

Some of us grew up thinking that our faith was a permanent, immovable object and that any whiff of change or dissonance was a personal failure. But what happens when you realize that the ways you've always understood and practiced your beliefs are unhealthy and need to shift?

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I was a very litigious adolescent. I mean, I wasn't literally bringing court cases as a 12 year old, but I saw injustice everywhere. This happened to be in the late 90s and early 00s when "hypocrisy" was a regular topic of conversation and "hypocrite" a label to be avoided. The buzzword was used to call out people who say one thing and do another. Hypocrites could not be trusted and I prided myself on never being considered one.

Fast-forward a few decades and I found myself in seminary studying Spiritual Formation. In the years since adolescence I've loosened up quite a bit (I sincerely think that's even an understatement), but I found myself returning to my old friend "hypocrisy." Allow me a moment to nerd out: two of my favorite theological terms are "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxy" - "right beliefs" and "right practices," respectively. I don't even think figuring out what the right ways of believing and practicing your faith are the most important aspects of these two terms.

I had not ever understood the relationship between belief and practice within my faith life. But the Holy Spirit can be tricky sometimes and I found myself slowly and painfully realizing that (much to my adolescent chagrin) there were

plenty of ways that my orthodoxy (beliefs) and orthopraxy (practices) weren't aligned.

If I believe that all people were created equal and are worthy of dignity and love, why would I think that some people need to spend a lifetime proving their worth and earning love when others are already being human the right way? Why wasn't I willing to be truly humble and uncomfortable and examine the ways I was living as if dignity and love were in limited supply? In theory, I believed in the equality of all humans, but I was not participating in helping make that a reality in the real world.

It didn't feel good to examine the ways that I wasn't living up to my own beliefs. And it felt even worse to realize that some of my beliefs led to unhealthy practices that were harming my own spiritual life as well as the lives of others. What do you do when you realize that doing the right thing goes against what you thought were right beliefs?

No, really? What do you do?

For awhile I did nothing. I just observed. But eventually the dissonance became too much and I had to truly examine what I believed. In some ways I had to adjust the practical ways I exercised my faith practices, but in other ways I needed to consider if my understanding of theology, my beliefs themselves were what needed realignment. If my beliefs necessitate the oppression of others in order to practice them, then I don't think they're worth hanging on to. If my practices aren't leading me and others towards growth, health, and transformation, what good are they?

I'm purposefully not being specific about which specific aspects of my faith needed realigning - I'm happy to discuss them one on one since they require the kind of nuance and trust that isn't realistic in a single podcast episode. What I want you to hear is that the point of a healthy faith is not figuring out the *right* way of believing or practicing (although I do believe there are some truths that are non-negotiable) but to consider the tug of war at play between our orthodoxy and orthopraxy. You believe what you do and I want my faith to always be producing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Here are some books to help you examine the ways your beliefs and practices are related to each other:

- Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero
- A Deeply Formed Life by Rich Villodas
- Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton

You'll find links to these along with a full transcript of this episode at BeckyLMcCoy.com/podcast/73

If you believe fashion should be comfortable, sustainable, and stylish, you've got to check out Rothy's. Their original flat is an award winner and I've been eyeing the driving loafers for years now (I've already got the flat and the point). Get \$20 off your order when you use the link BeckyLMcCoy.com/Rothys. That's BeckyLMcCoy.com, slash, R-O-T-H-Y-S.

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If you found this episode encouraging or helpful, share it with a friend and remember: it's okay to change the ways you understand or practice your faith when you discover dissonance and misalignments. You're doing great.