

## “A Better Story: Spirit and Us -Pathways to Healing”

John 14:25-27

One of my favorite books in recent years is *Mistakes Were Made but Not by Me* by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson. It deals brilliantly with the challenge of human mistakes or what we might call in the Christian tradition, “sin.” We often have a hard time accepting and learning from our mistakes. We often deny them, blame others or the circumstances, or justify them. Here is how this works according to Tavris and Aronson: <https://youtu.be/FyjRrTbYjfA>.

Our brains seem to be wired for **cognitive dissonance**—that uncomfortable sting when our actions don’t match our values. As Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson point out, we often become "self-justifying historians," rewriting our own stories to make ourselves the hero. We do this because we are afraid that failure defines our worth.

But the gospel offers "A Better Story."

In the Japanese tradition of *Kaizen*, failure isn't a dead end; it is the "foundation of success". It is a pathway to growth. They teach this in their school where failure is seen as pathway to success: <https://youtu.be/JiCuR9b-hpw>.

When Jesus promises the Holy Spirit in John 14, He isn't giving us a supervisor to watch for our mistakes; He is giving us an **Advocate** and a **Teacher**. This passage is part of Jesus’ “farewell address” before his death which was meant to be addressed to the believers and the disciples to encourage them on the way. The Holy Spirit is the power they had within their souls to continue to learn and grow in the way of love. Jesus was a realist because he knew that his disciples were fragile like all of humanity. In our essence, we are good, but because of the fragility of life we also make mistakes along the way. Our perspective and our experiences are limited. We grow on the way. What matters is not our perfection, but our willingness to continue to learn and to access the power of the Spirit which God has implanted in us.

The disciples were going to face many challenges after Jesus left them. They were going to do really well in some areas but ended up failing miserably in other areas. But in all of it, the key was not always getting right, but the willingness to look deep within for the power of God’s presence in their lives.

Let’s listen to John 14:25-27

‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

The world gives "peace" through being right, being perfect, or being better than others. But Jesus gives peace through the Spirit—a peace that allows us to look honestly at our sins and mistakes without being destroyed by them.

When we "turn to wonder," as Parker Palmer suggests, we stop defending our egos and start attending to our souls. We stop saying, "I didn't do it," and start asking the Inner Teacher, "What is this mistake trying to teach me about my need for Your love?"

### **Interactive Practice: The "Kintsugi" of the Soul**

*Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold, making the piece stronger and more beautiful for having been broken.*

**Leader:** I invite you now into a time of interactive prayer. This is not a time for shame, but for "wonder and inquiry."

**1. The Breath of the Advocate** Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. As you exhale, imagine releasing the need to be "right." As you inhale, welcome the Holy Spirit—the Advocate—who sits beside you, not as a judge, but as a friend.

**2. Identifying the "Rough Spot"** Think of a recent mistake, or a conflict where you've felt the need to justify yourself. Don't look for a "huge" sin—perhaps just a moment where you were impatient, controlling, or defensive. Hold that moment in your mind.

**3. Turning to Wonder** Instead of judging yourself, ask the Holy Spirit these two "Wonder Questions":

- *Spirit, what was I afraid of in that moment? (Wait in silence)*
- *Spirit, how are you inviting me to grow through this? (Wait in silence)*

**4. The Golden Repair** Imagine the Holy Spirit pouring "liquid gold"—God's grace and peace—into the cracks of that mistake. See the mistake not as a scar to be hidden, but as a place where God's light now shines through.

**5. Closing Prayer** *Holy Spirit, our Inner Teacher, thank You for being the patient Guide of our souls. Thank You that we are "students of love" and that our value is not found in our perfection, but in our connection to You. Help us to stop justifying our mistakes and start offering them to You for healing. May Your peace, which the world cannot give, guard our hearts and minds. Amen.*