

Polly's Pondering

I was listening to a TED Talk by Brene Brown, the Huffington Foundation's Endowed Chair at the University of Houston. She was speaking on vulnerability. This seems so timely, especially in the wake of Simone Biles' shocking action of pulling out of the team events and the All-Around gymnastic event at the Olympics.

Brene Brown starts the talk by making the statement that "Connection is why we are here. It is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. This is what it's all about. It doesn't matter whether you talk to people who work in social justice, mental health, and abuse and neglect what we know is that connection, the ability to feel connected, is neurobiologically how we are wired. It is why we are here." From a Christian perspective we know this is true as well. After all didn't Jesus say that the greatest commandment is *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'...and the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."* Matthew 22:36-40 In other words, we are created to love God and to love ourselves equally as well as we love our neighbors. We are to be connected to one another! Not only are we wired for it - it all flows from our connection to the One in whose image we are created.

So, if you are an enemy of God and you want nothing more than to create chaos to God's created order, you might introduce into the people of God the fear that they are not connected, the thought that they are not able to be connected, and or the feeling that they are not even worthy of being connected.

Shame is one of those tools of the enemy. "Shame is really easily understood as the fear of disconnection. (Brown)" The scripture tells us that Christ came into the world not to condemn it but that through him it might be saved. John 3:16-17

Fear is another tool of the enemy. Sometimes it sounds like this: "Is there something about me that if people know it or see it that I won't be worthy of connection?" Through God's word we hear: *"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* 2 Timothy 1:7

So when the enemy whispers that no one could love you because...(fill in the blank) shout back *"For I am convinced, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:38-39 NRSV. We will always be connected to God and God's love through Jesus Christ.

So, if we believe as Brown does that "... in order for connection to happen we have to allow ourselves to be seen, really seen" then, we must have the courage to allow ourselves to be seen. This takes a willingness to be vulnerable. It means that we have to be willing to be seen both in our perfection and our imperfection.

The first step is to accept that you are created worthy. God said after creating humankind that it was very good. And we were created in the image of God. Our worth is directly tied to God. To be unworthy is to say that the image from which we were created is flawed, imperfect, not worthy.

The second step is to refuse to numb yourself to the emotions of fear, embarrassment, feeling of insignificance because to do so is to also numb yourself to joy, happiness, and gratitude.

It seems to me this is the place in which Simone was wrestling with over these last few days. Perhaps it looked like this. If I fail to do well, will I still be loved? What will happen if I let these girls down? Will they still love me? What will the nation think about me if I fail to live up to expectations of perfection? I could never forgive myself if I kept these girls from getting a medal.

The third step is to be courageously vulnerable. As Simone walked off with her head held high, I believe she modeled for us the ability to be courageous through vulnerability. And as she embraced it, able to come out and experience both the messiness of imperfection and the joy and gratitude of a team that allowed her to be imperfect and loved her anyway, she modeled a willingness to tell the story of who she is with her whole heart. Somewhere in the process, I believe, their connection became stronger because they were able to be authentic with each other.

Now what if we would be courageous to be vulnerable before God and one another - imagine the strength of the connection we would experience because we were able to be authentic before the LORD. Join me in listening to Lauren Daigle tell her story with a song rich in vulnerability and full of hope through the assurance that we are worthy of love and purpose, fellowship and connection because God says so.

Lauren Daigle ~ You Say

