

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

## Chapter 3 See No Stranger

### 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 Loving God, in a world quick to explain and fix, teach us to listen, to stay, to bear witness to each other's hearts. May Your Spirit guide our reflections today. Amen.*

### 2. Sacred Sparks

**Purpose:** *Create curiosity and open hearts.*

- Pose this provocative question.
  - *Describe a near death or dangerous experience.*
- 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 Brous writes, "Every person, created in God's own image, has endless potential."  
*Do you believe there's untapped potential within you—something God may be calling forth in this season of your life? What might that be?*
2. Quoting the rabbis, Brous says: "Anyone who destroys a single life, it is as if they have destroyed the entire world. And anyone who saves a single life, it is as if they have saved the entire world."  
*Who in our world, community, or neighborhood is crying out for saving—not necessarily in dramatic ways, but in quiet, everyday suffering?*
3. Brous shares that 42,000 "images of God" slept on the streets last night.  
*How does this reality affect you personally? As members of the Catholic Church, how are we called to respond to this human crisis?*
4. Reflecting on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, the rabbis focus not on sexual sin but on the cruelty of a city that punished generosity.

*Who are the "Plotits" of our time—those who uphold or benefit from systems that punish compassion or prioritize exclusion over mercy?*

5. Brous speaks of a "covenant of cruelty"—an unspoken agreement in society that accepts or enables suffering.

*Where have you seen such a covenant at work—in policy, in culture, or even in our own hearts? How might we begin to break it?*

6. Brous asks what it takes to shift our consciousness from seeing "a stranger who is unwell" to seeing "Henry, my neighbor, created in God's image."

*What helps you make that shift—from abstraction to relationship, from stereotype to sacred dignity? What gets in the way?*

7. After telling the story of Hanne, who welcomed an unhoused man into her home, Brous invites us to consider our answers to difficult questions:

- *What instincts cause us to fear an unhoused stranger more than we fear the suffering of homelessness itself?*
- *What risks—emotional, spiritual, or practical—am I willing to take to truly see someone as a person?*
- *If I were Hanne, what would I have done?*

#### **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... *You meet us in joy and in sorrow.*

*Help us to show up—with humility, love, and silence when needed.*

*Teach us to say "Amen" to the pain of others, not to explain it away,*

*but to acknowledge it and honor it. Send us forth as people of presence.*

*Amen.*