

THE NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION

We hide what we know or feel ourselves to be (which we assume to be unacceptable and unlovable) behind some kind of appearance which we hope will be more pleasing. We hide behind pretty faces which we put on for the benefit of our public. And in time we may even come to forget that we are hiding, and think that our assumed pretty face is what we really look like.¹

— Simon Tugwell

One of the comments I heard over and over when people would walk by the book table and see my first book *Broken & Transformed* was, “I don’t need that book, I’m not broken.” At first, I was glad they had not experienced anything in their life that caused them great pain. However, over the years a realization began to evolve. Many people have no idea they are in bondage to their past, whether that be ten years ago or ten days ago. Sure, maybe they have not been sexually abused, addicted to drugs, or had a family member murdered; but they have experienced some type of rejection like being cut from a sports team, harsh words of a parent, betrayal from a spouse, embarrassment with friends, or abandonment. The bottom line is, we all are wounded in some way and in varying degrees. Something in our past or even current life has caused emotional turmoil, even if we do not recognize that it has impacted us at the core of our being, resulting in a change in how we view God, ourselves, and those around us.

Difficult situations we endure trigger questions which are a part of life. Why did God allow that to happen? Why didn’t God provide? Why am I not a better man? I can think of multiple biblical examples that questioned life after experiencing pain such as David being chased by King Saul, the people in John 11 asking about Jesus not arriving in time to heal Lazarus, Peter questioning Jesus about John’s future after being told he would be killed, and Job struggling with the day he was born. Again, questions are a normal part of life. However, it is how a person answers the questions that reveals whether they have allowed the wound to take root within their soul. This is only exacerbated when the person does not know the Lord when the incident occurred due to their young age or not being saved.

When a person turns away from the Lord’s truth and leaning into Him, the enemy has the potential to plant a lie. The person begins to listen to the response that Satan offers, such as “You are the problem. You are not good enough. You are not a real man. You are not loved and never will be.” If these lies coincide with what another human spoke or still speaks, then it only becomes stronger and truer within the heart of the receiver. This lie then grows into a core belief which we respond from. Our beliefs dictate how we

interpret what we see and hear. This in turn causes us to react. For example, if you have been let down by someone, which left you feeling helpless, you may believe that no one can be trusted. This in turn makes it more difficult for you to trust God. If a father was gone a lot and never around, you may find it difficult to believe that God is always with you. If you were fired from your job, the lies that you would not amount to anything flood back into your mind and that belief is strengthened. These are just a few examples of a litany of possibilities.

An experience that occurred in my life as a teenager brought a stronghold of self-sufficiency that I was unaware of but with which I continued to have issues in terms of wanting to remain in control of my life. Instead of waiting on God to move, I would feel impatient and grasp the reigns back. This was part of the reason for my brokenness during a time of struggle regarding a church plant failure. When I became tired of dealing with this issue over and over, I asked the Lord to search my heart and reveal to me what was at the core. "Why do I do this? And Lord, please deliver me from it." This was what He revealed: I needed a ride to the high school to attend dance line practice. My mom could not get away from work, so she asked my cousin to take care of me. However, my cousin forgot. Cell phones were not in existence at that time, so I continued to wait. As time elapsed and the practice began, my anger intensified. Ultimately, I vowed to never rely on anyone else ever again. Yes, I know. A little over the top. But isn't that what happens when our emotions are intensified from anger, pain, or despair?

I thought all aspects of my parents' divorce were healed, including this incident. Sure, I remembered the missed practice, but would have never imagined a stronghold resulted from it. Yet, I was wrong. This was one side effect of the divorce that created a deep-seated lie and internal vow. Only during a time of sitting in the presence of the Lord was this bondage revealed. A residual effect transpired that also needed to be released. (I address this later in the book.)

Why do I share this story? If you have been able to 'handle' your fears or weaknesses on your own, you are likely unaware of the need for a heart transformation. I am not referring to the need for salvation but the need to be changed at the seat of your soul. God has a great plan for your life, and in order to continue to move forward, freedom in all areas needs to occur. Don't worry, the Lord will not bring more than you can handle at one time. The reality of inner healing may be foreign to you and even cause a defensive reaction. By the way, if you ever react defensively, there is a problem, but stay with me. Continue to read on.

Do you often find yourself having to address the same circumstance over and over? The people may be different, or the exact details altered, but similar emotions are triggered within you. I often say that the only way over the mountain or obstacle is to climb it and overcome it. We can attempt to locate shortcuts in order to avoid dealing with things, but it will continue to surface until we are freed from it. Why? Because that is how much God loves us. He wants us to be completely free! He wants to use your

story to bring hope and healing to others, but this is not possible until you admit you are broken.

The point of this chapter is to help people recognize that there may be an emotional issue lurking deep within that needs healing. Yes, some emotions of fear are realistic, those we take to the Lord, and He strengthens us. But if there is consistent fear, insecurity, shame, or feelings of abandonment, then it is time to be honest with yourself. Instead of 'pushing' through another time of uncomfortableness or pain, how about allowing the Prince of Peace, Jesus, access to the depths of your being? He will shine the light of truth to allow you to see what lurks deep within your core beliefs.

It is okay to not be okay. Most people have been broken, and I would argue all of us will experience this at some time in our lives. Do not think that just because you have something that needs healing that you are in some way defective or insufficient in God's eyes. Brother or sister, it is just the opposite. God has been waiting for you to admit the need for transformation. He has longed for you to come to Him and give Him permission to heal. Yes, God needs our permission to allow the Spirit access into our pain. Only then can the power of God bring revelation, insight, and knowledge to areas that live in darkness.

The opposite of someone not knowing they need this book is one who knows they are broken and feel beyond repair. You may be asking yourself, "How did this happen?" There is a place where each person finds oneself at least once in life—a place of pain, sorrow, confusion, anger, helplessness, hopelessness, or any other describable negative emotion. Honestly, if you have been through it, indescribable is more like it. Being fully broken does not happen often in our lives, but when it does, it wrecks everything, and we are never the same. It is different for each person, as situations vary. One thing remains the same, though—the need for divine intervention.

Every aspect of our being needs transformation—our spirits, our souls, and our bodies. Spiritually speaking, we tend to run towards God or away from Him. There is usually no middle ground during this time. During my time of brokenness, I quit praying, fasting, and doing my daily devotions. This was my initial reaction. The questions I asked increased my anger towards God and the silence only created self-doubt. However, when things went from bad to worse, I knew God was my only answer. The choice to run back to God was the best choice I could have ever made. Did it make the situation go away? No. Did it make the pain stop? Not immediately, but it did change me.

When we run to the Lord in times of distress, then we can experience His peace, love, and faithfulness. I learned I was never alone. Even amid life-altering circumstances, my future was secure in my sovereign Creator. If you are hurting right now, run to God. He is there waiting for you with open arms. Nothing you do will make Him stop loving you (Rom 8:35–39). Some people may think, "But I created this mess." Yes, that may be true. However, you do not have to clean it up on your own. Allow the merciful lover of your soul, Jesus, to step in and take over.

Next, our souls—our mind, will, and emotions—need healing. Do you feel numb, in a daze, or on an emotional roller coaster? You might be confused as to how something happened, such as if your wife had an affair. You may hold yourself accountable if you caused a car accident, or you may blame someone else if they harmed your child. There might not be answers for your questions if a loved one contracted COVID-19 or was diagnosed with cancer. In most cases, a person's ability to function is limited in some way. Mentally, you may continue to replay the situation over and over in your thoughts. Emotionally, you may feel overwhelmed and unable to work. Your desire to accomplish other tasks diminishes, and all you can do is sit around.

As you invite the Spirit to help you, your state of disarray or confusion will level out. It might be extremely difficult to trust anyone or anything because you cannot change the situation or fix it. As you lean into the Lord, these emotions and thoughts will eventually decrease.

Is the will to live removed or limited? If this is the case, please reach out for help. Do not walk this road alone. As a matter of fact, do not think you have to figure everything out. The will to work or leave home may be impacted also. Again, reach out. Do not approach this daunting task alone. This is the reason the Lord has called us into community. Pick up the phone and call someone, perhaps a pastor or counselor.

Woundedness does not only impact our spiritual walk and mental or emotional health, but it takes a toll on us physically. Our physical bodies need a touch from the Lord also. I can remember being physically sick, vomiting because I was so stressed. Blood pressure may increase. If someone is diabetic, a trial could throw off their blood sugar. Some people turn to food in times of distress, so weight gain can occur or even the opposite where people quit eating and lose vast amounts of weight. Even David said his bones were wasting away under the pressure of guilt after being confronted by Nathan the prophet (Psalm 32:3– 5). Turning to the Lord will bring peace to a weary soul and level out physical concerns prompted by stress.

If you currently feel overwhelmed and are struggling with someone or something, here is a list of suggestions to help immediately:

1. Spend twenty minutes a day by yourself praying, meditating on God's Word, just being still, or going to church. Even Jesus pulled away by Himself to pray and be alone with His Father.
2. Ask others to pray for you and with you. It is always encouraging to know that someone has you covered in prayer.
3. Only share with a few people you trust the depth of what you are experiencing. This will limit gossip or having to retell the story, which only engrains it further into your soul. By limiting whom you tell, you also can avoid confusion from differing opinions and advice.

4. Accept grace. The enemy wants you to beat yourself up and self-destruct. Do not try to get everything taken care of immediately. Oftentimes, as pressure builds, there is a reaction that nothing can wait. This is a lie. Things can wait—maybe not some things, but the majority can. Realize that you may not be able to do what you normally do at this time. That is okay. Do not add further commitments to your schedule.
5. Only focus on important things at this time. Keep God first, and give attention to other things like taking care of your children, working, or paying bills.
6. Make sure to utilize self-care such as getting enough sleep, eating healthy, and exercising. Physical activity can help decrease the pent-up stress your body may be experiencing.
7. Engage in life-giving activities. These will differ for people but can range from cleaning, hiking, fishing, reading, shopping, painting, or walking on the beach.
8. Keep a gratitude journal. Write down things for which you are thankful. In addition, add how you see God moving on your behalf outwardly or how you are changing inwardly during this time.

The bottom line is, we are all broken vessels—some more wounded than others. However, we all know the ‘potter,’ God, who will put us back together as we are the clay in His hands (Isaiah 64:8). Friend, there is hope. Yes, this too shall end if you ‘remain on the potter’s wheel’ and do not remove yourself before you have gone through the process.

Do you know the actual process of pottery? First, the clay is shaped into the desired state. This can be very messy as the clay works through the hands of the potter. Then, the form must be fired. The pot must be heated to an extremely high temperature around 850 degrees Fahrenheit for about twelve hours. This removes water from the clay to harden it into shape. Next, the pot is painted with a glaze to add color and beauty by covering the drab clay. Once again, the pot must be heated to melt the glaze and create a seal. This time, though, the temperature is gradually raised in order to get it to at least 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit. It could not withstand the heat if it began that hot. Last, once the pot is done, the bottom must be filed so it can sit evenly on a surface. Wow, what a process.

How does that process relate to woundedness? First, we must allow the Lord to shape us based on how He has created us. Our callings, giftings, and personalities all come together to form a pot for just the right use, whether a pitcher, bowl, glass, or vase. It is during the fire of testing and trials where things that would cause us to be weak, unable to stay together, or withstand use (like the removal of water in the actual pottery process) are removed. Strongholds, bondages, and wrong mindsets must be demolished for the truth of the gospel to hold us together. Once our time of hardship ends, the Lord then paints us beautifully with glaze so His light can shine through us. Yet, once again, we must return to the kiln. This time, the heat is slowly turned up on us.

He reveals situations that remain stumbling blocks, shatters any lies we continue to believe, and alters our core beliefs to reflect who God says He is and who we are in Him. Then, just as the pot returns to room temperature and goes through another firing on the bottom, so too our foundations must be firmly set on God's Word and on Jesus as our Savior. Once that happens, we are God's workmanship, ready for display and use. Then and only then will the God of the 'potter' get the glory for a product that is beautiful and useful.

What does the power of God look like in splintered lives? Keep reading, and you will see the reflection of His glory in the glaze on many lives.