

# FAITH AND REASON

## DVD STUDY GUIDE | THE CHANGE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING: LIFESTYLE-BASED SPIRITUALITY

Welcome to this FAITHANDREASON® SEMINAR DVD, “THE CHANGE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING: Lifestyle-Based Spirituality, featuring Fr. Richard Rohr. In this guide you will find suggestions for your own review and preparation for using the DVD with classes or other small groups.

In this Study Guide, you will find recommended DISCUSSION STARTERS and DISCUSSION QUESTIONS. We encourage you to use your own imagination and creativity in both introducing the lectures by Fr. Rohr and in leading your class or group discussion about what new awareness and questions grow out of seeing and hearing the presentations.

**Here’s something you need to know right up front. How you approach the use of these DVDs is entirely up to you. You may be only interested in finding a few suggestions for discussion questions to throw to your class. If this is what you’re looking, great, you’ll find six or seven sample questions on the pages described below—use as many or as few as you like:**

### DISC ONE

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Page **3** for Fr. Rohr’s first lecture, “How We See and How We Don’t See;”

Page **4** for Fr. Rohr’s second lecture, “Contemplation as an Alternative Consciousness;”

### DISC TWO

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Page **5** for Fr. Rohr’s third lecture, “The Rediscovery of Seeing;”

Page **7** for Fr. Rohr’s fourth lecture, “Implications for Religion, Relationships and Politics;”

## WHAT'S ON THE DISCS?

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In this DVD set, Disc One contains the first and second of Richard's lectures: "How We See and How We Don't See" (1:08:26) and "Contemplation as an Alternative Consciousness" (1:03:03). In addition to the two lectures, there is also the first of three "Q and A" (20:06) sessions in which Richard responds to questions from the audience.

Disc Two includes Richard's third lecture, "The Rediscovery of Seeing" (54:13). This lecture is followed by a Q and A Session (24:48). And a final Q and A (17:42) follows his fourth lecture, "Implications for Religion, Relationships and Politics" (1:04:21).

## NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADERS

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You will find DISCUSSION STARTERS for each of Richard's lectures. These are meant to get you thinking about the issues that are involved in each presentation. You can use the DISCUSSION STARTERS at the beginning of the session to set the stage for the DVD presentations. The DISCUSSION STARTERS are followed by DISCUSSION QUESTIONS that can be used to help the members of your group "process" what they have heard in the lectures.

As a discussion group leader, you will probably want to preview the lecture and come up with your own discussion questions. Below, are some "Discussion Starters" to help provide orientation to the content of the lectures. These are followed by "Discussion Questions" to supplement your own.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THESE LECTURES

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In "The Change That Changes Everything," Richard presents what for most of us is a radically new way of seeing the world, seeing each other and seeing ourselves. He says, "We're so accustomed to thinking dualistically about everything; we've been taught to think analytically about everything." This means we're in the habit of judging everything and everybody. "Does it please me; does it not please me." "Is it good or is it bad." In our thinking, he says, we divide the world and everything up as if other people, other things, even ourselves are all objects for us to constantly evaluate one way or the other.

There is a way, says Richard, of seeing that the mystics have known for a long, long time. The mystics teach us that there is a way of seeing that lifts us beyond our preoccupations about "who's in, who's out;" "who's judging me? What are they thinking; what are they saying?" They beckon us to enter a world where to see is to be astonished; to see is to be moved at the core about who and what we are and to experience ourselves in powerful connection within a world that nurtures all living things and empowers us to be very different kinds of human beings.

## SUGGESTION FOR TEACHERS AND GROUP LEADERS: How to get started

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When you can, always view the DVD lectures in advance of class and group sessions. Be aware of specific content that strikes you as the most interesting, the most engaging or the most powerful. In your planning, make sure that you cover these parts of the presentations. Then, pay attention to the issues or topics that you think your fellow students and group members will respond to.

You can also review the Discussion Starters at the beginning of each lecture session, to help you identify specific topics and issues that you particularly want to cover.

## LECTURE ONE: HOW WE SEE AND HOW WE DON'T SEE

[Running Time: 1:08:26]

### DISCUSSION STARTERS: Lecture 1, "How We See and How We Don't see."

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1. Richard begins his first lecture by telling us that Thomas Merton, the renowned contemplative of the 20th Century, said that authentic contemplation as a practice and art form has been lost to the Church for centuries. If Merton's claim is true, think about the implications for the Church.
2. In lecture 1, Richard introduces the concept, "The Dualistic Mind." He says, "The dualistic mind sees everything, I mean, everything in an argumentative way." He explains "the dualistic mind" as that mind that always splits everything into "up-down, I like it, I don't like it, that's acceptable, that's unacceptable," etc.
3. He says that the dualistic mind is driven by our egos, our egos that want to always be in control of everything. "Our egos are always judging what threatens us, and what secures us, what will build us up and what will tear us down."
4. Rohr claims that the thing our egos really hate is change; change, for the ego always announces threat. Reflect on what effects can "surface" in us due to the diligence of the ego.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Lecture 1, "How We See and How We Don't see."

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**These discussion questions suggest an approach to your group discussion. Don't think you have to get to all of them. Mix them up; improvise.**

1. Reflect on Richard's description of "the dualistic mind." What initial impressions did you have? Are you surprised at his claims? Do you find his description of the dualistic mind troubling? Why?
2. Respond to Richard's claim that "the ego avoids change at all costs?" Can you identify this "avoidance" in your own experience? Can you think of an example in which such reaction worked out well for you? Can you think of an example in which it did not?"
3. What do you make of Richard's statement that, "religion, at the lower levels tends to become an idolization of the status quo?" Have you had any experience with this? Do you agree with Richard? Do you disagree?
4. What does Richard mean by "either/or" thinking? He draws an example of this kind of thinking from the 12 Step program and what therapists call "stinking thinking." Do you see the "if they're not entirely for me, they're against me" in any of your own experience?
5. Richard introduces "contemplative mind" as an "alternate mind." Put another way, he says that we are so used to thinking "with a dualistic mind," to access a "contemplative mind" can become "the change that changes everything." Can you imagine this kind of change in your own thinking? If yes, why? If no, why not?
6. As important as our dualistic thinking is, having produced many advances in human society, it can only go so far. As important as our "Enlightenment" thinking is to reason, science and even religion, there are core human concerns that dualistic thinking, no matter how clear or clever it is, simply cannot process. He says our minds cannot process the big human experiences: LOVE, DEATH, SUFFERING, GOD and ETERNITY. Why does he make such a claim? Doesn't Christianity [for Christians] and other religions, tell us the truth about these things? If we cannot rely on our analytical reason to explain these things to ourselves, what can we rely on?
7. "Our minds," says Richard, "act as our control towers, letting in what it perceives as beneficial and rejecting what it perceives as detrimental." What is the down side to our minds "thinking" in this way? What is lost by thinking in these ways? He says, "Once you split the moment, you close off the path to God." Do you experience this "splitting the moment" in your own life? Do you obsess about the past and worry about the future?

## LECTURE TWO: CONTEMPLATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

[Running Time: 1:03:03]

### DISCUSSION STARTERS: Lecture 2, "CONTEMPLATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS."

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1. Read and then reflect on these phrases from the poem, "Snow Geese" by Mary Oliver that Richard reads to begin his second lecture.

oh, to love what is lovely and will not last . . .  
what matters is that when I saw them, I saw them . . .  
I saw them as through a veil, secretly, joyfully and clearly . . .

Make some notes about your reflections. Be ready to share some reflections if the opportunity presents itself in the discussion.

2. Richard says that the kind of experience that Mary Oliver describes opens up the "heart space" in us. He says that this "heart space" is a place in which we can experience "a veil that has been parted." Think of moments in your own life when you have been aware of the "heart space."
3. Review the story in the gospel (Matthew 13:45-46) of the parable of the "Pearl of Great Price." Reflect on the merchant and the merchant's desire. Reflect on a pearl of great price you might pursue—something you would sell everything for.
4. Richard reminds us that "we have fought about who God loves." Remember such fights in your own experience. Think about the combatants. Think about what was at stake.
5. According to Richard, Pope John Paul II is supposed to have commented to a group of Native Americans, "you already know the great spirit in all things." Imagine what motivated the Pope to make such a comment. There is no way to know what motivated him, but it may be fruitful to try to imagine it.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Lecture 2, "CONTEMPLATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS."

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**These discussion questions suggest an approach to your group discussion. Don't think you have to get to all of them. Mix them up; improvise.**

1. Early in this second lecture, Richard introduces the idea of, "heart space." How are you struck by this notion? He says that in such "'heart space,' you feel that everything belongs and you belong to it." Have you experienced the "heart space" he is describing? Do you find yourself resisting the notion of such a thing? If so, why?
2. Richard reads a portion of Mary Oliver's, "Snow Geese." One line in the poem, says, "what matters is that when I saw them, I saw them." What is your response to her "statement?" What can it mean to say, "when I saw them, I saw them?"
3. In dualistic mind, Richard says that we "split everything into subject and objects, weighing the value of each thing that we see, how we feel about it, and what our opinion is about it. Notice how you're thinking right now about what you are hearing. Do you find yourself making these same kinds of judgments about what Richard is saying? How much of the time do you think you think this way?
4. Richard says that the God's first bible was nature. He says that if you do not understand the first bible, you will not understand the second one, the one that is so important in Christianity. The same could probably be said of the sacred literature of all faiths. What does this suggest to you? What questions, if any, do these statements raise for you?
5. "We were all taught that 'knowing' is of utmost importance," says Richard. How does awareness of the contemplative mind challenge that teaching? What are we to make then of "knowing" about the bible, theology and the teachings of the church? Has the Church been wrong? Explain.

6. Richard then says, "If you have dualistic judgment about me, know that you are also having dualistic thinking toward your wife or husband, your children and your friends." He also says, "Notice that you also have this same kind of dualistic judgment about yourself." What do you now think such dualistic judgments lead to? How do these "judgments" show up in your life, your relationships, your work?
7. Richard has quite a bit to say about the dualistic thinking of men. "The male always wants to know who's winning and who's losing." If you are a woman, how does Richard's comment strike you? If you are a man, what are you thinking and feeling in response to his statement?
8. Richard suggests that, in general, women seem to more naturally access the contemplative mind and contemplative experience. Does this bear out in your own experience? Why does Richard seem to think that women have a penchant for contemplative awareness?
9. What do you make out of Richard's claim that we can learn to transform our "thinking" and "seeing?" Do you think it possible to think and see out of a contemplative mind? Can our way of seeing and understanding truly be changed? If you have reservations, what are they?

## LECTURE THREE: THE REDISCOVERY OF SEEING

[Running Time: 0:54:13]

### DISCUSSION STARTERS: Lecture 3, "THE REDISCOVERY OF SEEING"

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1. In his third lecture, Richard begins by introducing the notion of looking at one thing with absolute attention until one experiences a "second look" at an object such as a cloud, the bark of a tree or a wild flower. He says that such contemplative exercise is often reported as a sense of losing oneself in such a way that it brings a profound experience of admiration and joy. Make an experiment of the exercise and take note of your experience.
2. He says that people who practice contemplation speak of developing a "respect for the simplest things in nature." He explains that the term, "respect" means to look at something twice - to look first in the way we always do, and then lingering to take a second look to focus on what is there. Our habitual way of seeing, he says, begins with the first glaze in which we critique the "object," it's up or down, whether it's black or white, gay or straight, "with me" or "against me," American or non-American. He continues, "but then, if we will respect the thing or the person with that second glaze, we can find that there are things about it or her or him that we did not notice before, never really noticed before."
3. It is our mind that wants to make all of these distinctions, not for truth as it imagines, but for the sake of the ego that secures itself with opinions about others, or judgments about them that support our hateful or resentful thoughts. Richard says that our egos always want to stay in control, deciding at every instant what threatens it and what doesn't.
4. Richard says that we have grown up in a culture that puts tremendous, even ultimate, importance on our "preferences." We believe that our preferences are so necessary until they become the filters through which we relate to everything and everybody. "I prefer this; I prefer that." Such "preferencing" set us at the center of our world; we spend so much energy "preferencing" until we miss opportunities to learn about ourselves and learn about the incredible possibilities for an expanded life experience.
5. Richard describes how, in order to experience the world fully and all the wonder and joy available to us, we must open three doors of our available "consciousness:" the door of the mind, the door of the heart and the door of the body. Our "post-enlightenment" training leaves us to focus our awareness on just the one door, the door of the mind. This reduces everything and everyone around us - even ourselves - to our constant critical analysis - our constant evaluation of everything to point that even

our very path to the sacred is closed off.

6. In his third lecture, Richard focuses on “keeping the three doors of consciousness open” so as to engage fully in our lives, know the constant, intimate presence of god, be “in love” with the world and an experience again and again.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Lecture 3, “THE REDISCOVERY OF SEEING”

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1. In his third lecture, Richard identifies the three doors of consciousness: the door of the mind; the door of the heart; and the door of the body. He tells us that when we work to keep all three doors open, our consciousness and our awareness are exponentially expanded. What is your response to his claim? Are you attracted to his ideas? Do you find them exciting? Challenging? Troubling?
2. He focuses at length on the door of the body, or more precisely, “the door of our bodies.” He makes the remarkable observation that in the history of a religion that proclaims that God became a body (the mystery of incarnation), Christianity has “acted” as if we were heads completely disconnected from bodies. He says that traditionally, we have acted more like followers of Plato than followers of Jesus.  
What do you make of his claim? Remember, Plato, the Greek philosopher, taught that the mind and body are split, and that physical objects are inferior to ideas. What is your understanding about the way Jesus taught about the body?
3. Richard says that, in order to know the world, know each other and ourselves and know God, we must learn to nurture and celebrate the bodies we live in. He says that our bodies allow us to experience everything we experience. How do his statements about our bodies strike you? What does your own “mind” tell you about what Richard claims about the body and the spirit?
4. Richard discusses the history of male initiation around the world. He tells us that primitive and ancient societies recognized that the male cannot be entrusted with power until he has taken the journey into powerlessness. What is your response to this statement? Why does Richard say that, in general, women have not needed this kind of initiation because they have historically known powerlessness?
5. Why does Richard call the observance of Ash Wednesday in Christian practice the last of the authentic rites? Why does he say people are so drawn to the service? What role has this service played in your life? Has it been significant for you?
6. Richard identifies the Christian notion of “original sin” not as a sin we have each on individually committed, but as the unfulfilled lives that generations pass on to succeeding generations. He says, “you do know that no one got all that she or he needed growing up.” We pass our anxieties and fears and prejudices about life onto our children and their children. How can we break that cycle? What does Richard offer us to help us be different, think differently and feel differently?
7. Richard says that prayer is not really about getting God to do what we want. Rather, he says, prayer is setting the “tuning forks” of our consciousness in line with God. He says prayer is not about words, words, words. Prayer is about silence and listening and being still. What is your response to Richard’s notion of prayer? Does his notion attract you? Are you allured by it?
8. Richard quotes his friend and colleague, Paula D’Arcy when she says, “God comes to us disguised as our lives.” He then rhetorically asks, “As my life?!” “God comes through the sacraments, through the music, through the Bible, but, as my life??!! Do you think Ms. D’Arcy’s statement is peculiar or ridiculous? What deep sense does this make to you; not, just your thoughts, not just your opinions, but at the depths of who you are?

## LECTURE FOUR: IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGION, RELATIONSHIPS AND POLITICS

(Running Time: 1:04:21)

### DISCUSSION STARTERS: Lecture 4, "IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGION, RELATIONSHIPS AND POLITICS"

1. Richard relates a story about how a rabbi he heard explained the sacred name for God in ancient Judaism. Since the 1960s, the name, "Yahweh," has become familiar to many Christians and non-Christians. The rabbi said that in Hebrew, there are no consonants so that the ancient sacred name would be written - using English characters - as Y'hw'h. He explained that literate Jews would know to furnish the appropriate vowels in the appropriate spaces between consonants. He said that the sacred name would be pronounced without the lips touching each other and without the tongue. It would be like inhaling, "Ya," then exhaling, "weh." Review the beginning of lecture 4 on the DVD to hear Richard pronounce it. You will hear it as breath exhaled followed by breath inhaled. The point is, the most sacred name for God moves out of body as breath and into the body as breath. In ancient Hebrew, the words for "breath," and "spirit" are built from the same root. Reflect on this: at birth, we all take the first breath - Ya! At death, our last exhalation, "Weh."
2. Richard's wonderful sense of humor shows when he tells us, "You know there's not a Catholic and a Protestant way of breathing; not a gay way of breathing and a straight way of breathing; not a black way or a white way of breathing; not an African way of breathing, not an American way of breathing."
3. "Now, you know," says Richard, "God is as given and as available as the air right in front of your lips." The old-timers used to say, "nearer than hands and feet." Think about a place for "transcendence."
4. He continues, "We've got to know that this mystery of God has been breathed since the beginning."
5. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, the author of *Women Who Run With Wolves*, tells the story in her book of the mother who, walking with her young daughter to church stops to teach her child: You know we love the church, with all its lights, with its altar, with its sacraments, and with its beautiful windows; but never forget that the church is the upper river, and what I want to teach you about is the real *abajo*, the lower river. Reflect on the two rivers.
6. Then, Richard refers to a famous statement by the revered mystic, Julia of Norwich in which she said, "first there is the fall, then there is recovery; both are gifts of God." Hey, I knew that the recovery is a gift of God; but I sure didn't know the fall was."
7. A rabbi says, "the only sin in Judaism is really idolatry: worshipping something as God when it is not God."

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Lecture 4, "IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGION, RELATIONSHIPS & POLITICS"

1. In his fourth and final lecture, Richard tells about learning from a rabbi what the sacred name of God - the poor Christian attempt at transliteration, "Y'hw'h - meant or signified in ancient Judaism. He told of the rabbi's explanation that the two syllables of God's name are pronounced as an inhalation of breath followed by an exhalation of breath. How does the rabbi's explanation touch you? Are you surprised? Are you enchanted? Are you drawn to the name? Richard reminds us that in the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "the wind blows where it will." Really? What are you saying?
2. The famous photographer Ansel Adams stayed for three days in the little town of Hernandez, New Mexico, waiting for the moon to shine just right for one of his most renowned photographs. He sat still and waited. Richard quotes Adams as saying, "Chance favors the prepared mind." Richard suggests that there is a mystery link between fanning our desire for, making space for, respecting the possibility of a quantum explosion and expansion of our consciousness of the spiritual. Do you long for such an explosion in your own life? Does the thought attract you? Do you ever wait in silence, being still?
3. Richard says, "Whenever religion is exclusionary, it's wrong." What do you think about this statement? What feelings come up for

you when you hear this? Should we defend our faith?

Should we defend God? What are the real enemies of faith? Who are the real enemies?

- 4.** Richard says that the spiritual teacher does not “impart” great spiritual truths to you. The spiritual teacher only points to the awareness that is already in you and together, you say, “My God, that’s right, I’ve thought so; I’ve felt that.” Richard also says, “there is a ticking truth in you, ticking away and you recognize it not because Richard says it, but because it resonates in you.” What “truths” have resonated for you as you watch and listen to his lectures in this series? What “truths” have captured your imagination?
- 5.** “Jesus taught,” says Richard, “that what threatens you can teach you the most.” What threatens you? What people threaten you? What ideas threaten you? Can you learn anything from any of these threats? A reminder: what threatens us has more to say about us than the thing or the person or the ideas that threaten us. Do you think this is crazy talk? Or are you attracted to it?
- 6.** How do Christian people or Jewish people or Muslim people live with the suffering and poverty of children going on around us? What does our spiritual longing have to say to us about this? We yearn for the experience of the spiritual, the place where “deep calls unto deep.” While we are yearning, what do we think about the savage inequalities around us?
- 7.** Richard says, “God is already in love with you. God doesn’t love you because you are good; God loves you because God is good.” If God is, in fact, in love with us, what do you want to do?