

Brokenness: The First Step Toward God's Healing Power

Broken. One of those words that doesn't bring a lot of joy. Who wants to be broken?

Broken things. Broken bones. Broken **relationships**. Broken **vows**. Broken **homes**. Broken **hearts**.

I assume we are all on the same page and don't want that word to describe much, if anything, in our lives. In fact, the only phrase with *broken* in it that I can think of ever wanting to use is "**broken fever**."

For a while, I've tried to figure out a different word to describe my family other than *broken*. Initially I thought it was just too negative. I started trying out different descriptive words. *Wounded*. *Bruised*. *Hurting*. Anything but *broken*.

I wanted to stand up and holler, "We are not broken!"

But you know what? I believe we are. And I'm realizing that that's OK. We are broken but healing. **God**, the **Great Physician**, is fixing up all the broken parts.

A couple of things have brought me to this conclusion. The first was reading this verse:

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing **power** belongs to **God** and not to us. We are **afflicted** in every way, but not crushed; **perplexed** but not driven to despair; **persecuted**, but not forsaken; struck down, but not **destroyed**; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

After reading that verse, I looked up the meaning of "jars of clay." One of the definitions said that the jars of clay would

have brought to mind a common household jar—probably inexpensive and fairly easy to break. It would probably have cracks and chips from being well used.

There is so much to get from this verse, but the idea that struck me was that the brokenness of the jar of clay allows what's inside to be seen—to flow out.

The **brokenness** of our lives allows God to shine through us. Oh my goodness, that sounds like some really syrupy sweet quote to post on Facebook. Unfortunately for all of us, I can't think of a better way to say it.

I just know that when everything in my world went kablooey, God was the only explanation for why I didn't personally go kablooey. It was abundantly clear that the strength I had to move forward came from God and God alone—"the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."

One of my first fears following the shattering of my marriage was that my testimony was toast. I kept thinking of all the people who would think we were just absolute frauds. I felt like a fraud. Or maybe I should say I felt like I'd been defrauded. Everyone, including me, thought we had a great marriage. How could I speak about my relationship with God if everyone thought I hadn't been honest about my relationship with my husband?

But God showed me my testimony wasn't about what I could or couldn't do. My testimony is what God has done and is still doing in my life.

And He worked mightily in those days following the shattering. He loved me and my children through our church, our homeschool community, our neighbors and even the city where my husband had worked. God provided for us in amazing ways. He gave us peace and even joy in the midst of our pain and breaking. It was *Him*, all Him.

Just as light shows through or water pours out of cracks in a broken pot, Jesus shows through our brokenness.

He showed through broken vows when He gave me the strength, peace and perspective to fight for my marriage in the face of my husband's betrayal. Believe me, it wasn't me.

He showed through the broken relationships caused by my husband's actions when He gave our friends wisdom, kindness, compassion and grace to pursue my husband and love him despite his response.

He showed through our broken home by strengthening the bond my children and I have, strengthening our faith and gracing us with love and joy.

He showed through my broken heart when I was able to comfort with the comfort I'd been given (2 Cor. 1:4).

I could probably think of a million more ways God has shown through the brokenness of my life. I've seen it in others too. My friends who have or who are battling illness—the grace they have while suffering greatly. The way my suffering friends reach out to others in their grief and pain. The compassion I see in my children because they understand what it means to be loved by others while going through difficulties. The love I see in those who have had their hearts broken but are still willing to open up to love again.

So I'm thinking that maybe being broken isn't such a bad thing.

Especially if God is allowing the breaking, which I believe He does. If God allows it, He is going to use it. If God allows it, He is going to bring good out of it. If God allows it, He is going to bring us through it. If God allows it, He is going to be glorified. All those things are good—very good.

I really am OK being referred to as broken. I'm not a broken woman. I'm a woman broken by the Lord so that I can be healed. And I believe that I'm much better as a healed woman than I ever was before the breaking.

I have a long way to go, and there is a lot of brokenness that needs to be healed.

I'm realizing this is a big topic. One that I'm going to have to ponder more. Because it's one thing for me to be broken and to watch God work with me toward healing. It is another thing altogether to watch how the breaking of so much in our lives has affected my children. That has been very very difficult for me. I'm definitely going to have to pray about that before I share my thoughts.

I believe it's going to be me again recognizing that I have to entrust my children to God. I have to believe He is working good for them in all of this too.

A lot to pray about and ponder, to be sure.

Thank you so much for being willing to walk this path with me. For being interested in my thoughts. I pray that they have encouraged you that no matter what way we describe our families—whole, broken, wounded, healing—God has us, and it is good.

Sue Birdseye *is an author and single mom of five kids that range from 4-years-old to 17-years-old. Her book, When Happily Ever After Shatters is in bookstores. This is adapted from her blog, .*