We talked last time about customer service. The point there being that you, the service provider meets the needs of your partner, the customer. I hope none of you beat up the other with “the customer is always right.” Although that is a good policy, if you are using this to get your needs met then you’ve got it backwards, the challenge is to meet their needs so you don’t have to demand with “I’m right so do it what I said.”

The problem here is in being right. The quote I’ve borrowed from Tom and Pat Malone in “The Art of Intimacy” is “If you’re right, you’re wrong.”

In Coupling, we are primarily working on being in relationship. Being right is working on another task. Being right is a power position that is not collegial or relational. There is no learning in ‘right.’ With right the argument is over and discussion ceases.

Naturally this interferes with connection and growing together. Being right sets up distance. Like saying “I’m on my podium making the proclamation, you peons down there need to hear and act on the edicts of the high and mighty.”

This is never conducive to closeness or intimacy. Intimacy requires safety, receptivity, and affirmation. ‘Right’ may offer safety in a paternalistic kind of way but can short-circuit your goals of Coupling. (If the goal is to lead and dominate, then you need to be right.)

It boils down to the question, “do you want to be right or do you want to be happy?”

But this is difficult work. Couples are always fighting over who is right, when to do what, how much to spend where, and how to tell whom. Naturally as individuals we all have a particular position that is right to us. Like noses we all have an opinion. We live with our opinion because we came to it as a matter of experiences and decisions. No one wants to live in uncertainty or confusion.

The challenge in coupling is setting aside ‘right’ in order to make room for the other. We all know listening is important, but especially when you think you are right. It may only be your opinion. You may know you are right but so do they, so much so that both are willing to fight for it.

Here’s the challenge for you. Listen, hear the other side, and genuinely care about your partner’s opinion. You may even go so far as saying, “be my teacher, show me what I am not understanding.” Hold on Bruce, you’re going too far!

What a great gift to give, to validate and understand. We all want to be understood and known. And inside your coupling is the perfect place to practice this redemptive principal of giving. You’ll recognize from the Prayer of St. Francis, “not so much to be understood as to understand, not so much to be loved as to love.’

Seriously, in Coupling, if you’re right, you’re wrong. We have to give up our position of rightness in order to make room for the other and have any chance for intimacy and happiness.