes you'll think something is self-evident when really it's just your perspective. And you'll feel like there's a fear, right, Marc? Or anger when lots of questions that never need to be answered, because they're just sort of functioning in the back of our brains as already answered. When those come from the background to the foreground. It creates anxiety, right?

Marc Schelske 11:07

Okay, so this feels key to me, right? Because when you say "normalize being wrong," I think you're not just saying, "Hey, guys, it's okay to not be right sometimes." I think you're also saying, "it's okay to feel the interior discomfort that any of us feel when we're wrong."

My whole journey of being the guy whose identity comes from being the person in the room who's right, is that that is a, a locus of certainty. I have a great deal of certainty because I know how society is supposed to work. I have a great deal of certainty because I know what a good healthy church looks like, because my theology is orthodox because my explanation of the atonement is the right one that has come to us purely and perfectly from the apostles. And so I have all of these ways of being right. My ideas about gender roles, my ideas about America's place in the world, whatever, insert whatever thing. I have an idea in my head about what is right about that. And that idea gives me certainty. And internally that certainty makes me feel okay. It makes me feel good in the middle of a difficult complicated, oftentimes painful world. And so maybe what I'm hearing you say is that the thing we ought to normalize is the interior discomfort that comes up when you don't know because if I'm operating from a posture that I need to be right, I'm a pastor--I have to be right. I'm a man--I have to be right. If I'm operating from that posture, the second I feel the discomfort of being wrong. I'm going to power up to try and restore the certainty that I feel.

Matt Tebbe 12:47

Yeah. And can I just take it another layer deep? That reveals, Marc, I think that what we have done is we've made an idol of our certitude. I no longer hold the truth. But my certitude holds me. And so I become brittle, I become rigid, I become argumentative. It leads me to not listen, not learn, not love, not be open to reason, leads me to insist on having my own way. Right? And being impatient. All the things that we hear are the opposite of love.

And so like you, I was... I mastered divinity. Right? At 27! But you know, God is this infinite mystery. What I'm also trying to do is I'm also trying to lean into the knowing that is unknowing, this apophatic tradition, that saints that I hope to be like when I grew up, embrace and talk about. This unknowing or this apophatic way of knowing that is okay with not having all the answers, or having the answer and not being heard from, or someone else saying the thing that you could have said, half as good as you and getting the praise for it.

Marc Schelske 14:07

You said almost in passing that one of the options is having the answer but not being able to say it. It's such a, it's such a profound and painful thing for some of us,

I'm a musician. And back in the day when I had less children and more marginal income, I would spend time in music stores, playing guitars and looking at equipment and sometimes buying equipment. I had this experience regularly where I would be in the aisle looking at stuff, and overhearing a conversation down the aisle from the store salesman trying to sell something to another customer. And I knew way more about the thing than the salesman did. And I had almost like an eruption inside me, like this moral ought, this deep, profound sense that it was my responsibility and right to enter into that conversation and tell the person what they needed and tell the salesperson off because they were wrong.

Matt Tebbe 15:07

This is just I think the way that we, Marc, as white men in America habituated to center ourselves to assert mastery, dominance, expertise. So when I say "normalise being wrong," it's really just me telling my soul--you know how the psalmist speaks to their heart or to their soul? Telling my soul, "It'll be okay. You're safe. You don't need to assert your intelligence. Maybe you don't have to set them straight". It's just this permission to be without having to center or norm my perspective at every moment I possibly could.

Marc Schelske 15:11

Right? Well, it's almost like there's this almost this like ontological fear for some of us that if we aren't right, in any given moment, like we just stop existing, or our identity is lost. I mean, I grew up in a fairly fundamentalist Christian community. And we were pretty rigorously trained to read the Bible in a certain way in order to articulate and defend our particular theological high horses. And part of that upbringing was that there was a proactive moral obligation to correct people in conversation who were wrong. Now, I don't know if you've ever had that experience, but it is a heavy weight.

Matt Tebbe 16:33

Yes, it is. And I've been that person. I've taken on that responsibility. And, you know, I'm never at a loss for words. It's not that I don't have anything to say if I'm, if I ever stopped talking--It's because I choose to shut up. So as a young man, I was just spouting off all the time. And I don't know, even when I was right, I don't think I was righteous. That is so much more important. We are well-intentioned, well, meaning people trying to help others. But Jesus says you have to be willing to be helped. Yeah, submit to that humiliation, that humbleness in order for you to be of any help.

Marc Schelske 17:12

So let's push this a little bit towards the scary edge here. Okay. If it's okay to be wrong, or in the various ways you've put it, you know, to not have to assert our opinion, to not have to fight for that certainty, What does that imply for theological models that are built on the idea that what matters most to God is that we agree on the correct formulation of a certain doctrinal idea?

Matt Tebbe 17:42

I hope that it actually unravel some of that. We have set up litmus tests and hoops, and we've, we've made ourselves gatekeepers into a kingdom. That was never, we were never, that's never been our role. And so I think in some ways, it will, and hopefully does threaten it. And actually, by the responses I get

from people who I say this to who live in those theological systems, I can report back it does threaten it. They get really angry.

Don't hear it what I'm not saying though. I'm not saying that what we believe or what we think is not important, I want to, one, change our relationship to our beliefs so that they're not ideological idols, we're not in bondage to them, so that we can be supple, agile, have our minds changed, but still live with this humble conviction or confidence. And then if we bump up against something that we literally don't believe, can't see, disagree with, we own that, so that we aren't now in a battle of ideas. That's like an arms race, a rational arms race in my mind whenever I get into those things, and I just wanted to just own like:, "I value your perspective as yours. But I don't have an imagination for how that coheres or how that can be true for me." There's an implicit ask for help there or at least a permission for you to be where you're at. And then I'm saying, "but I'm not where you're at."

Yeah. Another aspect of this is I have decided if I'm going to be wrong, I'm going to be wrong with and for marginalized people. If that makes sense.

Marc Schelske 19:29

I totally hear you. I have had points of conversation with people where we've been in disagreement, and the picture in my mind is sort of the classical picture of judgment and you're standing before God, and I've had moments where I've had to say, Okay, I'm going to stand before God. God's gonna know my heart and my circumstances and everything that happened. So when I stand before God, which failure am I more comfortable with? Am I gonna stand before God having failed in the direction of excluding this person from community because of this issue? Or am I going to fail in the direction of including this person, which might fudge the edge a little bit? Which of those failures am I going to take with me before God? And I think that's what I hear you saying, right? Like, I'm probably gonna get it wrong. Which way is in alignment with love?

Matt Tebbe 20:19

Of course, of course, I'm gonna get it wrong. It's not a question of will I, but I'd much rather in, in the final judgment, have God's love, burn away my commitment to post-millennial infralapsarianism. Okay, then actively working against teaching the history of racial injustice in America. The dogma that we fight over is not unimportant. But you referenced judgment, like when Jesus talks about judgment It is "have you acted righteously, or with justice, towards people who suffer under the prevailing Kingdom that's not God's." Under the rebellious Kingdom outside of God's good providential Shalom, there are definite losers, and those people suffer greatly. And Jesus tends to prefer being with them. And what did you do to those people, James and Jesus, even Paul, in some places, and in the pastoral epistles explicitly tell us exactly what's going to go down there.

It's really hard for reformation Christians to appropriate that and fit that in, I think, because we want to, we want to flip it around and put words before it? Well, of course, you have to, you have to have the right ideas about God, and then that'll create the right heart in you, and then that right heart will naturally normally be with the poor and feed people and take care of the sick. But I don't think humans work like that. I think we're actually much more complicated. So I think we also live our way into new ways of thinking all the time, all the time. And it's not unidirectional. And so there's a sense if I'm going to be wrong, Marc, like what you said, like you use the word include inclusion, I'm going to be wrong--the religious person is going to be yelling at me, because I have the wrong person at the party. I want to be

wrong like that, rather than the person who's keeping people from the party. That's the kind of wrongness I'm willing to be.

So for instance, white supremacy, I've never been a white man trying to dismantle white supremacy before. How the hell would I know how to do that? Right? You know, I don't know, everything's an experiment. And I'm learning all the time. And in order to learn, I have to recognize that I don't know at all, yes, and be willing to pivot. Or say, "Sorry." As a person in my position, regularly saying, but then also demonstrating through habits and practices that I'm willing to be wrong, is one of the only ways I know one of the ways I know not only one of the ways I know, to put my stake in the ground that we are going to develop a culture that's immune to abuse, or we're going to repent trying.

Marc Schelske 23:06

So if the hope is a culture that's immune to the abuse of power, if that's the hope, the idea that is not just that we will be wrong, because that's a human reality, but that we can be wrong in community, that is being wrong doesn't exclude us from the table, being wrong doesn't mean that we're out on our ear. That being wrong and feeling the discomfort that comes with that is normal.

We're having to undo, like, deeply, deeply ingrained expectations. I mean, like in the structure of our world, kids to adults, there's one line, kids are very often wrong. And they're surrounded by people who are right and who tell them that they're wrong, and you get older and older and older. And the expectation in our culture is that at some point as an adult, you're less wrong. And maybe if you're an important enough adult, you're never wrong. And then that same, that same expectation happens in the church, we've got newbies that are coming into the church, they don't know anything. They don't know biblical Greek, they've never read the Bible. Of course, they're wrong. They're surrounded by people who can correct them. All of these spectrums move up a ladder of being more and more, right, being the person that that doesn't have to say, "I'm wrong. I was sorry. I'm sorry about that." And so if you're saying our goal in the church is ideally to have a community that's immune to power abuse, we're having to unpack a lot of what everybody feels like is normal. I mean, that "everybody" should probably have an asterisk after it because not everyone on those scales feels that way.

Matt Tebbe 24:41

Right? But there's an assumption, right, an assumption about what is power and what's it for. Okay. And then the thing I'm waking up to the last five years is how to see and negotiate power as you answer those two questions. It's a much different answer for me as a cis-gendered white man than it would be for a queer black woman. In the same scenario.

Marc Schelske 25:02

it's sort of the same problem with wealth, right? Most people don't feel like they have a lot of money. No matter where they are on the spectrum. I had a conversation with a friend of mine I went to school with. He's a dentist, he makes, you know, multiple increments of my income every year and was explaining to me how his family is always on the edge financially and how they're having to sacrifice. I was feeling frustrated, because I was like, "Dude, you make in a month what I'm making half a year! How on earth can you be telling me that you're poor?" But that dynamic happens, right? Because I also make considerably more than other people! Anywhere you are on the scale, people sort of feel like the amount of wealth they have isn't... They'll say, "I'm not a rich person."

I think you're talking about that principle with power, like whatever amount of self-governing autonomy, and power over others I have, doesn't really feel like power to me. But somebody above me who has more power, they're the people who have power. When the Bible talks about wealthy people being led astray by their wealth. It's not talking about me,

Matt Tebbe 26:10

It's never you and me, Marc.

Marc Schelske 26:15

I've never once thought of building a spaceship. Never. That's not me at all, right? You know, same thing with power, right? The kinds of people who abuse power are not people like me. They're the kinds of people who have lots and lots and lots of power. And so I can never see myself in it.

Matt Tebbe 26:32

I used to ride bikes. In college I was a cyclist. And when, when the wind was at your back, and your pace lining, meaning you, you had riders in front of you, and you were in a paceline, it felt like you could go all day, it was so easy. And then you turn around and head into the wind. And if you're in a paceline, you'd be at the front and you were pedaling into the wind. And you were like, I want to die. This is so hard. And I think I think having power is like having wind at your back. You can't tell there's wind, because you're already moving in a direction and the winds aiding you. But not having power in any kind of identity or any kind of intersectionality we'd have is like riding a bike into a headwind, you're constantly fighting it.

And so like for me, then the way we organize our church, the way that we train, the way that we learned discipleship is all about telling the truth on ourselves and creating spaces where the more you're known, the more love you receive, not less, so that there's no spiritual or institutional benefit to hiding. Where we have rhythms and liturgies of owning what we call bad news, and hearing good news, and surrendering, consenting, to it together. Like we do that regularly. So that if I were to try to pull some crap...

We did this during the pandemic, dude! I came back from vacation, and we hadn't been meeting in person for a long time. And our leadership team did not decide to loosen some of our restrictions on meeting. And I came back and I was impatient. I sort of benevolently insisted on my own way. And I did that with my co-rectors. And then we tried to asynchronously get feedback on this plan that wasn't presented at the meeting I wasn't at but was presented afterward on our asynchronous work organizer. Two women on our leadership team sent us two emails about three days later and said, "Hey, there was some kind of violation in our community here."

Marc, I had so many rationalizations for why it was okay for me to do what I did. But like, I was so overcome with gratitude and, and, blessedness that a non- (so I'm in an Anglican tradition) a non-ordained woman who's on our leadership team could confront three priests and say, "Hey, the church you say you want us to be, I don't feel like we did that here." None of us felt like we lost leadership capital with her by saying, "you're right." All of that felt like an artifact to me of, maybe we're doing something right. Like maybe, maybe the thing that you do right is to create a culture where badness is cared for by the community. I haven't been a part of a church like that before. So we're building something we actually don't even know what to build either or how to build it.

So then we talk about our church, it's not top-down leadership, but center-out leadership. And what we notice about Jesus is He's inviting as many people into the center who can possibly stand it. Even in that

passage we like to quote, Matthew 28, the Great Commission, the part that I think is, is mind-blowing, "they worshipped him, but some doubted." And to the worshipping and the doubting, Jesus gives his authority.

I want to be clear that there is some badness and wrongness that I as a leader cannot have. So this person, if she sends me an email and says, "Hey, you kind of lead in a way that violated our community," and I begin gaslighting her, I embarrass her publicly, and I sent her a scathing email, and I call her and I shout at her--that's not the kind of wrongness I'm talking about.

Marc Schelske 26:30

Right, now you're talking about the abuse of power that we're trying to avoid. And the reason you're going into abuse of power is because you have to defend that internal certainty that you have to get, you have to get out from under the discomfort of being called out as wrong. And so in order to do that, you're going to turn all that energy on her and make her the bad guy. That's the abuse of power.

Matt Tebbe 30:40

Exactly. Yeah. Because I can't be wrong. Because I've built I have built my faith upon the rock of my ego, so I can't justify myself and be justified by Christ at the same time. Either Christ justifies you, or you're the advocate, you're justifying yourself. Either Christ is interceding at the right hand of the Father, or you're busy explaining, justifying, defending, protecting. I've done it, Marc. Your circle gets smaller and smaller, you become angrier and angrier, more, there's more and more fear and rigidity and judgmentalism at people who don't get it. And I could not find the fruit of the Spirit in that way of living.

Marc Schelske 31:26

Yes, right. That rigidity is the essential quality of every fundamentalism. That rigidity is built on that sense that if I'm wrong, something dire happens, whether that's death of ego or getting kicked out of the community, losing my position or not being saved anymore. Whatever it is, something dire happens. You're talking about a completely different way of the community relating to it give me an image of what the church looks like, if we normalize being wrong.

Matt Tebbe 32:01

I think that we have misunderstood what sin is. Without relegating Paul's legal metaphors into some apocryphal dustbin, I think that a more prominent metaphor in Scripture is not a legal judicial way to understand sin. But it's an illness, sickness way of understanding sin. I think the picture I want to just hold out before us is if we really believe that God was a good doctor, whose love wanted to rid our lives of the cancer of sin, rather than a judge, I think we would run to the good doctor. We would see sin as a cancer, and not just personal sin, but systemic sin and interpersonal sin and inequality, injustice, we would see it as a cancer that God is wanting to heal rather than a crime that God wants to punish. Criminals hide. Cancer patients run to the hospital.

Marc Schelske 33:06

Yeah, right. Right. They run to where there's life,

Matt Tebbe 33:10

...to where there's hope for healing. But you don't typically hear if you have breast cancer. "Now, how did you get this breast cancer? What did you do to deserve this?" The doctor doesn't shame us. The doctor,

the doctor becomes immediately our advocate against the cancer, because the cancer is robbing life, breeding destruction and leads to death.

Marc Schelske 33:31

Yeah, so what an incredible vision it would be to have communities centered on that idea, right, that we are going to we are going to be each other's advocate, we are going to draw each other to the advocate, so that this cancer in our lives can be healed. Man. that's a totally different picture.

Matt Tebbe 33:52

This woman, her name is Ellie, who six months ago now called me on my stuff, she did it like a good doctor, like believing the best about me. Right? And, and fighting for my good in the midst of my wrong. There's a sense in which, it this only this doesn't work through a sermon series. Like you have to actually build these relationships.

I have serious doubts that if I was at a different social location, meaning if I didn't have power, if I was a different gender, if I was a sexual minority, if I was a person of color, if this would be helpful for me at all. In fact, one of the reasons why I'm committed to this is because I think "I'm right" has been weaponized against powerless people. And I sit in the class of people who've used "I'm right" to silence, enslave, steal, exploit, abuse people. I just want to reiterate that this commitment comes out of trying to unwind and undo abuses of power. abuses of affluence, abuses of masculinity, and of race that I've seen in my socio-economic kin, that I, I'm not... I'm not advocating or prescribing it for, for instance, that should be the mantra of, you know, Latina woman. Sure. It may be if it's helpful for you, go for it. But I just want to say like, I think I think that this is particular to my location,

Marc Schelske 35:26

Right. The medicine, the medicine needs to be the medicine for the illness. And the illness we're talking about comes from being right as a form of power. And if that's the illness that you have, which it's certainly one of the illnesses I have, then the medicine is to practice being wrong, learn to be okay with the discomfort that comes from not being right. But that may not be the medicine that everyone needs to take.

Matt Tebbe 35:51

No. Right. Who around you has chronic self-doubt? self-loathing, thinks have nothing to offer, never trusts their perspective, tells themselves all the time that they're stupid and wrong. I mean, that's not me, right. But there are people in our church that are like that. And so they need a much different medicine. You're so right, Marc.

Marc Schelske 36:17

Thank you so much for spending this time with me talking about a very exciting and uplifting conversation.

Matt Tebbe 36:26

Yes, and I just to bracket this conversation, I may be wrong about everything I've just said.

REFLECTION

Marc Schelske 36:37

So, maybe you're not like me, and Matt, maybe you don't have this nagging need to be right. But chances are, that if your experience intersects with ours in a few places, then this might be something you also struggle with. I want to say this: Not having to be wrong is a Marcer of privilege. Now, I know a lot of us don't like that word. But if you're used to being the one who does the correcting, if you're used to being the one in the room that people defer to, if you're used to being the one who asked to see the manager and you end up getting your way, there's a good chance that you've got some privilege happening.

Here's why that matters. I'm a follower of Jesus, I'm committed to following Jesus' teaching and his example, and I think that's why you're here as well. So here's the thing. Jesus' teaching and example are expressly about setting down our privilege to help and serve other people. In John's gospel, chapter 10, verse 18, Jesus said this of himself, he said, "No one takes my life for me, I lay it down of my own accord." And then the Apostle Paul, not wanting us to think that was just Jesus talking about himself and his own life, explain this to us further, in Philippians 2. Read the whole chapter. I'm going to share just this part with you.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interest, but to the interest of each other. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, (pretty high version of privilege), did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself taking on the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

See, this is what Jesus did. This is what Jesus taught his disciples. This is the example we're told to follow: to lay aside the normal human desire to build up and protect ourselves at the expense of others, and instead to use our resources and our capacity to serve others. Learning to sit in the discomfort of being wrong is one tiny piece of that puzzle, especially for those of us who are used to being right.

See, for us, I think the spiritual practice is listening. Maybe not sharing our opinion, when we're not asked to do it, maybe not stepping in to correct someone else who's speaking up. I know, I know that that is hard for some of us. Some of us have learned that our sense of purpose and place and value depends on being right. But this is one of the ways we can step into living the other-centered co-suffering way of Jesus. So let's do it. Let's normalize being wrong. Let's be willing to not have to be seen as the one who's strong and right and in charge. Let's be willing to listen. Let's lay that stuff aside.

May you discover the gracious piece that can be had when we rest in Jesus, instead of in our own certainty. Thanks for listening.

Notes for today's episode and the links mentioned are available for you at www.MarcAlanSchelske/TAW045.