

A small group of us had gathered to pray for revival. I was excited because joining us was a pastor from Uganda who had been used powerfully of God in the revival in that nation. I confess that I had some expectations for our prayer together.

But this man prayed just one very simple prayer—and then he was silent. I remember thinking, “*That’s it? That’s all you’re going to pray?*”

As we sat in the ensuing silence, all I could hear was a jackhammer across the street, breaking up concrete in front of a downtown building. I was distracted by the constant pounding noise. I was disappointed because I had expected so much more. I was thinking perhaps revival would break out because of our prayer time!

The pounding of the jackhammer filled my thoughts. It was all I could hear, until the Lord spoke quietly to me: “You have some very hard places in your heart that need to be broken up.”

In that moment, the Lord showed me a key to revival: *brokenness*.

The Gift of Brokenness

The constant pounding of the jackhammer had a purpose. It was pulverizing the old concrete so that something new could be established. The old building across the street was being transformed, but the process of new life required the old to be broken up and removed.

New life comes out of brokenness, which leads to repentance and restoration in Jesus Christ. Brokenness allows the hard places of our hearts to be exposed (pride, lack of love, envy, sinful habits, hypocrisy, shame, etc.), so that the healing and restoring in Christ can begin, exchanging a heart of stone for a heart of flesh:

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:25-28).

I once prayed for brokenness in a group of prayer leaders, and was gently corrected. There was a fear that praying for brokenness meant that I was inviting pain and devastation into our lives. But brokenness really means examining the hard places that already exist in our hearts, and then repenting of them so that the healing power of Jesus Christ can restore those places to true freedom in Christ. Brokenness does not need to be feared; it is a loving gift from the Lord.

God Dwells with the Broken and Contrite

King David knew the place of brokenness. After his sin with Bathsheba, he knew that a broken and contrite heart was the key to restoration. He acknowledged that all the sacrifices and acts of service to God could not fulfill the one thing God desired the most in him: brokenness.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

The word contrite is equated to being pulverized, crushed into small particles, or ground into powder. This is a picture of true brokenness; when the rocky places of our hearts are ground into such fine powder that new life can begin to grow. David knew that this place of contriteness was the way to be ushered back into the presence of the Holy, Living God. It was the place of revival for him. David knew the truth of Isaiah 57:14-15:

*And it will be said: "Build up, build up, prepare the road!
Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people."*

*For this is what the high and lofty One says--he who lives forever, whose name is holy:
"I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."*

The Heart of a Broken Person

Nancy Leigh DeMoss, an author and speaker on personal and corporate revival, quotes a report from a missionary who experienced true, heaven-sent revival in Africa. He noted that the African believers would ask him if someone was a "broken Christian." They were not concerned if he or she was a well-known or committed Christian. It was more important for them to know if the believer was truly *broken*.*

Nancy goes on to list some characteristics of a broken person:

- Broken people have a dependent spirit; they recognize their need for God and others.
- Broken people are humbled by how very much they have to learn.
- Broken people trust in God – they rest in Him and are able to wait for Him to act on their behalf.
- Broken people are quick to admit their failure and to seek forgiveness when necessary.
- Broken people compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel a desperate need for His mercy.
- Broken people realize they need to maintain a continual heart attitude of repentance.
- Broken people continually sense their need for a fresh encounter with God and for a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit.

Don't fear praying for God to do a work of brokenness in your life. Although God used the sound of a jackhammer to awaken me to my desperate need for Him, the work of the Holy Spirit has been far gentler. Rather than a forceful pounding, it is a daily, rhythmic nudging of the Spirit to give those hard places of my heart over to the Lord Jesus Christ for His reviving work.

"Dear Heavenly Father, we acknowledge our desperate need for Your reviving work in our lives. We pray that You will guide us into true brokenness, that we might repent and receive forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ. Take away our fears of being broken, and replace those fears with the courage to allow the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts. As we seek true brokenness, we pray for the fulfillment of Your promise to both revive and dwell with those who are broken and contrite in Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen."

**Brokenness: The Heart God Revives, by Nancy Leigh DeMoss, pg. 86.*

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