

God's Unpopular Lemonade Recipe

What you should really do when life gives you lemons

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. How many times has someone offered you this trite saying as a well-meaning pat on the back? It's a cute phrase, one that undoubtedly rings true for those determined to make the best out of any sour situation.

It's also the last thing you want to hear when you've just had a miscarriage, been diagnosed with stage 3 cancer or lost a spouse. The truth is, life hurts far more than the sting of a little lemon juice. At times, life can feel like a 200-ton boulder falling on you again and again and again. And for those who've experienced this, they know there's a big difference between being squeezed by life and being broken to pieces by it.

One of the great mysteries of God's kingdom, however, is that the latter is a way of life for anyone who desires to follow Christ. Jesus blatantly laid out this unpopular life plan of brokenness in one of the most prophetically layered passages in the New Testament.

In Matthew 21:33-44, Jesus uses a parable about a vineyard's wicked tenants to depict Israel's rejection of God's Son. He concludes His exchange with the chief priests by referencing an Old Testament passage that prophesied how God would marvelously use "the stone" rejected by human builders as the very cornerstone of His new creation, the church.

Jesus' words in verse 43 continue to spark debate among theologians and teachers regarding the ramifications for God's chosen people (Jews) and the rest of us (Gentiles). But for anyone who desires to walk in step with the Holy Spirit today,

it's what Jesus says in the following verse that deserves just as much consideration: "Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed" (v. 44, NIV).

Jesus is obviously referring to the Jew-Gentile dilemma; but I believe His words also apply to the higher calling of those who desire to walk as He did. The Bible consistently links brokenness with kingdom living. Unfortunately, most of us misunderstand what true brokenness looks like or even means. It isn't a dark-night-of-the-soul depression, loneliness, grief or despair, though most who've endured brokenness have experienced such elements along the way. True godly brokenness is less about our emotional reaction than it is the spiritual fruit borne from the process: our changed form. When something is broken, it changes from one solid piece into many smaller fragments that can be reformed, rebuilt and reused. This is exactly what God intends when He allows life's trials to break us.

I don't believe God's desire is to pummel us into a heap of ashes, which is the alternative route Jesus describes for those who don't fall onto "this stone" but instead have it fall on them. I believe God weeps with those who have been crushed and seemingly scattered "like dust" (v. 44, NASB). But our omnipotent God also knows the ultimate good brokenness yields, which is why He gives us the option to either fall on the rock and be broken (less painful) or have it fall on us and be crushed (ouch!).

The choice is ours—yes, even when a spouse of 25 years serves us divorce papers or our long-awaited baby suddenly dies in his sleep. God desires to use every situation—good or bad—to bring about the glorious new creation in each of us. And in His wisdom, He knows brokenness is one of the most effective ways to transform us.

Still, brokenness hurts. It's not as simplistic as being dealt

a handful of lemons and adding a little sugar to sweeten the experience. The path of brokenness is difficult, yet it mimics Jesus' bigger-picture perspective that caused Him to submit to the Father and lay down His life for those who, instead of embracing Him, chose to reject, beat, curse, mock, spit on, bruise and, yes, crush Him.

The good news for us is that, like Jesus, the Father will never let us be crushed or broken beyond restoration. "New creation" life is always within our reach. The Jesus who was once crushed is now resurrected, alive and our living hope. And therein lies the key ingredient to God's masterful recipe for living in His kingdom.

Marcus Yoars *is the editor of Charisma. You can check out his blog at [or connect with him via Twitter @marcusyoars or .](#)*