

EMBRACING BROKENNESS MINISTRIES

What Does it Mean to Embrace Your Brokenness?

There are many ways that individuals describe brokenness and the human condition. For this purpose, three categories will be explored. Inherent, imposed, and invited brokenness. Let's examine each type and where the focal points lie for those wishing to address their personal and spiritual brokenness.

Inherent brokenness is the brokenness that comes from sin. The idea of inherent brokenness assumes that our very nature is broken. We are all imperfect and all capable of evil. Christians have many different interpretations of when this sin is addressed. At Embracing Brokenness Ministries, sin is addressed at the cross. It becomes personal when we accept and believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins. But the very nature of sinful rebellion (wanting to do things our way versus God's way) has left us with habits and reward systems that need to be transformed.

Key scriptures:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; (Isaiah 53:6)

Paul admits that "the trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin" (Romans 7:14)

Paul also states, "So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin." (Romans 7:25).

Solomon concurs: "Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

The apostle John perhaps puts it most bluntly: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

Imposed brokenness, also known as woundedness or trauma (in today's vernacular), is the kind of brokenness that happens to us in the course of living in a world at war (spiritually speaking). This brokenness comes from outside of us that we do not choose but is the consequence of sinful choice in the Garden of Eden. Accidents, illnesses, injuries, traumas, losses, unkind words, hurtful situations, disappointments, and abuse cause our wounds. It is important to note that imposed brokenness hijacks our sense of identity and causes us to live out of a false self. Another way to say it is our true self is hidden under layers of fig leaves to cover the vulnerability of that true self.

We are responsible for choosing how we deal with this brokenness. Often, we can pass on our brokenness to others as we react out of our pain and anger in hurtful ways—thus the

saying “Hurt people hurt people”. But when fully healed, this type of brokenness becomes the source of healing for others—the concept of the wounded healer.

Invited Brokenness is embracing the imposed brokenness—as a caterpillar enters the chrysalis to release something transformed—a butterfly. The brokenness originates from within to make way for a deeper, more authentic, more mature version of our Self to emerge—what we like to call the true self. God only wants to relate to the true self He created before He placed us in “our mother’s womb” (Psalm 139). Some of the characteristics often shared about addressing this type of brokenness:

- When we let go of what we know to reach for something more.
- When we choose to break open and surrender to God’s molding when overwhelmed by the pain of imposed brokenness
- When we choose to break open because we realize that our old ways have kept us stuck in places we don’t want to be for far too long.
- When we allow ourselves to be broken open—following the guidance of the Spirit—to become our true selves and move toward greater wholeness.

The Journey of Addressing Brokenness

Looking at transformation as the process that enables us to gradually die to sin, self, and society/culture to fully and profoundly love God and people, George Barna explains in his book *Maximum Faith* that Jesus Himself defined the journey's destination. He taught His followers that the most important exhortations from God were to love God and people with all of their heart, mind, strength, and soul (Mark 12:30-31). In the Garden of Eden, we chose to eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, being convinced by Satan that God was holding out on us and that we could be as knowledgeable as Him. We thought we knew better how to run our lives than God did. Each day, and often multiple times a day, we make choices aligning with who is in charge of our lives—God or ourselves. Most of the time, Self wins. But to address our brokenness, we must be willing to turn the reigns back over to God and play by the Kingdom’s rules, not the world’s.

Knowing the purpose of the journey is critical. Most Christians mirror cultural goals, desiring power, the favor of others, and material things that they believe will provide happiness, comfort, security, belonging, and popularity. Surprisingly, few are focused on completely cooperating with God to experience the kind of whole-life transformation described in the Bible, which is made possible only through a partnership with God. The lack of understanding of the goals of a truly Jesus-following life prevents people from making the extraordinary life possible. As a result, the church does not look much different than the world, opting to play by the world's rules (written by the enemy Satan) rather than those of the Kingdom of God.

While God-driven transformation is more common among people who are engaged in church life than among those who are not, neither the length of time involved with churches, nor

the number of hours devoted to church-oriented activities bears much of a correlation to transformational progress. Barna stated, “You can be the Church Lady and yet be no farther along the journey than Richard Dawkins (a well-known atheist). Attending church activities and classes does not guarantee or necessarily enhance one’s transformational experience. Wholeness requires more than simply showing up and gorging on the religious-activities menu.” The study found that some people reach the ultimate stages of wholeness and maturity within just a couple of decades, while others failed to achieve such maturity after more than five decades of consistent religious activity and positive intent. Barna goes on to identify ten “stops” of the transformational journey.

The transformational journey has ten stops en route to wholeness and freedom. According to the research, most Americans never get beyond stop three (awareness and concern about sin and its effects but not cooperating with Christ to alleviate that problem). Among those who become “born again Christians,” most never move past stop five (i.e., having invited Christ to be their Savior and then engaging in much religious activity). In other words, **most of the American public never reaches the second half of the stops on the journey to wholeness.** Barna also determined that most church programs are designed to help people get to stop five of the journey but not to move farther down the road to Christ-likeness.

Barna identified the most challenging stop as “stop 7, which is that of brokenness.” The researcher indicated that to move closer to completion of the journey, a person must be broken of three things: sin, self, and society. He noted that America’s culture is a substantial barrier to people being willing to completely abandon themselves and the world in favor of listening to, obeying, and enjoying God.

Armed with numerous insights from the research, Barna mentioned a few of the statistics in the book that place some of these perspectives in context. For instance, while more than two-thirds of Americans say they are either “religious” or “spiritual,” they admit to not being deeply committed to faith matters. Fewer than one in five (18%) claims to be “totally committed” to personal spiritual development. Further evidence shows that among **adults who claim to be Christian, just one out of every seven (14%) say that their faith in and relationship with God is the highest priority in their life.** Driven by social mores, few adults who believe they are Christian are willing to abandon worldly objectives in favor of seeking godliness.

Understanding that we are made in three parts: body, soul, and spirit, the Western world focuses mainly on the physical and not on the other two. Also interesting is that the warning God gave to Adam was, “Dying, you shall die.” God was talking about two deaths. The first and immediate was the spiritual death or ...

... separation from God, and the other being ... physical death through a long decaying process. Satan only focused on one death, the physical, ignoring the greater death. He knew that negating the spiritual would change the way that humans see the world. God fully intended us to see the world through the spiritual lens, starting with our intimate relationship. When focused in the way intended, the physical body was instructed by the soul, which was taught by the Spirit/God/the ways of the Kingdom. But detached from the Spirit, we started to interpret our world through the physical, which instructs the soul, which instructs the Spirit.

Until we can return to the way God intended, where our Spirit is driving the process of how we see the world, we will remain crippled by fear, anxiety, depression, etc.. It will be difficult to enjoy intimacy with God (as depicted to the right). The transformation journey requires us to be safe in God's presence, fully engaged and tuned into His instruction, then reverse this lens problem and fully live in the Shalom, a hallmark of the Kingdom.

We must embrace our own brokenness and the process of surrendering our lives to God so that we can be fully restored to do the work that God prescribed for us in Genesis 2. Restoration and healing are available to everyone once they have surrendered control over life to our Creator God. Once Jesus is driving decisions, not us.

No temptation [regardless of its source] has overtaken or enticed you that is not common to human experience [nor is any temptation unusual or beyond human resistance]; but God is faithful [to His word—He is compassionate and trustworthy], and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability [to resist], but along with the temptation He [has in the past and is now and] will [always] provide the way out as well, so that you will be able to endure it [without yielding, and will overcome temptation with joy]. (I Corinthians 10:13 AMP)

There is a spiritual tipping point that God wants us to experience. A place between our reliance on ourselves and a total reliance on Him. For each of us, our prayer should be come now, *Lord*. Waiting is arduous and self-serving. The entire meaning behind *Embracing Brokenness* is the willingness to do the hard work and even ask God for that brokenness to come quickly as a vehicle to neutralize our desires to live life our way. A pure heart starts with your thoughts because your thoughts become your words, your actions, and your character. A key step to being pure in heart is allowing others to see us as we are – in all our brokenness and vulnerability.

We must be willing to set aside our false self, the one hidden with a fig leaf, and allow others to become part of our journey. We must invite folks to accompany us spiritually - friends of Jesus who want to walk alongside us in our healing process. And it is a process, and we must trust it, even when we see no indication that it's happening around us. *Surrendering* is a challenging concept to grasp, but eternity's future merits the exploration of our own brokenness in this life that will lead us to a forever with Christ. ***The antidote to ALL brokenness.*** For more information or questions, email us at info@embracingbrokenness.org