



Prayer, Praise & Proclamation
CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES



Broken Vessels

**How God Uses
Imperfect People**

Bible Study Series

Six Weeks

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Brokenness and Pain

Unfortunately, brokenness and pain are universal. It may have been from the pain of love that ended prematurely, the pain of abandonment and isolation, the pain of chronic illness or death, or the pain we bring on ourselves through our sin and failure. But we all know what pain feels like, and it feels like being broken.

Like clay jars, we are fragile. We can be easily broken but we do not have to remain “broken vessels.” We are never beyond the healing and redeeming power of God. In the face of failure, God responds with restoration. Despite our shortcomings, God will work in and through us. In the midst of our circumstances, God will help us endure.

God doesn’t stop there! He seeks to use us to speak into the lives of other “broken vessels.” He uses our experiences with His grace and power to comfort others. He desires to use us to help our neighbors and loved ones encounter the God who brings hope and restoration.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” (II Corinthians 4:7 NKJV) We are broken vessels, but this great treasure the good news of Jesus Christ shines through our brokenness.

Session 1: A Fresh Start

John 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:15-19

Background Scripture: John 18:1-14

Breaking the Ice ***What's the biggest mess you ever made?***

John 18:15 - 18, 25 - 27

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest.

16 But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.

17 Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

18 Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

25 Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not!"

26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

27 Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

Discussion Questions

- What emotions would you have experienced in Peter's situation?
- What factors may cause us to shrink back from identifying as Christ followers?

John 21:15-19

15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

18 “Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.”

19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever seen God bring restoration to a seemingly hopeless situation?
- How can God use your story of forgiveness and restoration?

Live It Out

You’ve messed up, but God’s grace is so deep and His love is so wide that He will always restore you when you come to Him in forgiveness and repentance. How will you live out that truth this week?

- **Remember.** Look back to one of the times that you sinned. Thank God for His forgiveness and consider the ways that He has brought restoration to your life.
- **Memorize.** Memorize Psalms 139:23-24. Pray this on a regular basis to keep short accounts between you and God. Is there a circumstance or sin in your life for which you need to ask God for forgiveness?
- **Write.** Write a letter of forgiveness to someone who has hurt you. You may or not you give this letter to the person, the writing process can help you express forgiveness and fully forgive them just as Jesus has fully forgiven you.

The Bible Meets Life

When we come to faith in Christ, we realize there is nothing we can do to earn a right relationship with God. We fail, but Jesus gives us hope. Now that we are Christians, we still fail, but we sometimes chastise ourselves for falling. The same grace we needed for salvation is the same grace we need to live it out.

Session 2: Objections Overruled

Exodus 3:11-12; 4:10-17

Background Scripture: Exodus 3:1-10

God will work through us despite our shortcomings.

Breaking the Ice:

Have you ever accomplished something you didn't think you could do?

Exodus 3:11-12

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

12 So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

This mountain (3:12) Refers to Horeb, "The mountain of God" (Ex. 3:1; also known as Sinai), the mountain on which God met with the Israelites through Moses.

Discussion Question

- Have you ever felt inadequate to do something God wanted you to do?

Exodus 4:10-12

10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

11 So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?"

12 "Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

Discussion Questions

- How do these verses help us understand the way God uses us to accomplish His plans?

Exodus 4:13-17

13 But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send."

14 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

15 "Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.

16 "So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.

17 "And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."

Discussion Question

- Have you ever felt like asking God to send someone else?

Live It Out

It's easy to approach God with a "But, what if?" or "But, what about?" Posture. Consider the following:

- **Deal with the past.** Moses past sins affected his outlook and posture in life. What temptations tend to come up repeatedly for you? What sins do you often commit? Ask the Lord to free you from those chains.
- **Focus on the present.** When you wake. Each morning, start your day by praying asking the Lord for direction.
- **Be accountable.** One of the best ways to overcome your shortcomings is by sharing them with others and inviting others to hold you accountable.

The Bible Meets Life

We don't have to look far to find someone who can do something better than we can. Because our culture puts a lot of value on talents and skills, we can be tempted to make comparisons and think we are not important or significant. God doesn't judge by such standards. He doesn't need whatever we consider our limitations; He just wants us. Our weaknesses do not override what God can and will do through us to accomplish His purposes.

Session 3: The Gift of Grace

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Breaking the Ice ***What would you like an unlimited supply of?***

2 Corinthians 12:1-7a

1 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--

4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations,

Discussion Question

- How would you summarize Paul's experience in these verses?

2 Corinthians 12:7b-8

a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever dealt with a thorn in the flesh?
- What has helped you discover that God's grace is sufficient for you to endure anything?

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Discussion Question

- What are some appropriate ways to respond when god says “No” to your prayers?

Live It Out

God’s grace is sufficient; His grace will allow you to face anything and everything that life throws at you.

- **Give thanks for grace.** What hardship are you currently experiencing, or did you most recently experience? Thank God for that difficulty and ask Him to fill you with strength by His grace.
- **Look for grace.** Consider a decent hardship you encountered. How did God work in your life while going through the difficulty? Identify how God displayed His grace in that situation.
- **Share grace.** Who in your life needs to experience the grace of God? Pray that God would intervene in the situation. Ask God to break the false hopes and false securities in that individual’s life. Pray that God would shower His grace upon the person and that He would use to share the amazing message of the gospel’s grace with him or her.

The Bible Meets Life

Our lives are filled with bot joy and sorrows, opportunities we embrace and difficulties we’d rather avoid. We don’t question God’s presence in the good times, although we might when life gets hard. God is with us through it all good and bad. We are no less in God’s hands or useful as His instruments when we face challenges. God’s grace is always with us.

Session 4: A Channel of Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:1-7

Breaking the Ice

What is your favorite comfort food?

Remember: The comfort of Christ and the comfort of others are better than any comfort food. Even better than ice cream!!!

We are to comfort others in their time of need.

2 Corinthians 1:1-3

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

Discussion Question

- How specifically does God comfort you in your troubles?

2 Corinthians 1:4-5

4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

Discussion Questions

- What are some ways you prefer to be comforted by others?
- Has God ever used you to comfort someone?

2 Corinthians 1:6-9

6 Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead,

10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

Discussion Question

- How can these verses influence the way we care for one another?

Live It Out

When comforting others,

What Not To Say Or Do:

- “I know how you feel”
- “This will turn out for good.
- “You shouldn’t feel that way”
- Don’t offer advice
- Don’t be condemning or judgmental.

What To Say And Do:

- “I love you”
- “I’m so sorry”
- “I’m here for you”
- “You are not alone”
- Be silent
- Be present
- Listen pray

The Bible Meets Life

No one is immune from trouble. No one wants to go through hardships, but sometimes life rains on us. Thankfully, God never abandons His children, and we can know the power of His presence in the challenges we face. When we’ve walked through a hard season of life with God’s comforting grace, we can walk with others undergoing the same difficulties. We can encourage them with the love, grace, and comfort of Christ, who they see in us.

Session 5: A Passion to Share The Gospel

2 Corinthians 5:9-11, 14-21

Breaking the Ice

What marketing methods are least likely to persuade you?

2 Corinthians 5:9-11

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

Discussion Question

- What comes to mind when you think of persuading others to follow Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;

15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Discussion Question

- What are the basics truths of the gospel every person needs to hear?

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Discussion Questions

- How does the love of Christ Change our view of the people we encounter?
- Since we've been reconciled to God, what's our role in sharing the message of reconciliation?

Live It Out

God has blessed you to be a blessing. God wants to work through you to see His Kingdom come and His will be done in your neighborhood and city. Consider:

- **Begin with prayer.** When you wake up in the morning, instead of picking up your cell phone or turning on the television, get on your knees and ask God to work through you.
- **Learn to share.** Do you know how to communicate the gospels to others? At its simplest, witnessing is telling what Jesus has done for you.

The Bible Meets Life

One of the beauties of life is the uniqueness each one of us brings to it. We are created by God with particular interests, abilities, and personalities. Our individuality is compounded by our history including our sins, failures, and victories. We are all unique, but God calls us to the same task: to share His gospel. Our individual histories and experiences provide opportunities for us to bring the gospel into the lives of others.

Session 6: Right Here, Right Now

Mark 5:1-20

You don't have to go far to share your transformed life in Christ.

Mark 5:1-7

1 Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains,

4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him.

7 And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."

Discussion Question

- Who might this broken man be today?

Mark 5:8-15

8 For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!"

9 Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many."

10 Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country.

11 Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains.

12 So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them."

13 And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

14 So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened.

15 Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever observed a dramatic transformation in someone's life?
- Has Jesus made a noticeable change in your life?

Mark 5:18-20

18 And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him.

19 However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."

20 And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

Discussion Question

- How can we use our story of transformation to share the gospel?

Live It Out

Right here, right now, the Lord Jesus wants to display through you His glory to this broken world. You don't have to go far to share your transformed life in Christ. The first-place God calls you is often not across the world, but across the street.

- **Write.** Write down names of three people in your life who are far from God. Ask God for an opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with them.
- **Walk.** Walk across your street, hop over your fence, or knock on the cubicle next to you. Start a conversation about the Lord Jesus and ask Him to guide your words and the conversation.
- **Research.** "Hasn't science disproved Christianity?" "How can you take the Bible seriously?" "If your God is so loving why do you believe in hell?" We can respond with grace and intelligence to the skeptics' questions.

The Bible Meets Life

Some Christians can be enthralled with the idea of doing great things for God in exotic locales. While that type of mission is needed, the first-place God calls is often not around the world but across the street. Christ calls us to represent Him right where we are. The hardest ministry may be among those who know us best, but those same people are ones most impacted by the way Christ has transformed us.