



"We need to remain on the road to Emmaus. The Stranger still stalks that same road. In His company, we need to discuss our doubts, discuss the scriptures and continually offer each other bread and consolation." Ronald Rohlheiser

"Our stories are the bread we have to offer one another." Sue Monk Kidd

I've been lingering in the story of Jesus joining two disciples out of Jerusalem and on to their hometown of Emmaus (Luke 14:13-32). He has just been crucified and buried. Rumors swirl that His body is missing. The men don't know it's Jesus when He asks them: "What are you two talking about? What has happened?" (The men's response, loosely translated from Aramaic, is, "Duh!")

Why did Jesus ask them to tell the story? (Surely, He knew it. He lived it!) But He also knew something they didn't: They needed to tell it, to "discuss their doubts." "When a person tells [their] story and is truly heard and understood," writes [Dr. Curt Thompson](#), "both [they] and the listener undergo actual changes in their brain circuitry. [They] feel a greater sense of emotional and relational connection, decreased anxiety, and greater awareness of and compassion for others' suffering."

Did you catch that? Telling our stories to an empathic witness re-wires our brains for healing. And not just that, listening to others' stories heals us, too. Scientists in the field of interpersonal neurobiology are finding what Jesus has known all along: Being seen and known heals our broken stories.

My husband has shared his excruciating childhood with thousands of men at a local [men's retreat](#). It still makes me wince sometimes to hear it, and people ask him how he can tell it again and again. Bob says telling his story keeps him sane, the repetition of God's redemption reminds him of his security, identity, and sense of self-worth. It dawned on me: Bob has literally been healing himself and feeding others by sharing his story among a kind and safe brotherhood. His brain has been re-wired for a new narrative.

During this time of isolation, consider a safe friend with whom you can share how you are doing, how you might be fearful. And watch something beautiful happen. "It is difficult for the brain to attune to others when it is afraid;" says Thompson, "but, counterintuitively, when we practice paying attention to others, our fear dissipates. When we look for others with the intention to connect, we disallow anxiety from taking up residence within us." We literally put up a no-trespassing sign to fear.

And we move toward healing.

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