

The Amen Effect: Ancient Wisdom to Mend our Broken Hearts and World

Chapter 2 Please, Hold On

1. Threshold Moments

Purpose: *Mark the transition from daily life to sacred encounter.*

- Greet people with soft music, low lighting, and a visual centerpiece a photo of your loved ones on a table next to a lit candle.
- Opening prayer: *Let us pray; Holy Spirit, be with us, help us to see your light as we pray, share and grow as your people. We ask this in your holy name. Amen*

2. Sacred Sparks

Purpose: *Create curiosity and open hearts.*

- Pose this provocative question.
 - *Describe your experience during the pandemic. Or*
 - *Describe a darkness to light event.*
- Have people whip around the circle with their answers.

3. Chambers of the Spirit

Purpose: *Share lived faith experiences in sacred listening circle.*

Invite everyone to share the answer to one or more questions.

1. Rabbi Sharon Brous quotes a nineteenth-century rabbi when reflecting on the plague of darkness (Ex 10). She suggests that when we cannot see one another or recognize our neighbor's pain, we live in disconnection. How do you experience disconnection in your life?
2. Is there a "chorus of loneliness" in our communities? Is the Church the best place to foster connectedness? Where else have you found loneliness being overcome?
3. Brous imagines the challenges Adam and Eve must have faced during their first night, enveloped in total darkness. Was this the end? Imagine the joy that must have come with the dawn. Have you ever experienced a moment of sudden enlightenment or clarity?

4. In today's culture, phrases like "I did it my way" seem to clash with the reality that God created us for community and mutual support. What are your thoughts on this contrast?
5. Have you ever had a moment like Jonathan's—something you were ashamed of or an experience you were afraid to share because of fear of judgment? How did that impact your sense of connection?
6. Describe your experience with relationships that share a common purpose. How does that shared mission affect your sense of community?
7. Brous points out that people don't join a church for its advanced metrics. As Catholics, we are deeply invested in the sacraments, but we are also wired for relationship. How do we bridge these concepts to create authentic community?
8. Following a celebrity suicide, conversations often emerge about mental health and isolation. How can we transform our communities into places of love and care? How do we build the "Amen Effect"—the sacred mandate to hear one another, embrace each other, and love especially on the hardest days?

4. Intentional Sending

Purpose: *Leave inspired and committed to live the faith.*

- Use a ritual action:
 - Relight the candle
 - Invite everyone to share the one word or phrase they would like to take into the next week/month (depending how often you are meeting).
- Close with a prayer of sending... *Have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.*

Philippians 4:13