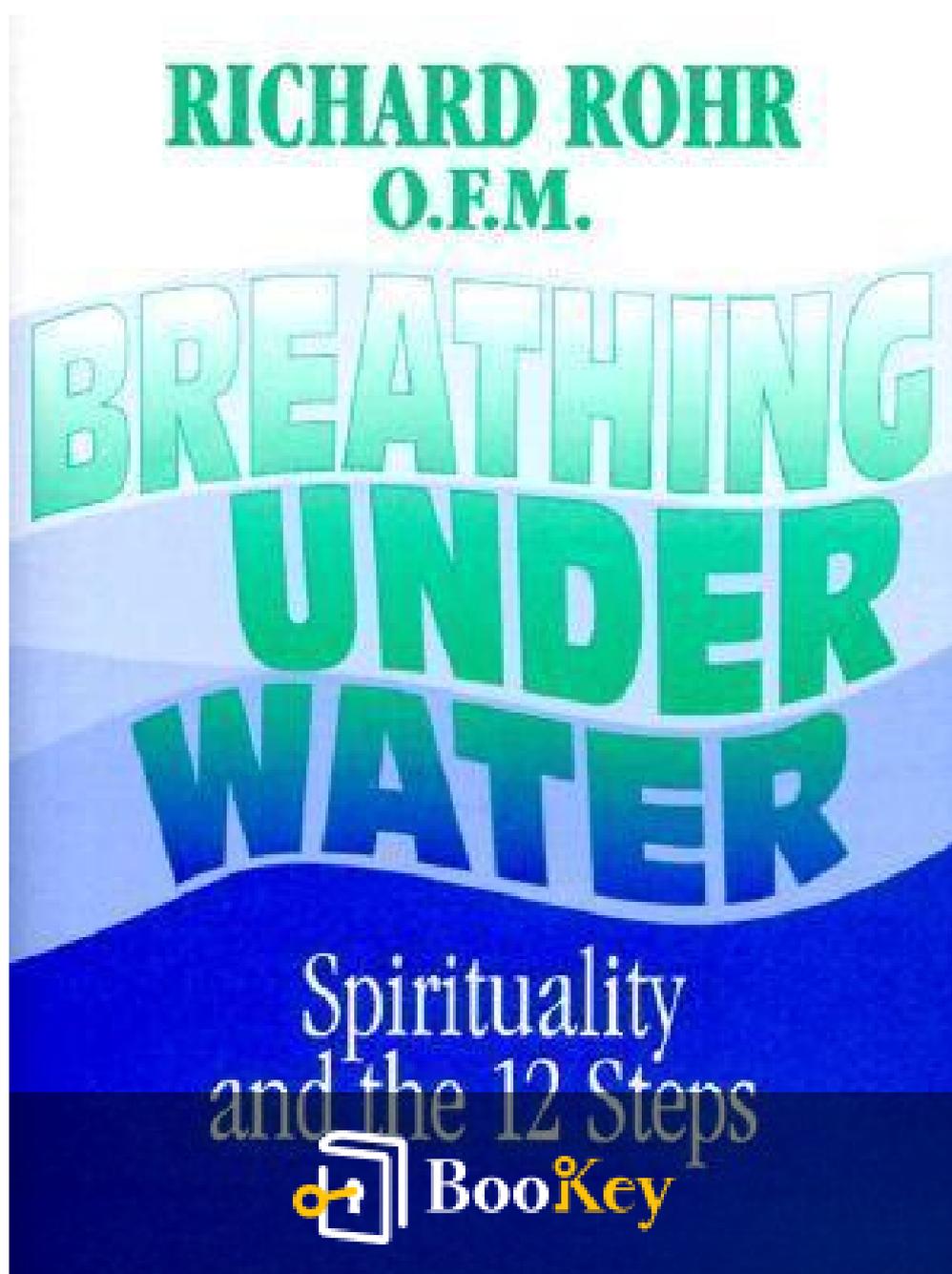


# Breathing Underwater PDF (Limited Copy)

O.F.M. Richard Rohr



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# **Breathing Underwater Summary**

Navigating Inner Depths for Spiritual Awakening

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## About the book

In "Breathing Underwater," Richard Rohr offers a profound exploration of the intersection between spirituality and emotional health, inviting readers to navigate the turbulent waters of life with wisdom and grace. Drawing on the transformative power of the Twelve Steps, Rohr illustrates how acknowledging our own vulnerabilities and the need for deep inner work can liberate us from cycles of addiction and despair. This book serves not only as a guide for personal healing but also as a call to embrace authentic relationships with ourselves, others, and the Divine. With compelling insights and a compassionate tone, Rohr challenges us to dive beneath the surface of our lives, confront our truth, and emerge with a renewed sense of purpose and freedom. Join him on this journey of self-discovery and resilience, and learn to breathe deeply, even when submerged.

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## About the author

O.F.M. Richard Rohr is a prominent Franciscan priest, spiritual teacher, and author known for his deep insights into spirituality and contemplative living. Born in 1933, Rohr founded the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which focuses on integrating spirituality into everyday life. His writings often explore themes of mysticism, transformation, and the interplay between faith and social justice, drawing from a wide range of wisdom traditions. Rohr's approachable yet profound style resonates with diverse audiences, inviting them to engage in deeper spiritual inquiry and personal growth. Through his numerous books, teachings, and public lectures, he has significantly influenced contemporary spiritual discourse, encouraging individuals to embrace a more profound relationship with the divine.

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## Chapter 1 Summary: Powerlessness

In the opening chapter of "Breathing Underwater," Richard Rohr explores the profound themes of powerlessness and the inherent struggles of the human experience, particularly through the lens of addiction, spirituality, and self-awareness. He begins by referencing the foundational Step 1 of the Twelve Steps, which acknowledges an individual's powerlessness over alcohol and recognizes the chaos that stems from this addiction. This sets the stage for an exploration of how personal crises often lead to greater spiritual awakening.

Rohr presents a candid reflection on the human condition, citing biblical texts from Isaiah and Romans to illustrate the dissonance people often feel within themselves. He points out a universal experience—many of us struggle with our behaviors, falling short of our own expectations and desires. The teachings of Jesus, as referenced, resonate with Rohr's observations about the human experience, revealing a shared feeling of being lost and confused.

As Rohr delves deeper into the intricacies of human existence, he observes that true understanding and compassion often arise from failure rather than success. He notes a paradox where the humble and vulnerable find revelations that those who pursue success may miss. This divine economy of grace, as he describes, can only be fully appreciated through personal

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struggles and resilience rather than mere intellectual contemplation or religious observance.

A significant point made is that until individuals hit their limitations or the brink of their capabilities, they may not seek a higher source of strength. He argues that many self-made individuals rely solely on their willpower, which often results in a rigid self that pushes others away rather than nurturing loving relationships. The pursuit of moral superiority, he warns, can mask a deeper ego-driven need for control, perpetuating a cycle of spiritual stagnation.

Rohr emphasizes that genuine transformation cannot be achieved through self-effort alone. The need for powerlessness becomes apparent, as recognition of one's limitations facilitates a connection with a greater source of strength. He critiques both personal and societal tendencies to cling to false identities while avoiding the vulnerability necessary for true growth. He astutely notes that a shift from the ego's limited perspective to a more expansive awareness is essential for spiritual evolution.

The chapter poignantly articulates that the ultimate goal of spirituality is rooted in a process of letting go. Drawing from various spiritual traditions, Rohr underscores the necessity of unlearning previous attachments to foster personal growth. He reflects on the innate human resistance to change, as many would rather embrace familiar, ineffective patterns than confront the

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challenges of transformation. This sentiment is echoed by W.H. Auden, who expresses the fear of change over the discomfort of maintaining the status quo.

Thus, the chapter closes on the idea that maturity in spirituality involves a continual process of relinquishment—shedding false selves and illusions to make space for authenticity and deeper connections. The journey toward genuine spiritual awakening demands humility, courage, and the willingness to embrace vulnerability, ultimately leading to a richer, more fulfilling existence.

In summary, the chapter illustrates several key principles:

1. Acknowledgment of powerlessness is the first step toward spiritual clarity and transformation.
2. Personal failures often lead to profound insights and compassion.
3. Seeking a higher source of strength requires recognizing one's limitations.
4. Genuine transformation cannot be orchestrated by the ego; it necessitates a surrender to a greater power.
5. Mature spirituality revolves around the practice of letting go and unlearning, paving the way for authentic existence.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Acknowledgment of powerlessness is the first step toward spiritual clarity and transformation.

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing at the edge of what feels like a dark abyss, acknowledging that all your efforts to control and manipulate your life have led you to this moment of surrender.

Embracing your powerlessness isn't a defeat; it's a profound awakening. In this recognition, you allow yourself the grace to let go of the burdens you've carried for so long, freeing your spirit to seek deeper connections and authentic transformations. This pivotal moment can be the catalyst for your journey, guiding you to draw strength from beyond yourself and inspiring a life filled with compassion, vulnerability, and genuine purpose.

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## Chapter 2 Summary: Desperate Desiring

Chapter 2 of "Breathing Underwater" by Richard Rohr centers on the theme of "Desperate Desiring," emphasizing the journey toward healing and spiritual transformation through surrendering to a power greater than oneself. The initial step of this transformative journey involves a deep longing for faith and healing, framing it as a continuous process rather than a single moment of decision. This development requires the simultaneous opening of three critical inner spaces: the mind, heart, and body.

1. To genuinely believe in a power that can restore sanity, individuals must engage in an extended journey of trust and letting go. This surrender is not achieved in haste; rather, it unfolds over time through persistent desire and longing. True faith transcends mere intellectual assent and taps into holistic awareness, fostering a profound and luminous perception of reality.
2. The chapter posits the significance of cultivating these three inner spaces—mind, heart, and body. Each space requires careful attention and nurturing to encourage personal growth and healing. The mind should be kept open through practices like meditation, which liberate the individual from fear-based thinking and allow for a more peaceful and contemplative approach to spirituality.
3. The heart space necessitates healing from past traumas and a willingness

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to foster genuine relationships. Engaging with others at a deeper level can facilitate emotional growth. The author emphasizes the importance of art, nature, and connection, suggesting that these activities can foster love and vitality within the heart.

4. The body requires attention to become an active participant in healing. The text reflects on the significance of bodily experiences and the necessity of acknowledging the memories and messages that reside within it. The body, often neglected or repressed in religious contexts, needs to be embraced and cared for rather than seen as merely a vessel for the soul.

5. The work of spirituality involves the ongoing liberation of the head, heart, and body. This integration creates a more profound proximity to divine presence, challenging the fragmented approach often observed in traditional religious practices. It encourages a holistic engagement with life that invites a stronger encounter with the divine.

6. The final message asserts that reconnecting these inner dimensions leads to the realization of a power that can restore sanity. By adopting an uncluttered presence, individuals can encounter this divine presence in their daily lives, learning to accept and embrace their experiences without resistance. Thus, the journey toward healing becomes a collaborative effort of self-discovery and spiritual awakening that unfolds within the nurturing embrace of a benevolent God.

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Through this expansive exploration of the relationship between faith, personal healing, and the interconnectedness of the mind, heart, and body, Rohr articulates a transformative pathway that emphasizes the integration of the internal self and the embrace of divine love. The chapter concludes with a resonant blessing for unity in body, heart, and mind, reinforcing the belief in the supportive presence of God throughout one's journey.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embracing the Journey of Surrender

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing at the edge of a vast ocean, the waves of life crashing around you, as you find the courage to surrender your fears and desires. In Chapter 2 of 'Breathing Underwater,' Rohr inspires you to realize that true transformation comes not from a single moment but from an ongoing journey of trust in a power greater than yourself. As you consciously open your mind, heart, and body to the ebb and flow of this process, you begin to cultivate a profound connection with the divine presence that surrounds you. This invitation to embrace vulnerability and let go of control allows you to experience healing at the deepest levels, welcoming faith as a luminous guide in your life. Every breath you take becomes a reminder of your interconnectedness, propelling you forward on a path of spiritual awakening where each step is steeped in trust and the knowledge that you are supported every moment by a benevolent force.

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## Chapter 3: Sweet Surrender

In Chapter 3 of "Breathing Underwater" by O.F.M. Richard Rohr, titled "Sweet Surrender," the narrative revolves around the transformative power of surrendering one's will to God, a pivotal concept exemplified in Step 3 of the Twelve Steps: "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God." This transition from willfulness to acceptance is explored through theological foundations, personal testimonies, and scriptural insights.

1. **Acceptance and Liberation:** Rohr emphasizes that true surrender often feels like a death—dying to the need for control and resistance. He references spiritual teachings that challenge the instinctual human tendency to fight against life's realities. Acceptance is portrayed not as passivity, but as a source of profound power. Embracing the moment and allowing oneself to be vulnerable can lead to spiritual freedom, as surrender is fundamentally a "giving to" rather than a "giving up."

2. **Resistance and Control:** The author reflects on humanity's ingrained

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## Chapter 4 Summary: A Good Lamp

In Chapter 4 of "Breathing Underwater" by O.F.M. Richard Rohr, the author delves into the profound emotional and spiritual journey associated with making a "searching and fearless moral inventory" of oneself, a critical step in personal recovery and transformation. This process is not merely a moralistic exercise but rather a deep confrontation with the self, emphasizing the importance of honesty, humility, and compassion in growth.

**1. Overcoming Resistance to Self-Examination:** Individuals from highly moral or strictly religious backgrounds often hesitate to engage in self-inventory due to their fatigue with judgment—both self-directed and that which they perceive from others. The burden of an internal critic, shaped by past experiences and external influences, can drive some to addiction as a means to quiet this voice. However, Rohr suggests that such resistance to moral inventory stifles true spiritual awakening, as encountering one's vulnerabilities and failings is essential to self-knowledge.

**2. The Value of Moral Scrutiny.** The author asserts that moral scrutiny is not aimed at achieving moral superiority but rather facilitating a transformation that fosters a sense of awareness and compassion. Engaging with our shortcomings allows us to better empathize with others. Through honest admission of our flaws, which he describes metaphorically as "shadow boxing," we cultivate transparency that fosters deeper connections

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with those around us.

**3. Finding Growth Through Shadow Work** The process of confronting our shadow self is necessary for true spiritual growth. Acknowledging our flaws—both big and small—becomes the gateway to understanding our inherent humanity. Here, Rohr draws on biblical stories, such as those of the prodigal son and the publican and Pharisee, highlighting that authenticity in admitting wrongdoing often leads to deeper understanding and eventual redemption.

**4. Understanding the Shadow Self:** The shadow self represents the parts of ourselves we choose to deny or avoid—those qualities shaped by nature, nurture, and personal choices. Continuous engagement with this hidden aspect is crucial for personal development, as it allows us to confront denial and helps reveal our full humanity. Positive traits may unintentionally blind us to our deeper issues, necessitating conflicts and challenges to shed light on these hidden aspects.

**5. Seeing Clearly:** Rohr emphasizes that self-awareness involves recognizing our own imperfections before judging others. He references Jesus' teaching about noticing the plank in one's own eye before looking for a splinter in another's, which serves as a profound reminder of the importance of self-reflection. This clarity enables us to navigate our moral complexities and fosters a sense of responsibility rather than blame.

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**6. The Divine Perspective on Good and Evil:** The chapter concludes with a critical understanding of God's role concerning human failings. Rohr suggests that God does not aim to root out evil but instead transforms our weaknesses into pathways for greater good. This transformative power of grace accentuates the idea that our struggles can lead us to deeper consciousness and understanding.

Through these reflections, Rohr invites readers to embrace their imperfections as essential to their spiritual journey. By engaging in honest self-inventory, individuals may move past superficial judgments, leading to an authentic life suffused with grace and mercy. Ultimately, acknowledging the shadow self—along with the ongoing challenge of staying conscious—becomes a vital aspect of spiritual awakening and personal growth.

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## Chapter 5 Summary: Accountability IS Sustainability

In Chapter 5 of "Breathing Underwater" by Richard Rohr, the author delves into the crucial theme of accountability as a pathway to sustainability in personal and communal healing. The chapter opens with a clear reference to Step 5 of the Twelve Steps, emphasizing the necessity of admitting one's wrongs to God, oneself, and another human being. This act of confession is framed as vital to overcoming the burden of guilt, which, according to the author, can consume us from the inside, similar to the resonant imagery found in Psalm 32.

Rohr contrasts the traditional retributive justice system prevalent in many religions—with its principles of punishment and merit—against the transformative and restorative justice inspired by Jesus' teachings. He asserts that the former aligns with the ego's desire for reward and punishment, while the latter offers a revolutionary opportunity for personal transformation through grace. This economy of grace invites individuals to acknowledge wrongdoing, not as a means to achieve moral purity but as a way to encounter God's profound love. This loving confrontation liberates both the sinner and the wronged party, making healing a mutual endeavor.

A key notion introduced is that genuine accountability leads to an enriching human connection. Consequently, when individuals confess their wrongs, it is a profound act that can alter lives by restoring relationships and fostering

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healing, rather than focusing on punishment. This understanding of confession hearkens to the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, which championed truth-telling as a means of healing rather than punitive measures. Rohr relates this notion to the biblical prophet Ezekiel, who articulates that God acts out of unconditional love rather than mere retribution, illustrating that true punishment lies in the shame and recognition of one's failures rather than transactional justice.

Rohr further draws comparisons between traditional Christian confession practices and Step 5 of Alcoholics Anonymous. He proposes that the ecclesial sacrament of reconciliation, initially a communal event, transformed into a private exercise over centuries. In this evolution, people lost the opportunity for communal bearing of burdens and mutual accountability. The focus shifted toward individual absolution, straying from the relational and community-based aspect of confession. The author highlights that true healing requires exposure of the truth in a communal, supportive environment, echoing the need for restorative justice, which reintegrates individuals rather than punishing them.

The chapter concludes with a powerful assertion: the sustainable transformation of humanity hinges on mutual apologies, healing, and forgiveness. Rohr underscores that moving beyond past grievances, accepting reality, and fostering accountability are necessary for growth and regeneration. He posits that these principles parallel Jesus's teachings on

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forgiveness, which constitute a vital technology for changing hearts and circumstances. In this framework, those who embrace accountability and forgiveness can lead others towards liberation, breaking the cycle of offense and bitterness that threatens communal unity and spiritual growth.

Key Themes	Description
Accountability	Essential for personal and communal healing; relates to admitting wrongs.
Confession	Vital for overcoming guilt; involves acknowledging wrongs to God, self, and others.
Retributive vs. Restorative Justice	Contrasts punishing systems with transformative grace-based justice.
Human Connection	Genuine accountability fosters relationships and mutual healing.
Truth and Reconciliation	Inspired by the South African model, emphasizes truth-telling for healing.
Transformation through Love	True punishment is the shame of failure; healing comes from God's love.
Evolution of Confession	Shifted from communal to private, losing mutual accountability aspects.
Essence of Healing	Requires communal support and truth exposure for restorative justice.
Conclusion	Sustainable transformation relies on mutual forgiveness and accountability.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embracing Accountability

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing at the edge of your own life, where the weight of unspoken guilt hangs like a storm cloud overhead. In this moment of reflection, you realize that to genuinely embrace accountability—acknowledging your wrongs to yourself and others—can be the transformative act that breaks you free from that cloud. The act of confession, as Rohr illustrates, goes beyond mere admission; it becomes a lifeline connecting you to profound love and healing. Picture the surge of hope as you grasp that this vulnerability creates not only personal relief but also opportunities for communal healing and connection. By accepting your missteps openly, you invite others to do the same, fostering an environment rich with grace that nurtures relationships rather than shames them. Your journey toward accountability becomes a catalyst for change, illuminating pathways to mutual forgiveness and restoration, reinforcing the understanding that, together, you can rise above the shadows of resentment and cultivate a shared landscape of unconditional love.

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## Chapter 6: The Chicken or the Egg: Which Comes First?

In Chapter 6 of "Breathing Underwater," Richard Rohr delves into the interplay of grace and responsibility as expressed in Step 6 of the Twelve Steps. The chapter reveals the essential paradox: while we must recognize and take responsibility for our character defects, it is ultimately God who removes these defects. This duality raises the question of which comes first—grace or our efforts to seek divine intervention—and Rohr posits that both are necessary as they coexist harmoniously.

1. It is with great ease that one can find biblical validation for acknowledging character flaws. Scripture highlights God's perpetual mercy and invites believers to embrace their journey toward healing. The Levitical verse from Lamentations, affirming God's kindnesses renewed every morning, supports the ongoing opportunity for change and redemption. This dual necessity—recognizing one's shortcomings while also waiting for God's grace—represents a liberating understanding of spirituality.

2. The chicken-and-egg dilemma reflects a deeper theological tension

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## Chapter 7 Summary: Why Do We Need to Ask?

In Chapter 7 of “Breathing Underwater” by O.F.M. Richard Rohr, the author explores the significance of asking in prayer and the transformative purpose it serves in our spiritual journey. This chapter delves into the fundamental mystery of why we need to ask God for help, despite the belief that God is already aware of our needs.

- 1. The Purpose of Asking:** Rohr emphasizes that we ask not to change God but rather to change ourselves. Prayer should foster a living relationship with God rather than simply serve as a means to get what we desire. It is a symbiotic dialogue, where both the individual and the divine are transformed through the interaction, which goes beyond mere requests and includes communal growth and understanding.
- 2. Overcoming Entitlement:** One of the key barriers to spiritual growth and understanding is the attitude of entitlement. Rohr highlights that notions of deserving and being owed something undermine any meaningful relationship. He reflects on Jesus' teachings, particularly His warning about the spiritual peril of entitlement, especially among the wealthy, urging us to adopt a posture of humility and reliance on God.
- 3. Embracing Our Position:** The author articulates that we must recognize our status as beggars before God and the universe. Truth emerges through

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honest relationships and interactions rather than abstract concepts. He advocates for a life situated in humility, understanding that authentic prayer comes from a place of neediness, revealing our vulnerabilities rather than concealing them within self-reliant frameworks.

4. Transformation Through Divine Assistance: Rohr cautions against the danger of self-directed efforts to eliminate our shortcomings, suggesting that genuine change can only occur through divine intervention. By inviting God into our lives to reveal and remove our faults, we create the conditions for authentic transformation, wherein our flawed aspects diminish as our true selves are uncovered.

5. Right Relationship with Life: The chapter further addresses how addiction and misplaced desires can deplete our spiritual energy. Recovery involves redirecting our deep desires towards a genuine spiritual relationship. Gratitude plays a pivotal role in this transformation; a continuous practice of gratitude keeps us open to life's gifts and diminishes feelings of resentment and entitlement. Recognizing that life itself is a gift allows for deeper satisfaction and spiritual fulfillment.

6. The Realization of Divine Presence: Ultimately, Rohr suggests that in our quest for the divine, we may discover that God has been present all along. Acknowledging this revelation can change our perception of life, leading us to recognize the constant availability of divine grace. This awareness

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transforms our burdens into lighter paths, clearing our way to experience the "gate of heaven," which is always accessible to us.

Through these reflections, Rohr invites readers to reconsider their approach to prayer, humility, and the potential divine gifts that come from leaning into our needs and vulnerabilities. He ultimately asserts that true satisfaction and fulfillment arise from the grace of an ever-present God.

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## Chapter 8 Summary: Payback Time

In Chapter 8 of "Breathing Underwater," titled "Payback Time," Richard Rohr delves into the essential process of acknowledging and making amends for the wrongs we have done to others. The chapter is anchored in Step 8 of the Twelve Steps, which guides individuals to list those they have harmed and become willing to seek reconciliation.

Rohr emphasizes the complex interplay between divine grace and human responsibility. While the grace offered by God can forgive us, the consequences of our actions—often described as "karma"—must be addressed through tangible acts of restoration. Acknowledging our past mistakes and making amends is crucial not only for the healing of others but for our own liberation as well.

1. The Need for Acknowledgment: Rohr cites biblical examples to underline the importance of recognizing one's wrongdoings. In 2 Samuel, Nathan confronts David, leading to David's acknowledgment of his sin. This act of admission is foundational to personal and spiritual growth. He reminds us that judging others reflects our own flaws and that true healing begins with taking responsibility for our actions.

2. Transcend and Include: The chapter discusses a universal principle of growth: to transcend and include earlier stages of development. In our

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journey of love and forgiveness, we cannot skirt past previous wrongs. Instead, we must confront and rectify them, as unresolved issues can hinder both our growth and the healing of those we have harmed.

3. **Redemptive Listening:** True reconciliation involves not only our willingness to apologize but also the active practice of listening. Rohr advocates for “redemptive listening” and “nonviolent communication.” This approach fosters open dialogue where both parties feel heard and understood, enhancing the healing process.

4. **The Shape of the Cross:** Rohr asserts that the geometry of the cross symbolizes the need for both vertical (spiritual) and horizontal (interpersonal) connections in reconciliation. Genuine healing and spiritual authenticity manifest in tangible relationships, not just abstract beliefs.

5. **The Process of Willingness:** The chapter articulates that becoming willing to make amends is itself a gradual journey. It involves ongoing reflection on our past behavior and the harms we have inflicted, shifting our focus from being victims of others’ actions to recognizing how we have contributed to the hurt.

6. **Listing Our Wrongs:** A practical step in this process is to create a list of those we have wronged rather than those who have wronged us. This practice counters the instinctual tendency towards self-pity and fosters

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accountability. It invites a mindset of humility and gratitude, allowing us to act on our awareness of past mistakes through thoughtful gestures towards those we have harmed.

7. Transformation Through Grace: Ultimately, Rohr frames this process of making amends as an opportunity for transformation. By recognizing our flaws and seeking to reconcile, we can evolve into more compassionate individuals. This transformation is essential for achieving deeper relational and spiritual fulfillment.

In conclusion, Chapter 8 embodies a call to action, urging readers to engage in the often-painful but necessary work of reconciliation. Embracing this process enables personal growth and extends the grace of healing not only to ourselves but, importantly, to those we have affected. Through humility, active participation, and genuine desire for amends, we can foster a path towards profound transformation and restoration.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The Need for Acknowledgment

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing in front of a mirror, your reflection speaking back the truths you've often avoided. Chapter 8 of 'Breathing Underwater' invites you to embark on a journey of self-honesty, where acknowledging your wrongs becomes the first step towards true liberation. Picture the weight lifting from your shoulders as you make peace with the past, understanding that this courageous admission is not just about facing your mistakes but about embracing your humanity. In recognizing your flaws, you unlock the door to deeper connections with others, allowing healing to flow in both directions. This key point serves as a reminder that our relationships thrive on authenticity; by owning past actions, you cultivate growth, compassion, and ultimately, a more fulfilled life.

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## Chapter 9: Skillful Means

Chapter 9 of "Breathing Underwater" by Richard Rohr delves into the concept of "skillful means," particularly in the context of making amends, as emphasized in Step 9 of the Twelve Steps. This chapter invites readers to reflect on the profound nature of apologies and interpersonal reconciliation, drawing upon biblical wisdom and real-life experiences.

1. **The Essence of Wisdom and Skillful Means:** In contrasting Western notions of wisdom with Eastern concepts, Rohr emphasizes that true wisdom is practical and applicable, learned through guidance or the arduous process of trial and error. In a society that often lacks elder mentors to share this wisdom effectively, the role of imparting skillful means becomes crucial. Jesus exemplified this teaching in his parables and ethical guidance, focusing on human authenticity rather than divine worship.

2. **The Importance of Humility and Humanity:** The author points out how Jesus identified more as a "son of man" than as a divine figure, encouraging followers to emulate his humanity rather than idolize his divinity. This

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## Chapter 10 Summary: Is This Overkill?

In Chapter 10 of "Breathing Underwater" by O.F.M. Richard Rohr, the discussion centers around the concept of self-examination, particularly focusing on Step 10 of the Twelve Steps: "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it." The chapter begins by addressing the challenges and potential stagnation that can stem from excessive self-scrutiny, positing that while personal inventory is important, a balance should be maintained to prevent becoming mired in guilt or shame.

**1. The Transition from Guilt to Awareness** Rohr critiques traditional approaches to personal inventory that often wallow in guilt, suggesting instead a shift towards an "examination of consciousness." This newer perspective emphasizes awareness over judgment, inviting individuals to observe their thoughts and feelings without becoming trapped in self-criticism. This shift harmonizes well with the following steps of prayer and meditation, leading to a more profound spiritual journey.

**2. The Nature of Consciousness:** The author elaborates on consciousness as a vital fulfillment of the soul, explaining how it operates as a profound observer of our inner lives. He articulates consciousness as that which underlies our experiences, allowing individuals to step back from compulsive behaviors and attachments. By understanding consciousness and



detachment, Rohr argues that individuals can connect with a deeper spiritual wisdom that transcends mere self-identity, likening consciousness to a shared divine essence.

**3. The Role of the Holy Spirit:** Rohr discusses the concept of the Holy Spirit as synonymous with consciousness and soul. He emphasizes its pervasive presence and transformative potential in individuals' lives. The Spirit, presented as an "Advocate" or "Inner Witness," is perceived not as an external force but as an intimate inner guide that fosters connection with the divine and with others, underscoring every person's inherent identity as a 'child of God'.

**4. Cultivating an Objective Perspective:** Returning to the practical aspects of Step 10, Rohr asserts that this process is less about obsessively cataloging faults and more about perceiving oneself from a "grounded child of God" viewpoint, leading to a compassionate acceptance of one's imperfection. He infers that a calm and dignified recognition of wrongdoing becomes feasible when individuals are anchored in their divine identity.

**5. Love and Consciousness:** The chapter profoundly connects consciousness with the capacity to love, even our flaws and shortcomings. Rohr insists that to be truly conscious is to love fully, thus achieving liberation from self-imposed limitations and fears. This love transcends personal mistakes, situating them within the broader context of growth and

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understanding.

Through these principles, Rohr encourages readers to embrace the nuances of personal examination, urging a move toward deeper awareness and love that fosters healing and connection rather than the constriction of guilt. His reflections offer a pathway not merely for recognizing individual faults but for growing into a richer understanding of oneself as part of a larger spiritual tapestry, marked by compassion and interconnectedness.

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## Chapter 11 Summary: An Alternative Mind

In Chapter 11 of "Breathing Underwater" by Richard Rohr, the author delves deeply into the transformative nature of prayer and meditation, emphasizing a significant shift in consciousness when engaging with these practices. This chapter highlights the transition from an egocentric perspective to a soul-centric approach, which Rohr articulates through the contrast between the "calculating mind" and the "contemplative mind."

**1. The Nature of Prayer and Meditation:** Prayer is depicted not merely as a means of communicating with God, but as a profound restructuring of one's mindset. It involves exchanging a self-centered way of thinking for a way that aligns more closely with divine wisdom. This reorientation is critical for processing the fundamental human issues—love, death, suffering, God, and infinity—effectively.

**2. The Importance of Perspective:** The calculative mind is limited, viewing reality through a narrow lens shaped by individual needs and experiences. In contrast, the contemplative mind enables a broader and more profound understanding of existence. This shift is essential for authentic spiritual growth and requires intentional practice to master.

**3. Willingness to Be Transformed:** True prayer invites individuals to relinquish their preconceptions of what they want and instead to be open to

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discovering what they truly desire as guided by God's will. This transition is often met with resistance and discomfort, as it involves letting go of the small self and embracing a larger identity that connects with the divine.

4. **The Internal Journey:** Jesus' teachings underscore the necessity of going beyond outward expressions of faith, urging believers to seek an "inner room" where authentic spirituality thrives. This inner journey is where prayer becomes a transformative force, fostering genuine change rather than mere ritualistic behavior.

5. **Conscious Contact with God:** The author ties this concept to the Twelve Steps of recovery, arguing that substantive prayer leads to a deeper understanding of God's will and imparts the power to enact it in one's life. This conscious contact with the divine is not reliant on externals but emerges from an authentic inner dialogue.

6. **The Role of Community:** While communal prayer holds its place, Rohr cautions that it can sometimes foster superficiality and distract from the personal, transformative journey that solitary contemplation provides. True prayer is where personal struggles with life meet God, facilitating profound inner obedience and growth.

7. **The Call for Self-Reflection:** The chapter concludes with an encouragement to be mindful of how thoughts shape words, actions, and

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ultimately character. This reflection underscores the idea that the journey of prayer is a pathway toward realizing one's destiny in alignment with God's will.

Ultimately, Rohr advocates for a deep and reflective understanding of prayer and meditation as essential practices for transforming consciousness, facilitating genuine encounters with God, and enriching the inner life of believers. By adopting a contemplative mindset, individuals can foster an authentic spiritual journey that impacts not only their personal lives but also their broader communities.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The Importance of Perspective

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine stepping into a new reality where your understanding of life expands beyond the confines of your immediate desires and concerns. As you cultivate a contemplative mind, you begin to see the world through a lens of deeper empathy and connection, fostering a profound sense of belonging and purpose. This shift in perspective, as illuminated by Rohr, invites you to engage with life in a more meaningful way, allowing you to embrace love, suffering, and the divine with an openness that was previously unimaginable. By letting go of your egocentric mindset, you start living not just for yourself, but as a part of a larger tapestry of existence, enriching both your inner landscape and the lives of those around you.

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## Chapter 12: What Comes Around Must Go Around

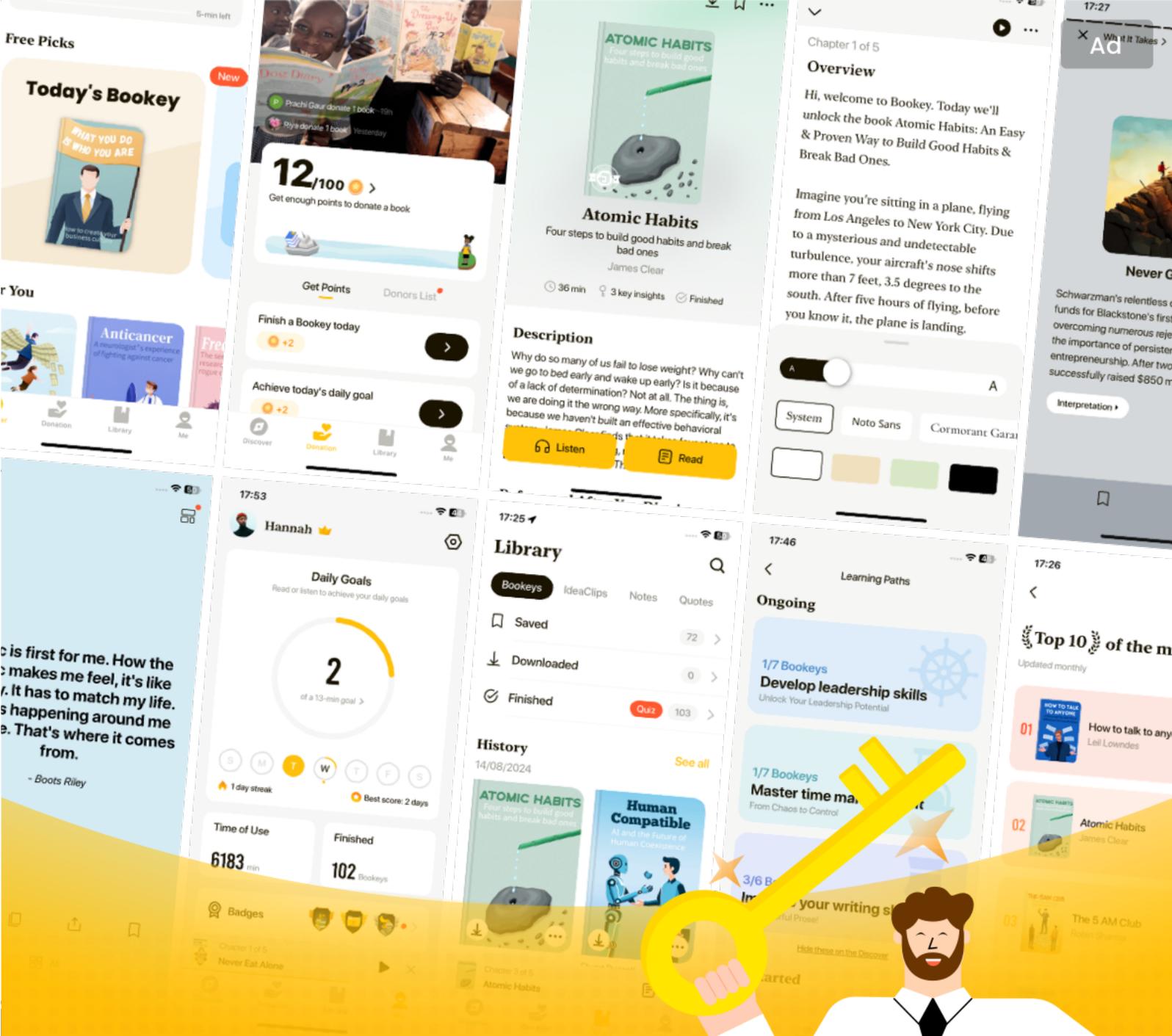
In Chapter 12 of "Breathing Underwater" by Richard Rohr, a profound exploration of spiritual awakening and the necessity of service emerges, particularly through the lens of the Twelve Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous. The chapter asserts that true spirituality entails active engagement with others and a commitment to love and service, rather than a focus on personal self-development alone.

1. The necessity of giving: A major theme is the notion that spiritual growth is inextricably linked with the act of giving back to others. Rohr emphasizes that genuine understanding of spiritual truths comes only through the act of sharing them. Like the principle of karma, what we inherit spiritually must be transmitted to others, suggesting a cyclic nature of spiritual gifts that flourishes with sharing.

2. The dangers of egocentricity: Rohr argues that too often, spirituality devolves into a form of self-absorption—what he categorizes as "spiritual consumerism." Without confronting our inherent selfishness and redirecting

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# Chapter 13 Summary: An Unexpected Postscript: Only a Suffering God Can Save

In this poignant reflection on the nature of suffering and the role of God in human anguish, the author delves into the profound and often perplexing interplay between divine love and the reality of pain. Here is a summary of the key principles and insights presented:

- 1. God's Relationship with Suffering:** The text begins with an exploration of how God engages with the suffering of the world. The author challenges traditional theodicies that attempt to reconcile a good and just God with the existence of evil. Instead, he suggests that a more meaningful understanding of God arises from recognizing that God is deeply entwined in human suffering rather than apart from it. This perspective positions God not as a distant observer, but as a participant in the plight of humanity.
- 2. Solidarity Through Shared Pain:** The author emphasizes how shared suffering creates a unique bond among individuals, underscoring that those who have endured pain can offer profound support and empathy to one another. This idea resonates with the wisdom found in Twelve Step Programs, which establish that true healing and compassion often emerge from common experiences of hardship.
- 3. The Nature of True Redemption** The core of the discussion lies in the

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assertion that individuals who have traversed their own suffering possess an innate understanding of love, trust, and redemption that is transformative. This process is deeply personal and cannot be reduced to mere theological constructs. It is through experiencing suffering that individuals can foster genuine connections and community.

**4. The Suffering God:** A critical insight here is the concept of a "suffering God." The author posits that only by acknowledging the divine presence in suffering can individuals reconcile their own pain and find solace. This suffering God becomes a source of comfort and strength for those grappling with their struggles—a God who intimately understands human anguish.

**5. Healing Through Compassion:** The text concludes by asserting that true salvation takes root when human beings, through their suffering, reach out to one another in love and empathy. The experience of suffering alone can bring forth a deeper realization of life's purpose and forge a path to spiritual awakening.

**6. Lessons of Suffering:** Ultimately, the author contemplates the transformative nature of suffering, suggesting that it is often through our deepest pains that we cultivate love, understanding, and connection to something much greater than ourselves. It highlights the paradoxical beauty that can emerge from suffering, as it has the power to awaken profound

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insights and a deeper relationship with the divine.

In this reflective journey, the author provides a narrative that not only addresses the complexities of human suffering but proposes a radical rethinking of how we view God's role within that suffering. The message resonates with those seeking meaning and solace amid life's most difficult trials, inviting them to recognize that they are not alone in their struggles.

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