

Holding Paradox

Making room for complexity, uncertainty, and more than one truth

The spiritual life is rarely simple

Many people come to spiritual direction hoping for clarity, and clarity can be a gift. But the deeper life often includes paradox. We may feel faith and doubt, grief and gratitude, longing and resistance, belonging and exile, certainty and unknowing.

Holding paradox does not mean avoiding discernment or refusing to make choices. It means making enough room for complexity before narrowing life into a single explanation.

Both may be true

A tradition may have wounded someone and also given them beauty. A relationship may have been loving and also limited. A spiritual practice may be helpful and also used defensively. A person may be called toward change and also rightly afraid of what change will cost.

Spiritual direction can help hold these tensions without rushing to flatten them. Sometimes healing begins when the soul is allowed to tell the truth in more than one register.

Paradox and maturity

Paradox often asks for humility. It asks us to release the fantasy that the spiritual life will always feel clean, resolved, and certain. It asks us to live with mystery without collapsing into passivity or confusion.

This kind of holding can deepen compassion. When we can bear complexity in ourselves, we may become less quick to judge complexity in others.

Practices for holding paradox

- Name both sides of the tension without forcing one to disappear.
- Notice what each side is protecting, longing for, or grieving.
- Ask what becomes more loving, honest, grounded, and responsible when both truths are honored.
- Let silence hold what the mind cannot yet reconcile.
- Return to the body when paradox becomes abstract or overwhelming.

Closing reflection

To hold paradox is not to give up on truth. It is to honor truth deeply enough to let it be complex.

Sometimes the soul grows not by choosing one side too quickly, but by staying present long enough for a deeper integration to appear.