WORKSHEET

Mapping Your Circles of Disclosure

Closeness has a shape, and most of us were never taught it.

The Circles of Disclosure is a model Jim has worked out over about twenty-five years with clients, in spiritual direction, and on himself. It is not a rule about secrecy. It is a question about proportion — whether what you share is aimed at the person in front of you, or whether it is simply what comes out of you now, in every room, to whoever happens to be sitting there.

A Practice to Begin

Draw five circles, one inside the next. At the center, the person who gets the whole of you. Then familiar others — children, parents, a confidant or two. Then good friends. Then acquaintances and colleagues. Then the outer ring: strangers and the public. Put real names in, not categories. Where a name is hard to place, leave it sitting between two rings and notice what makes it difficult.

Reflection Questions

1. Who is at the center, and does that person know it?
2. Name something you said this month to someone in an outer ring that belonged further in. What did it cost?
3. Name something the center had every right to hear that you held back instead. What was that protecting?
4. When something large comes out of you, is it aimed, or is it spillage? How would you tell the difference from the inside?
5. Which of the three goes wrong most often for you — being used, being misread, or being understood as offering a closeness you did not mean?
6. Is there a ring that is currently empty? What would it take to put one name in it?

An Invitation for the Week

Before you share something that matters, pause long enough to ask which ring this person is standing in. Not in order to withhold. In order to aim.

None of these are failures of honesty. Every one of them is a failure of proportion.

— The Circles You Didn't Know You Were Drawing