

## Chapter 4.

# BROKENNESS: THE AREA OF MY LIFE I HOPE NO ONE EVER FINDS OUT ABOUT ME

*Where there is great anxiety, people-pleasing, anger, phobias, and the drive to control, there is usually a false belief and deep wounding. Brokenness traps us into destructive patterns, which eventually destroys*

*much of what is good in our lives.*<sup>1</sup>

—TERRY WARDLE

If you have ever felt broken or anxious, you know it can be hard to cover it up. In Matthew 5:3, when Jesus started his Sermon on the Mount, the first thing he declared was, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Another term for “poor in spirit” is broken. Those who are broken tend not to wear a mask, because there is no need to hide. They know they are broken and are willing and open to receive any and all help to mend their brokenness.

Broken people know they need help  
and are welcome in the kingdom.

things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

Recognizing our weakness and receiving help from someone greater than ourselves is considered a strength in the kingdom of God.

## JESUS' BROKENNESS

We often forget that Jesus came for the broken. He came to experience this life and see how it felt to be broken. Isaiah 53:3 aptly described Jesus' brokenness. "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised and we held him in low esteem." Despised, rejected, suffered, pain, pierced, crushed,

oppressed, and afflicted are all descriptors of brokenness. Verse 5 continues, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him and by his wounds we are healed." Jesus was broken so those who looked to him could live. Jesus chose death so we could experience life—a simple exchange for those who believe. Our God knows and understands brokenness. By choosing Him, our brokenness is restored with healing and wholeness.

Psalm 51 gives us a look into David's prayer life as he poured out his heart to God after the prophet Nathan called out his sin of committing adultery with Bathsheba. Verse 17 reads, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, you will not despise." The Hebrew word here

for broken is *shabar*, meaning “crippled, maimed, wrecked, and crushed.” This is what happened to Jesus on his way to the cross. David is saying God will not despise a spirit or heart in this condition because Jesus was despised on our behalf so our worth could be restored. Man despises brokenness, but God never will.

## WE ARE ALL BROKEN

In the spring of 1993, our children were ages five, three, and one when I became pregnant with our fourth child. My husband and I were busy with ministry, having planted a church in Northern California only a few years before, and I was overwhelmed with motherhood, since both of our families lived on the East Coast. Anger toward the

children began to come out in disproportionate ways, and I didn’t know what to do. If I was with them in the grocery store and they began to whine, I would take them into the bathroom and spank them really hard. If they spilled their drink during a meal, I would go into a rage. To add more pressure to the situation, I homeschooled the oldest two children and would scream at them when they got distracted or didn’t understand what I was trying to teach them. I was a hot mess and needed help. The worst part was, I didn’t dare to reveal how bad it was.

One day, I finally got up enough courage to tell my husband I needed help, and he brushed it off that I had probably just had a bad day. I firmly told him that was not the case. I had purposely controlled myself when he was around, so I needed

him to understand how bad things were. I told him I wanted to meet with our pastor, because he had shared in his sermons about his anger issues. I believed he would understand and hopefully be able to help me.

The next day in church while our pastor was preaching, a woman in the back began a long, loud wail. The ushers went to help her out of the room when the pastor stopped his sermon and told them to leave her alone and turn up his microphone. He relayed that she was finally feeling much unresolved pain and needed to let it out. He continued to preach and another woman on the other side of the room also let out a long, loud wail. I was sitting beside my husband in the front row, and as he began to shift in his seat, I knew he was uncomfortable with what was happening in the

room. Little did he know, that any minute I was going to be one of those wailing women.

As the pastor described living from the false self, he simply said, "It's okay not to be okay." The moment I heard that statement, I felt a deep resonance in my gut and a wave of emotion begin to rise in me. I had grown up in a Christian home and attended church my entire life. I knew how to behave in church. That day, those words gave me permission to be honest. I was not okay and I knew it, but I had learned to do the right thing at the right time in the right place and therefore, things would be all right. My rightness was all wrong! I held it together until the altar call and then knelt on the floor in front of my seat and cried and cried and cried. Hiding the terrible secret of my raging

anger was over and I was relieved. My brokenness was now out in the open.

I began to meet weekly with the pastor and his wife for prayer and counseling to begin the journey of establishing new habits and patterns of thinking, extending and receiving forgiveness, and identifying the fear and hurt underneath the anger. The first step to my freedom was bringing my brokenness into the light. I released the guilt of my actions and the shame I carried that I was disqualified for ministry because of my sin and brokenness. Have you ever felt like you had to fix yourself before you could come to God and receive the healing you knew you needed? The reality of it is that our sin and brokenness qualify us to receive the grace and mercy of Jesus as our savior and healer.

I believed Psalm 34:18: “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” I was devastated that I was hurting my children and continuing the cycle of abuse that could be traced back for generations in my family. I clung to Psalm 147:3: “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” I was in bondage to anger. I knew that Jesus was my only hope. If Jesus came to “bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners” (Is. 61:1), then I had to let Him into this dark place of my brokenness. That decision changed everything. When I admitted my need and welcomed Him into that area of my life, I experienced His tenderness and healing love.

***Mirror Moment***

Reflect for a moment on the place of your brokenness. What is the one thing you hope no one finds out about you? That is probably the place of your brokenness. Write out the story of your brokenness in your journal, describing the feelings that surround it. Allow the Lord to comfort you in the midst of this exercise. Holding the secret is what gives it power in your life to harass and torment you. “When I remained silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long” (Ps. 32:3).

Find a safe person with whom you can share this journal entry who can direct you to the help you need to begin the healing process.

## TWO BROTHERS' BROKENNESS

In Luke 15, we read the story of two brothers. The youngest brother asked for his inheritance so he could go off on his own and live as he pleased. In Jewish culture, a son's request for his inheritance was a sign of great disrespect to the father, indicating that the son cared nothing for relationship with his father, but only wanted his money. The father granted this son's request and gave him his share of the property. After he spent all he had, there was a severe famine in the whole country, so the son got a job feeding pigs. He was starving and desperate enough to eat the pods fed to the pigs. In the midst of his utter state of brokenness, the young man decided to return

home and ask his father if he could become a hired servant. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him” (Lk 15:20). The father ignored the son’s confession of sin against heaven and him and called for a feast to celebrate the return of his son.

His full acceptance of his son was unheard of in that culture. The elders of the town daily sat at the city gates. If they had seen the son before the father, they would have turned him away and refused to let him enter, because of his previous disrespect to his father by asking for his inheritance and bringing shame to the family name. The father knew that would be the case, so every day he scanned the horizon for any sign of his son. Finally, the day came when the father saw

him in the distance, ran to him, embraced him, and called for a feast, inviting the entire village to attend. By the father’s gracious act of forgiveness toward his son, he was making a statement to the village that his son was fully accepted and should be treated with full rights and privileges as his son. Such a generous demonstration of love and grace was unprecedented in that culture.

Meanwhile, the older brother was not as pleased about the news of the party. He was angry and refused to attend, even after his father’s pleading. His response reveals his brokenness.

“Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with

prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!” (Lk. 15:29)

Such a strong, negative, and emotional response of the older son indicated that he had been acting out of duty, interpreting all interaction with his father as obligation. He was hurt and perhaps felt overlooked as the father grieved the loss of the younger son. The father was shocked that his oldest son felt that way and said, “You are always with me and everything I have is yours.” This son was unable to receive the love of the father and the rights and privileges that came with the relationship. His brokenness was in his self-righteous attitude and intentional “perfect” behavior. The eldest son was prodigal while living in the father’s house.

Brokenness has many facets. Whether a person blatantly rebels outwardly like the younger brother or inwardly seethes from jealousy like the older brother, both are signs of brokenness that need a healing touch. Both sons rebelled against the father. Both sons rejected and abandoned the father. Both sons reacted in ways that revealed their brokenness. Outward signs of brokenness might include rage, abuse, and addictions to alcohol, drugs, sex, or food; but a self-righteous attitude, perfectionism, pride, and judgment of others are just as strong indicators of brokenness that are veiled with morality and good behavior.

The lepers, blind, lame, deaf, demonized, and prostitutes all ran to Jesus to receive love and mercy. The Pharisees and other religious leaders ran *from* Jesus because they refused to accept their

brokenness. The younger son ran from the Father and returned to receive grace. The older son was always with the Father, but refused to have a love relationship with Him. In the kingdom of God, there is no limit to God's grace. He will give as much grace as needed. He simply wants us to admit our brokenness and come to Him. Cynthia Pearl Maus described the rise from brokenness from the story of the sinful woman in Luke 7.

The creative power of Jesus' love called the repentant woman to regard herself as he did, to see in herself the possibilities that he saw in her. The place that this transformed woman occupies in Christian thought is not due to her strange, deep love for Jesus, but rather to what was wrought in her by Christ's love for her. It was Christ's love for her that delivered her from

her past [brokenness] and made her what she became. The central truth for which her life has come to stand is that it is possible to be delivered, through love, from the lowest depths to the shining heights where God dwelleth.<sup>2</sup>

The power of love, if we choose to accept it, can be transformational in our lives. Jesus is the only one who sees our utter brokenness and chooses to love us unconditionally. It is this kind of love that gives us hope and the ability to change. This truly is a blessing to the broken.

## OBSTACLE: ANGER

Every single one of us is going to feel angry at some time in our lives. Where that anger is directed and why is the starting point of beginning

to better understand it. Anger is a strong feeling of displeasure and antagonism aroused by a sense of injury or wrong.<sup>3</sup> Anger develops as “a natural response of the failure of others to meet one’s needs for love, praise, acceptance, and justice.”<sup>4</sup>

Healthy anger can act as a powerful force for producing change in our lives at every level. It can be a gift that signals that things are not okay. Many people don’t think they have a problem with anger, but are sarcastic, passive-aggressive, numb, or apathetic. Each of these expressions is an indication of indirect anger. The word *sarcasm* means “tearing of flesh.” It is intended to cut a person, but is covered with a façade of joking. Passive-aggressive people say one thing to our face, then stab us in the back when we turn away. They smile at us and pretend everything is fine,

then say things to others, often acting as a victim, to get other people to confront us or speak for them, because they *can’t* approach us. This type of manipulation is calculated and driven by anger.

People who feel numb have shut down emotionally to survive. Long-term chaotic or abusive situations cause them to close off emotionally to cope. They no longer feel joy or pain. They live in a constant state of numbness and their anger has become frozen. Apathy is a sign that passion and hope are gone. Not caring is the only way a hurting person endures the pain. Apathy is a logical conclusion to an emotional issue. Rather than caring and feeling continual hurt, fear, or powerlessness, a person chooses not to care so they can function in everyday life.

## THREE TYPES OF ANGER

Of which type of anger do you most commonly struggle? There are three types of anger mentioned in the New Testament. The first type includes a stewing or festering that brews just below the surface and doesn't come out. The Greek word for this type of anger is *parogizo*, used in Ephesians 6:4, exhorting fathers not to provoke their children to anger. The second type of anger occurs when something important to you is threatened or damaged, gradually building within you. The Greek word is *orgizo*, used in Ephesians 4:26: "Be angry (*orgizo*), but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger (*parogizo*) and give no opportunity to the devil." Paul is saying to feel the

anger, but don't sin by refusing to deal with the festering anger below the surface which gives the devil a place in your life. The third type of anger is the kind I exhibited with my children. The Greek word is *thymos*, or rage, referred to in Galatians 5:20 as "outbursts of anger" or "fits of rage." This kind of anger passionately erupts, then cools down quickly.

## WHAT IS UNDER THE ANGER?

It is very difficult and takes time to break old thought patterns and behaviors. Let's explore six emotional causes under anger. Anger is what presents itself to others, but the primary emotion is underneath the anger. The understanding of these six causes identifies the real issue. The first is

fear. Fear can be a strong emotion, causing you to feel weak, vulnerable, and powerless, so you rise up in anger to push people away to regain a sense of control. The rush of adrenaline that accompanies anger makes you feel strong and hides the hidden terror.

The second underlying emotional cause is invalidation of your opinion and feelings. Everyone wants to be heard, whether in a business meeting or at the dinner table. Your opinion is simply your viewpoint on a topic. To criticize your viewpoint or worse yet, ignore you completely, can cause anger. This is often seen in autocratic homes where one parent is always right and children aren't allowed to have different opinions.

The third underlying emotional cause arises when your way is blocked. It is the attitude from

which road rage stems— “Get out of my way!” Whether a person's car is cut off on the freeway, or the budget is cut dissolving the business plan, or a two-year-old is told no, anger results. It is probably the most volatile of all the underlying causes, because it erupts spontaneously.

The fourth underlying cause for anger is hurt. When a person is hurt, the offense is either turned inward, leading to despair or depression, or turned outward, leading to anger and bitterness. When turned inward, you seek to contain the anger by taking it out on yourself, and self-rejection and self-hatred results. Turning the hurt outward can lead to blame and seeking revenge toward the person who hurt you. The healthy response to hurt is to feel the sadness, loss, and pain of the wounding.

The fifth underlying cause for anger is attacking your personhood. Name-calling, which is inappropriate comments about your gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or beliefs fits this category. Oftentimes, these comments are made sarcastically or with a joking tone to get a laugh. Outwardly, people might smile or play along, but inwardly the very core of your being has been touched and it hurts.

The final underlying cause for anger is unmet expectations. The angry person flies off the handle because of an unfulfilled expectation that is never spoken to the person receiving the anger. The angry person assumes the expectation is obvious, so he or she doesn't need to communicate it directly. It should just be known. This happens in any relationship with assumptions and poor

communication. (Wait, all of us do this at times. Yes, we do.)

Fights cause anger that leave a wake of pain. The next time anger wells up, pause for a moment and sift through these six areas to identify its underlying cause. Clear communication can avoid many arguments and disagreements in our relationships.

## HOW DO I GET RID OF MY ANGER?

No one wants to spend all of their time overwhelmed by anger. While you can't rid yourself of anger, because it is an emotion, you can learn to appropriately deal with the real issue under the anger so it doesn't fester or spew in unhealthy ways to hurt people around you.

Here are five ways to self-check your anger level for your personal soul care: 1) Acknowledge the way in which anger generally surfaces—aggression, passive-aggressiveness, sarcasm, numbness, apathy, depression, or rage. Once the form is recognized. 2) Identify the underlying issue as the source—fear, invalidation of your opinion, get out of my way, hurt, attacking my personhood, or unmet expectations. 3) Ask for help. Speaking out your pain to a close friend, spouse, or counselor disarms its power in your mind. 4) Grieve the loss accompanying the pain to process all the feelings surrounding the incident. 5) Choose to forgive the offender.

Forgiveness does not always mean reconciliation for those who have hurt you and may not ever involve a conversation with the other person.

Rather, forgiveness eliminates bitterness from forming in your heart to torment you and cut off intimacy with God and those you love. Satan is a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Do not allow unhealthy anger to be the entry point of your destruction. You can be free from anger's grip. Go beneath it and diffuse it.

## THE WAY THROUGH: DISCIPLINE OF FORGIVENESS

Are you ready for a path to freedom? The way through anger at others is forgiving them by choosing to release your own heart from the burden of offense. Offense can either be self-inflicted or caused by others, but letting go of it is what brings freedom to you. There is a lie attached

to unforgiveness that by holding the offense, you are protecting your wounded heart, when just the opposite is true. Holding onto unforgiveness while waiting for justice only waters the seeds of bitterness that “grow up to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb. 12:15).

Unforgiveness strangles your ability to grow and over time, the heart withers up and becomes hardened, unable to give or receive love. Thinking you can wait to forgive until you are ready is self-deception. You will never feel like forgiving. It is a matter of your will to choose it.

You will need to give yourself grace. Forgiveness is a process that takes time. It acknowledges the feelings that accompany the offense and provides space to feel the pain and get out the hurt. Grieving losses such as the loss of innocence, loss of safety,

and loss of dignity take time to release. Your time frame for mourning these losses is different in the same way as mourning the death of a loved one is particular to each person. Distressing memories must be sifted through and released as Jesus is welcomed in to touch painful places. Stages of grief in the midst of releasing forgiveness must be acknowledged and given time to work through for full release to occur.

Make no mistake, forgiveness is hard and it takes time. It may be something you have to choose every hour until you can do it every day, and as you choose forgiveness every day, the space between needing to ask yourself to forgive someone (even yourself) will get further and further apart.

## WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

Forgiveness is not forgetting what has happened or excusing the person for their behavior; rather, it is a choice to allow God into the wounded place with His healing presence. Giving the burden to Him to carry leaves no place for resentment to turn into bitterness. Justice demands action. Forgiveness releases the debt without demand, by taking the person off the hook and releasing them to God for justice. In the midst of His pain and agony on the cross, Jesus released his offenders to His Father when He said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing” (Lk. 23:34). Jesus knew that only the Father could pronounce judgment.

## PRACTICE: PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

Make a list of all the people you have to forgive and begin to walk through this process. Recognize that it will take time and repeated effort for you to fully let go of the offense. Don’t be discouraged by this knowledge; rather, let it be an area where you ask God and others for help.

This prayer of forgiveness is a good starting point.

**Lord Jesus, I know that you are with me, so I choose to forgive \_\_\_\_\_ (name the offender) for \_\_\_\_\_ (list the things the person did or failed to do) because it made me feel \_\_\_\_\_ (list all the painful feelings). I choose to release my pain to**

**you and ask you to heal my damaged emotions.**

**In Jesus' name, Amen.**<sup>5</sup>

Are you ready to do the work? Be specific. Work through each person and each painful memory. In the presence of the Lord, other repressed feelings may surface that will need attention. Do not be discouraged by this process. It will end and you will be free.

You will recognize healing in your life when you recall painful memories and they no longer have the sting they once had upon mentioning them. Blessing the offender is another way to know that Jesus has healed you. You don't have to speak the blessing in person, but you can pray prayers of blessing for them in a genuine way, showing that you have released them into God's hands.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What do you think or feel to read, "Blessed are the broken, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"?*
- 2. What is an area of brokenness in which you struggle?*
- 3. Look up Isaiah 53:3-5. What verbs are used to describe the brokenness of Jesus?*
- 4. In the story of the two brothers, with which brother do you most relate and why?*
- 5. How is your brokenness an obstacle to intimacy with God?*

6. Which display of anger is most common for you (sarcasm, passive-aggressiveness, numbness, apathy, festering, or rage)?
7. Tell a story about a time when you acted out on your anger. Looking back, which of the six underlying emotional causes was really the issue (fear, invalidating your opinion, get out of my way, hurt, attacking your personhood, or unmet expectations)?
8. How does forgiveness play a role in dealing with anger in a healthy way? Who in your life do you need to forgive?

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Wardle, *Outrageous Love, Transforming Power: How the Holy Spirit Shapes You into the Likeness of Christ* (Leafwood Publishers, 2004), 99.

<sup>2</sup> Cynthia Pearl Maus, *Christ and the Fine Arts: An Anthology of Pictures, Poetry, Music and Stories Centering in the Life of Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938).

<sup>3</sup> Solomon Schimmel (1979) Anger and Its Control in Graeco-Roman and Modern Psychology. *Psychiatry* 42: 320–337.

<sup>4</sup> Robert D. Enright and Joanna North, eds. *Exploring Forgiveness*. Madison, WI, USA: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. ProQuest ebrary.

<sup>5</sup> Neil T. Anderson, *The Steps to Freedom in Christ: A Biblical Guide to Help You Resolve Personal and Spiritual Conflicts and Become a Fruitful Disciple of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House, 2017). For more on the topic of forgiveness, see Leanne Payne's *The Healing Presence: Curing the Soul Through Union With Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1989) and *Restoring the Christian Soul: Overcoming Barriers to Completion in Christ Through Healing Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991).