

In Memory of Richard Twiss

By [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

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[Richard Twiss](#) and I spent time meditating and praying together, particularly discerning the question, “Who God is calling us to be?”

Richard talked about how he had always been an ambitious person, but he knew that it was time for him to stop striving and be with his tribe. He explained that he was the person that he was because of his relationships with his family and tribe, and it was time to nurture those connections.

When Richard asked who God was calling me to be, I began to articulate my elevator speech. I had just left my position as a pastor and had been asked by hundreds of people what I was doing with my life. Being an ambitious person myself, I eagerly wanted to prove that I had a plan. So, I had become very adept at outlining my goals succinctly. “I have three hopes,” I began. But as soon as I started, I realized that I didn’t have three hopes. I had one. My canned speech smelled; it suddenly seemed outdated and spoiled.

I looked at Richard as my words faltered. I wondered, *Why I can’t I articulate my three goals? Is it because I respect this man too much? Do I just want to impress him, and so I’m ready to change who I am in order to fit his expectations of me?* I thought about this as Richard looked at his shoes. He crossed his arms like a man who had all the time in the world. He gave me all the space I needed as I fidgeted in my seat.

I took a deep breath and realized, *Richard doesn’t have any expectations of me. I just can’t lie in front of him. I can’t even tell him the lies I’ve told myself for these months.* Richard had an unbelievable detector for bull crap and I couldn’t get around it. I had to tell the truth—to him and to myself.

In that short hour, Richard helped me to see beyond my ambitious striving, beyond fulfilling everyone’s expectations—and he helped me to sort out who God was calling me to be. I’m grateful for Richard’s imagination and love as he took the time to

mentor so many of us.

Richard Twiss died on February 9, 2013 in D.C. He will be missed.