

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

35. The Hope of Living Beyond Our Brokenness

You are listening to episode 35 of the Encouragement for Real Life podcast, titled, "The Hope of Living Beyond Our Brokenness." Sadly, we live in a broken world, and because we do, brokenness invades the spaces of our lives. From the moment sin entered the world when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, brokenness infiltrated our world. No matter how much we try to avoid it or what we do or don't do, brokenness will be a part of life this side of eternity.

Well, that's encouraging, isn't it?! What a great way to begin a podcast, right?

But sometimes reality isn't perfectly positive. Sometimes it helps knowing you and I aren't the only ones who experience brokenness in this life. And sometimes we could use a little extra encouragement when we feel broken into a million pieces. I pray God uses this episode to encourage your heart if this is you today. Let's get into it to find some much-needed hope as we go.

If we had the choice, we'd each probably prefer to pass on the helping of brokenness.

Am I right? We'd rather not experience it. But, the thing is, brokenness is one of the few things you and I have in common. If we're breathing, we have broken places in our lives.

Broken relationships, broken bones, broken hearts.

Brokenness caused by the actions or words of others.

Brokenness caused by our own actions or words.

We have broken dreams, plans, and hopes.

Death and grief and loneliness carry brokenness with them.

You may be showing up today feeling completely shattered or broken.

Or maybe you've bought into the belief that this is the way life will always be and you're feeling beyond repair. Or maybe you're feeling hopeless and helpless and too much of a mess for God's use.

Friend, if any of these describe you or how you're feeling today, you've come to the right place. You are not alone. This world is filled with women like you and me who are walking in shoes not so different than our own. No, we might not have the exact same broken places, but we all have them. We are in this together.

Even that neighbor or co-worker who looks perfect, acts perfect, and appears to have the perfect, storybook life, she too is familiar with brokenness. Even if she tries to hide it from the rest of us.

So, friend, let's be a little vulnerable here. What are the broken places in your life?

Allow me to highlight some of mine:

My heart... physically, it doesn't always beat the way it's supposed to, and last month I had a heart procedure to hopefully fix that. Emotionally, my heart has been broken more times than I care to recall.

My ears... I have hearing loss, especially in my left ear.

Broken relationships... with people whom I've hurt and with some who have hurt me.

The death of my parents nearly crushed me. Nearly. And, with both of them gone, I find days where I feel like an earthly orphan. But I can rejoice today, knowing because my Savior lives, so do they.

My past sins... as if out of nowhere they sometimes plague me and my thoughts. How could God ever love someone like me who has made such mistakes in life?

Sometimes I get insecure, I get fearful, I rely on my own strength instead of God's. And someday I'm quick to judge and slow to forgive.

What are the broken places in your life?

Dictionary.com describes brokenness as fragmented, torn, fractured, not functioning properly, changing direction abruptly, incomplete, infringed or violated, disconnected, weakened in strength or spirit.

No wonder we don't like to talk about our broken places! Who wants to be known as fragmented or incomplete? No thank you.

But, how does God view brokenness? How does He see the broken places of our lives?

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

Psalm 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.

Psalm 73:26 My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.

Psalm 51:17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

These references are from the New Living Translation.

It appears God sees our brokenness differently than we might. He sees it in the light of eternity. Not only does He meet us in our brokenness, but He uses it. He uses it for our growth, for the good of others, and for His glory.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

How does understanding how God sees brokenness help you in this moment?

We can peer into scripture to see one example of how God has brought good out of brokenness in John 4:4-30. Jesus left Judea to return to Galilee, and on His way, He happens upon a Samaritan woman.

As Jesus was traveling, he stopped and sat at Jacob's well near Sychar to rest around noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well, and as she did, Jesus asked her for a drink. Shocked at how a Jew would speak to a Samaritan, let alone a woman, she asked why He was asking her that. Jesus said if she only knew Who she was talking to, she would have asked Him for living water.

She didn't know who Jesus was, but asked Him if He was greater than Jacob who dug that very well. Jesus said the water He offers is everlasting, refreshing, bubbling over, and leads to eternal life. She now wanted this water so she wouldn't have to draw from the well daily.

Jesus prompted her to go get her husband, and she replied she didn't have one. Jesus confirmed that saying she's had five husbands and the man she was living with wasn't her husband. Recognizing He must have been a prophet or something, she tried to change the subject. Jesus eventually revealed He was the Messiah she was waiting for. She left the jar beside the well and ran back to the village telling everyone to come out and see a man who told her everything she did.

We can glean much from this account, can't we?

Jesus met the woman, right where she was. She was a Samaritan. Jesus was a Jew. Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Jesus isn't confined to human standards. He meets each one of us in our brokenness, right where we are. He offers us life, purpose, hope.

Jesus met her in her mess. The woman drew water at noon. Why noon? Genesis 24:11 says women drew water in the cool of the evening. Drawing water was the social highlight of a woman's day. Maybe she came at a time to avoid other women? Maybe she was ridiculed, shamed by other women coming to draw water? Maybe an outcast? Maybe some of us feel the same. No one is an outcast to Jesus. He meets us in our messes.

Jesus met her to not leave her unchanged. Even though she skirted the issue about her husband (or non-husband), Jesus prompted her to face her sins and mistakes. He wouldn't leave her as she was. He doesn't leave us unchanged either. When we face our sins and mistakes, healing begins, and hope appears.

Jesus met her in her brokenness. She had 5 husbands, the man living with her was not her husband. Jesus met her in her situation and in her broken places, without condemnation. He does the same for us.

Jesus transformed her life. To learn from the past, to let go of it, and to step forward into a life full of Him. Just as the woman left her pot at the well to go and tell others, we are called to do the same. Leave our pots and go tell others of how He transformed our lives.

But the story doesn't end there.

Reading on in verses 39-42, it shares that many came to believe because of the woman's testimony.

Our brokenness is not the end of our story! God used this woman, this imperfect, broken, seeking woman, to impact the lives of others. Many came to believe in Jesus because of her words. God didn't use a scholar or a qualified teacher or a wise counselor. He didn't use someone with an upright and righteous life. He used a woman, resembling you and me, to spread the good news about Jesus!

What stands out to you the most in this account of Jesus and the woman at the well. How can you apply this to your current situation?

Brokenness is a blessing that leads to breakthroughs.

A couple years ago I purchased a beautiful succulent plant (we'll call her Samara) at our local downtown farmers market. She was beautiful and perfect in every way. She was just what I was looking for. But, Samara was top-heavy and a little tall for the plastic pot she was housed in, so I thought I'd replant her into a different pot.

I had what I needed in our garage... the soil, the new pot Samara would call home, and my gardening tools. Carrying her out to the garage, her top-heaviness caused her to flip forward in my hand. Before I could do anything about it, as if in slow motion, Samara cascaded forward and crashed on our cemented garage floor. I stood there in disbelief and I might have shed a tear. My beautiful Samara was sprawled out on the floor in pieces.

I quickly tried to pick up the pieces as if the five second rule came into play. I don't know what I was thinking. Would picking up the broken leaves quickly change my situation? Did I think the circumstance would reverse itself by picking them up in haste? I don't know. I held as many of Samara's leaves in my hands as possible. Now what?

Stepping back inside the house with my hands full and my heart downtrodden, I set the leaves down on our dining room table. I knew what to do! I googled "broken succulent plants" and up popped on my screen how to propagate succulents. Ah ha! That was it. I poured soil into an empty plant starter container I found in the garage and set the succulents on the soil. My screen was right! In a matter of weeks, sprouts appeared!

With the 2 times a week waterings and proper sunlight, the sprouts grew. And, you know? They're still growing. I gave many startings away to family and friends. Samara has multiplied herself over and over again. From her broken leaves came multiplied life of more plants. Many more than her unbroken self could have produced! Samara reminds me of the Samaritan woman, and she reminds me of me. God uses our broken places in our lives! Does this not encourage you??

Reminds me of John 12: 24-25 MSG "Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal."

Our broken places don't define us, nor do they limit us.

God uses them for our growth, for the good of others, and for His glory.

Isaiah 61:3 reads (Voice):

"God has sent me to give them a beautiful crown in exchange for ashes, to anoint them with gladness instead of sorrow, to wrap them in victory, joy, and praise instead of depression and sadness. People will call them magnificent, like great towering trees standing for what is right. They stand to the glory of the Eternal who planted them."

God brings blessings from our brokenness and exchanges beauty for our ashes, gladness for sorrow, victory, joy and praise for depression and sadness.

How could God be using your broken places for your growth, the good of others, or for His glory?

Talk to God.

When we're feeling broken it's a good time to talk to God. He is always with us and he will comfort us in the brokenness. He listens and fills our hearts with the truth that it will benefit from. God knows you and me better than anyone else, and He has the words that will strengthen and encourage us.

Look to our bright futures.

God is bigger than our mistakes and brokenness. And so are His plans for your life and mine. God is working the lows, as well as the highs in life, into a beautiful story that's worth sharing. There is a bigger picture to see here, and no matter how broken we may feel now, this isn't the end.

Let go of the weight.

Release any negative emotion that's weighing us down... pain, rejection, anger, sadness, disappointment. We can ask God to help us forgive those who have wronged us. When we let go of the weight, God's peace will lift us and will flow through us to others.

Live loved.

You and I are loved by our Creator. When brokenness blinds us of the truth, we tend to believe we're forgotten, unwanted, unloved, uncared for. God loves us more than we can comprehend. Goodness, He gave His Son for you and for me. Let's remind ourselves daily of His love for us.

In closing, this week we are discussing this episode in the Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. Come on over and join in the conversation. The link to this group is in the show notes.

I invite you to check out the additional encouragement I have waiting for you in the free Resources on my site. They are designed just for you in mind. The link to these resources is also in the show notes.

God equips us to live beyond our brokenness, friend. What a hope we have! May we remain encouraged as He uses it all for good in our lives. Thanks for tuning in today. God bless you.

Julie Lefebvre