

Jesus and Connection

The crowds gathered to hear Jesus. They likely are telling each other stories of what they've heard about this teacher—the things he has said, the wonders he has performed. There is a buzz. Jesus begins to walk among them. They reach out to touch his clothes because they feel or perceive a kind of power coming from him. They clamor to speak with him. At times he has to get in a boat in order to teach, so large are their numbers. And they stayed with him so long at times, that he had to find a way to feed thousands physically as well as spiritually. All of this means that Jesus created connection on a large scale—perhaps even the thrill that is called “collective effervescence” when people have a heightened experience together. And we know from the research about this phenomenon that the bond created in shared experience of this kind lasts for a good long while. He gave them a gift of feeling part of something bigger even after they returned to their homes, their labor, and whatever circumstances they faced in their lives. And this is why we gather in his name as well.

But he didn't just make crowd connections. He sought out connection with people around personal tables. Again, allow your imagination to describe the scene. At table. Your table. With Jesus. Wow. What would that have been like? I can only imagine that he wasn't just at the table with you, but he paid attention to you. Saw you. Knew you. We are called to make connections. To slow down, to “spend” time, to give our attention. Whether it is feeding those who are hungry physically or using table fellowship to draw people together who are hungry spiritually, socially, or emotionally, Jesus said “do this.”

“...when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” – Luke 14: 10-11

When have you felt a sense of awe at the connectedness of the human family? What impact did the isolation of the pandemic have on you? What effect does political polarization have on your sense of wellbeing?

Experiences [of collective effervescence] contribute to a life filled with less loneliness and greater meaning, positive emotions, and social connection... Collective assembly meets the primal human yearnings for shared social experiences. A collective assembly can start to heal the wounds of a traumatized community. When we come together to share authentic joy, hope, and pain, we melt the pervasive cynicism that often cloaks our better human nature. – Brené Brown, Why Experiencing Joy and Pain in a Group Is So Powerful”

Awe Practice: Synch Up

For almost twenty years, I held retreats at Lake Tahoe for spiritual leaders. The place itself created a container of awe. We ate, talked, sang, laughed, learned and ritualized together resulting in a palpable collective effervescence. But my favorite evening about mid-week was when I would lead a “drum circle” experience with a variety of percussion instruments. At the beginning many, if not most, were leaning back with skepticism about their ability to join in the rhythm (“I don’t have any”). But when everyone started playing together, you could see even the most tentative ones start to jam when they realized they would never be left alone to keep the rhythm on their own.

We can be more confident when given the opportunity to “synch up.” It doesn’t have to involve a drum circle or a mass singing event. Simply the basic rhythm and dance of passing the deviled eggs at a dinner party helps even the most introverted get in touch with our innate ability (and need) to connect. This awe practice is the curation of connection. What will it be? Who can you collaborate with to make it happen?



Do not feel lonely, the entire universe is inside you. Stop acting so small. You are the universe in ecstatic motion. Set your life on fire. Seek those who fan your flames. – Rumi