

The Crab Bucket Syndrome

In his book *Falling Upward*, Richard Rohr bases his primary theme on Carl Jung's concept of the Two Halves of Life. In the first half basic patterns are set by our family, society, educational systems, peer groups, and personal goals. Then a deep personal crisis comes. It may be caused by health issues, failure at work, divorce, death of a child, war, or even being sent to prison. At that point, the individual has a choice. He/she can continue on the same path that has been set, or go deep and get in touch with new values or their true self. However, when we set out on a new path, some major problems can develop. Rohr states the following:

One of the major blocks against the second journey is what we would now call the "collective," the crowd, our society, or our extended family. Some call it "the crab bucket syndrome" — you try to get out, but other crabs just keep pulling you back in. What passes for morality or spirituality in the vast majority of people's lives, is the way everybody they grew up with thinks. Some would call it conditioning or even imprinting. Without very real inner work, most folks never move beyond it. You might get beyond it in a negative sense, by reacting or rebelling against it, but it is much less common to get out of the crab bucket in a positive way...It takes a huge push, much self-doubt, and some degree of separation for people to find their own soul and their own destiny.

Rohr goes on to state that we must be willing to die, or to become engaged in the process of losing our false self.

Your false self is your role, title, and personal image that is largely a creation of your own mind and attachments. It will and must die in exact correlation to how much you want the Real. How much false self are you willing to shed to find your True Self?...Your True Self is who you objectively are from the beginning, the mind and heart of God, "the face you had before you were born" as the Zen masters say. It is your substantial self, your absolute identity, which can be neither gained nor lost by any technique, group, affiliation, morality, or formula whatsoever. The surrendering of our false self, which we have usually taken for our absolute identity, yet is merely a relative identity, is the necessary suffering needed to find "the pearl of great price" that is always hidden inside this lovely but passing shell.