

## Prayer Transformation Ministries Email Newsletter – Teaching for 3/28/07

### The Blessings of Brokenness

The importance of brokenness is often downplayed and even dismissed in the American Church. In contrast, it was not uncommon for African believers during seasons of revival to distinguish between Christians and truly *broken* Christians. They would ask if a believer was broken, rather than wonder if the believer had a strong commitment to Christ or worked hard in ministry. They knew that those who embraced brokenness understood what it meant to walk fully in the purposes of God.<sup>1</sup>

Many times in our ministry we have experienced either looks of bewilderment or outright resistance when we speak of the significance of brokenness in the Christian life. In the American Church, the topic of brokenness is one of the most misunderstood and neglected truths of the Bible. Jesus preached about brokenness when He said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:3-4).

### We Don’t Understand Brokenness

It is hard in our cultural context to understand the concept of brokenness. Our society is all about self-fulfillment and determining our own destinies. Bookstores are loaded with self-help books. The most recent obsession surrounding “The Secret” is just another re-packaging of age-old attempts to exclude God and make man the controller of all things.

The Church is no exception. Walk through any Christian bookstore and you will find books on how to have a happy marriage, be successful financially, or raise happy children. Church leaders can buy any number of books on how to grow their churches exponentially or implement sure-fire programs. Even the Church has to admit it has succumbed at some level to a culture that esteems self-reliance and outward success.

Yet listen to the word of God in Isaiah 66:1-2: “*Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being? declares the Lord. **This is the one I esteem; he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.***” The great God of this universe is not looking for successful people to manage His Kingdom. He is looking for those who are poor, weak, and in desperate need of Him. Those are the hearts that God is searching for—and in which He finds great pleasure.

### Brokenness Is a Choice

Many fear brokenness because they believe it means that tragedy or devastation has to enter their lives to bring them to that point. Others believe brokenness will result in deep depression, overwhelming sadness, or some level of emotional breakdown.

But *true brokenness can be a choice*, even though it may be a painful or difficult choice. It is the choice to give up our reliance on self. It is agreeing with God about how He sees the true condition of our hearts. Brokenness is a breaking of our self-will and a surrendering to Him. It is not a one-time event, but rather a lifestyle of submitting oneself to God’s will, purposes, and supernatural enablement. In Psalm 51:17, David uses the word “contrite.” Contrite has the idea of being *crushed to powder*. It is the inability to put ourselves back together again or to make anything of ourselves.

Brokenness is the path of God’s blessing (Matthew 5: 3). It attracts the favor and esteem of God (Isaiah 66:2). As Roy Hession states in his classic book *The Calvary Road*, “To be broken is the beginning of revival. It is painful, it is humiliating, but it is the only way.”<sup>2</sup> To talk of revival and transformation without embracing brokenness is foolishness and self-delusion. This is a hard word in our “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” culture. But all our plans, visions, and methodologies will mean nothing until we are a people

who learn how to live a life of genuine, biblical brokenness. In broken people, God finds vessels through which He can pour His unlimited love, grace, and blessing into a desperately needy world. Brokenness is the pathway to true joy and fruitfulness in ministry.

Are you willing to commit to a lifestyle of brokenness? This is not a question of whether you've had tragedy or frustration in your life or ministry. This is an issue of willingly coming to the end of your self-reliance in your Christian life—and even giving up “doing ministry” as you've known it.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss, in her book *Brokenness: The Heart God Revives*, has a chapter entitled, “Am I a Proud or a Broken Person?” It is a wonderful checklist of what a truly broken person looks like compared to a prideful heart. Here is just a sample of the challenging comparisons:

- o *Proud people* feel confident in how much they know. *Broken people* are humbled by how very much they have to learn.
- o *Proud people* find it difficult to discuss their spiritual needs with others. *Broken people* are willing to be open and transparent with others as God directs.
- o *Proud people* try to control the people and circumstances around them—they are prone to manipulate. *Broken people* trust in God—they rest in Him and are able to wait for Him to act on their behalf.
- o *Proud people* don't think they need to repent of anything. *Broken people* realize they need to maintain a continual heart of repentance.
- o *Proud people* don't think they need revival, but they are sure everyone else does. *Broken people* continually sense their need for a fresh encounter with God and for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit.

This kind of checklist is a powerful tool in the journey toward revival.<sup>3</sup> Let the Lord examine your heart and show you the path to brokenness.

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<sup>1</sup> *Brokenness: The Heart God Revives*, by Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Moody Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> *The Calvary Road*, by Roy Hession, Christian Literature Crusade, pg. 21.

<sup>3</sup> The full list of *Proud vs. Broken People* is available at [www.reviveourhearts.com/pdf/1-ProudBrokenPeople.pdf](http://www.reviveourhearts.com/pdf/1-ProudBrokenPeople.pdf)