

Leadership track theme: LEADERSHIP CHARACTER

SESSION: 2

THE BLESSING OF BROKENNESS

E. LeBron Fairbanks
Eurasia Conference
October 4-7, 2007

Key Verses:

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

“For You, O God, tested us. You refined us as silver is refined. You bought us into the net. You have caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, but you brought us out to rich fulfillment.” Psalms 66:12.

“And she [Rebekah] said, ‘If all is well, why am I like this?’” (Gen. 25:22)

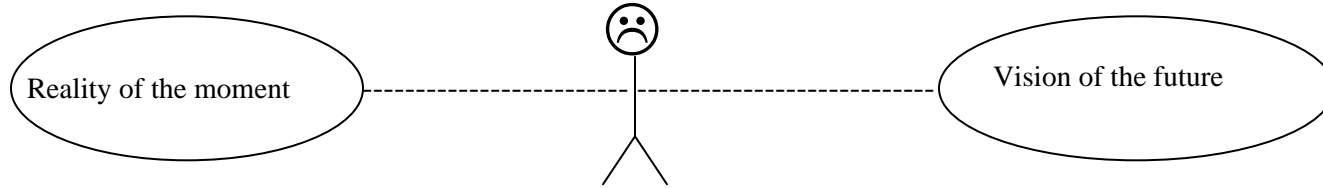
Introduction:

The late Dutch theologian, Henri Nouwen, wrote a book entitled, *THE WOUNDED HEALER*. In the book he talks about the minister as a “wounded healer: “One who must look after his own wounds but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others” (*THE WOUNDED HEALER*, p.82).

Nouwen helped me profoundly to see that I could bring my brokenness along side another, place my arms around the person and pastorally care for the individual even as I was working through my own woundedness.

In the process, we are blessed, which is the theme of this session: **The Blessing of Brokenness**. Brokenness is another vitally important character shaping value.

Remember the discussion in the previous session about the pain leaders experience when good and godly people differ and even collide over vision and values?



PAIN!

I discussed the “pain” we experience when leaders hold tightly to a ‘vision’ of the future while ACCEPTING the ‘realities’ of the present, especially ‘good and godly people who do not embrace the vision we have for our ministry assignment. This leadership position often produces pain for the leaders.

We also experience pain, brokenness, and suffering in our families, communities and countries where we live and serve. A district superintendent friend on mine told me recently regarding a very discouraging time with his son during the past nine months, “I knew God was there, I just didn’t know where ‘there’ was.” When our children hurt, we hurt.

Sometimes, we ask the question Rebekah asked in Genesis 25:22, “If all is well, why am I like this?”

The relationship between brokenness and Christian leadership in the real world often presents conflicting expectations and multiple demands for the leader. In these situations, how do we lead Christianly, consistently, and with vision and courage?

In these ministry assignments, how can we lead when we feel abused, manipulated, undermined and ignored? And if God has permitted words to be spoken or deeds done against us, why? What does He want to teach you...and me? What does He want to teach others?

Perhaps my “favorite” verse in the Bible is Acts 27:25 – “So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me.” The scriptural context is Acts 20-28.

God gave a vision to Paul regarding ministry. Acts 23:11 tells us that God spoke to Paul and told him that he would minister in Rome just as he had ministered in Jerusalem.

In studying the context, we see that when God gives to us a vision for the future, for Paul, and for you and me:

A. ...delays may occur. Paul was in jail for two years before the vision (Acts 23:11) was realized. God told Paul in Jerusalem that he would testify about God in Rome. He just did not tell Paul how long it would take for the vision to be realized!

In addition to the delays,

B. ...suffering and hardship may result. Paul was insulted, intimidated and had threats on his life after he received a vision from the Lord.

C. Also, questions may also arise that tempt us to doubt.

* Paul could have asked “why” he insisted on a trial in Rome after King Agrippa told him (Acts 26) he could be set free if....

* He could also have wondered why he didn’t listen to his friends (Acts 20-21). Not so with Paul. But often with us.

D. And results may differ from what we expected. Paul finally arrived in Rome as per the vision in Acts 23:11. He was placed again in jail.

*But in jail he ministered to friends and the jailers.

* He also, in jail, wrote the Prison Epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians. He ‘bloomed’ where he was planted!

Paul’s faith and courage in God, powerfully stated in Acts 27:25, were demonstrated in the midst of a typhoon, 14 days without food and a shipwreck. And, one chapter later, we find that God, indeed, was faithful to the vision He had given to Paul.

In the midst of the “realities” we face in our present leadership assignments,

* how can we effectively lead as a “wounded leader” with a broken heart?

* What are the characteristics of a suffering servant leader?

* Where is the “blessing” in leading with a broken heart?

Characteristic #1: A suffering servant leader EMBRACES BROKENNESS -

Brokenness can develop Christ-like character qualities in us.

What is brokenness? Brokenness is one of those things that is easier to recognize when it is experienced, but often difficult to describe. We know some contributors to a broken spirit.

* Circumstances overwhelm us.

* Suffering overtakes us; personal sin defeats us.

* Words spoken that cut us and deeds done that hurt us.

* Friends use and abuse us.

* Family members misunderstand us.

God uses our brokenness of spirit – a recognition of utter dependence on God - to get our attention, wherever we happen to be in our walk with Him.

In these times of brokenness, God teaches us lessons, painful as they may be, about others, ourselves, and Him that we need to learn in order for us to grow and mature in our faith.

* “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalms 51:17

In the book, *Broken in the Right Place: How God Tames the Soul*, the author makes some powerful statements regarding brokenness:

“ Brokenness purifies our ambitions.”

“ Brokenness allows us to see our own blind spots.”

“ The breaking process produces a leader that can be trusted.”

Korean pastor Paul Cho is quoted as stating: “I’ve yet to see a leader God has used tremendously who has not been broken.”

As strong as we think we are, with a brokenness of spirit we recognize how weak we really are, and how much we need our heavenly Father if we are to live and lead in the way He wants us to live.

In these moments, we are driven to our knees with the words of II Corinthians 12:9: “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” The contemporary song reminds us of the truth of this passage.

*“His strength is perfect when our strength is gone,
He’ll carry us when we can’t carry on,
Raised in His power, the weak become strong,
His strength is perfect, His strength is perfect.”*

Regardless of who is right or wrong in situations where good and godly people differ over vision and values, God’s process of developing leadership character within us involves being broken before Him. (I Peter 1:5-9)

* *For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.
For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure,*

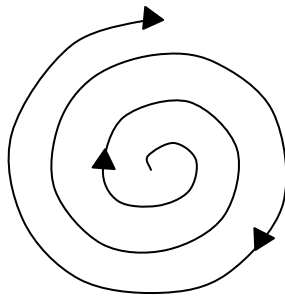
they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

How shall we respond to the brokenness in our lives? We can respond in one of two ways to our brokenness.

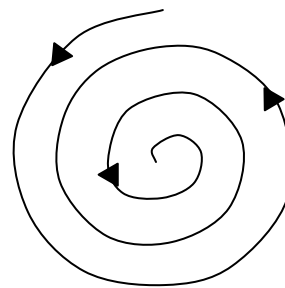
*We can resent the situation, person, circumstances, or God and grow bitter, become angry and withdraw .

* Or, we can be driven to our knees to ask God what He wants to teach us through the brokenness or “dark night of the soul.”

These two ways of thinking and reacting can be diagrammed as follows:



Growth Producing



Growth Inhibiting

Key questions to ask in the midst of conflict situations are: What can I learn? and How can I change? These are growth-producing questions. On the contrary, growth inhibiting questions are: Why me? and What if...? This is the “could have, should have, would have” way of thinking. They are growth inhibiting!

What are the fruits of brokenness?

No one wants to be broken. So why is it necessary for Christian leaders? The fruits of brokenness are **humility, authenticity, integrity and sensitivity.**

** I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:1-2.*

Brokenness of spirit can produce in us Christlike character qualities, especially the character quality of humility. In biblical perspective humility is a prerequisite to the things we seek most in our lives. It is the firm foundation upon which our spiritual life is built.

Recently I read that “Humility is not underestimating our worth or allowing ourselves to be defined by another. Humility invites us to say ‘no’ to the center of our

own universe. Humility is recognizing that we are God's creation and allowing ourselves to be grounded in *that* reality." (Kathleen R. Flood OP in Upper Room Reflections, September 17, 2007)

There are seven ways to spot a humble spirit:

Humility does not demand its own way.

Humility exudes an attitude of service (service is doing mundane things that help others).

Humility does not seek attention or credit.

Humility forgives when offended, but is hard to offend.

Humility does not criticize others.

Humility produces a teachable spirit.

Humility produces a gracious spirit—a spirit of mercy and thanksgiving.

Something *good* happens to us when we respond to the painful and conflict situations in our assignments...

1. by focusing on **our** walk and relationship with Christ, and not on others and their expectations;
2. by yielding responsibility of the "led" to the Christ who indwells within us by His Spirit;
3. by leading *pastorally* out of the pain and brokenness (and not denying it);
4. by expecting trials, temptations, misunderstandings, verbal abuse, rejection, and a sense of being "used" by some whom we are suppose to lead; and
5. by relating to those in the Christian fellowship who profess faith in Christ as brothers and sisters in Christ (even though evidence may not support their testimony). This kind of living and dying is only possible by grace alone.

*Grace alone, which God supplies,
Strength unknown, He will provide.
Christ in us, our cornerstone;
We will go forth in grace alone.*

What really hurts is that God sometimes uses people who are different from us, often people with whom we have problems, to teach us these lessons we need to know about **ourselves**.

Satan often pounds us at our weak points, creates doubt within us, and raises questions within us regarding God's grace in our lives.

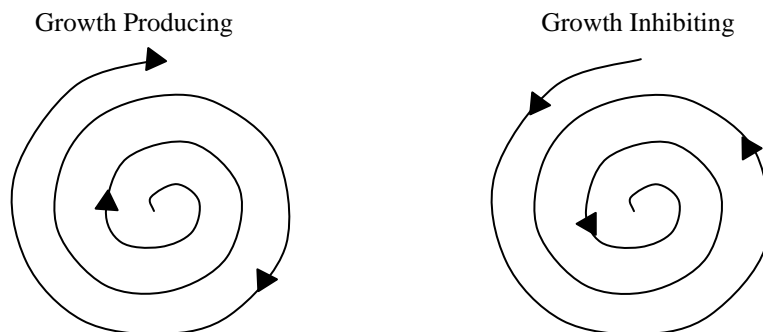
And, we sometimes experience the "silence of God" when our family members or close friends are suffering.

* In these times, we need to remember the text: *For you, O God, have tested us. You refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net. You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, but you brought us out to rich fulfillment.* Psalms 51:17

* In these times, the “blessing” of the choral benediction we sang at the close of every MVNU baccalaureate service reminds us of our only source of strength:

“Grace to you, grace to you. May grace abound in all you do.
Grace to do the will of the Father, grace, grace to you.”

Remember the diagram I shared earlier visualizing the two ways we can respond to brokenness in our leadership assignments:



Circle the number that best describes **your** way of thinking and reacting when “good and godly” people differ with you?

Growth **Producing** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Growth **Inhibiting**

Remember, we lead as “wounded leaders” with a broken heart by **EMBRACING BROKENNESS.**

God uses brokenness to draw us closer to Himself.

Our brokenness can develop Christ-like character qualities in us.

Characteristic #2: A suffering servant leader PRACTICES HOSPITALITY.

An attitude of hospitality enables us to “make room” or “create space” for the challenging people with who we live and work.

A. During a recent Christmas season Anne and I spent a fascinating evening in Columbus with a former MVNU student and his girlfriend. We walked to a nearby restaurant to purchase some Chinese food. We ate the meal by candlelight while sitting on the floor in a circle. The meal was great. The three hour discussion was phenomenal. What a great blessing to Anne and me as well as to the other couple! Sharing our meal. Sharing our time. Sharing our journey. During the evening Anne and I experienced what the Bible refers to as hospitality (Romans 12:9-12; I Peter 4:4-8).

This practice of Hospitality was a way of life fundamental to Christian identity for seventeen hundred years of the Christian church. Christine Pohl convincingly documents this practice in her book, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality in Christian Tradition*. Hospitality has the potential of transforming relationships with individuals with whom we live and work.

Biblically and theologically, the term “hospitality” is not limited to receiving a stranger into our homes – although it surely includes this dimension.

Fundamentally, it is a core attitude toward those whom we are leading. This hospitality can be expressed by a variety of behaviors. Hospitality, biblically understood, challenges us to relate to others as if we were relating to Christ Himself.

“Hospitality” means primarily the “creation of free and friendly space” – making room, to use Pohl’s words, in the midst of differences of thought or behavior that may exist. . It often provides the opportunity for those individuals to enter into deeper contact with himself, or herself, with others, and with God. It is a beautiful gift we can give to others.

It is being to others with whom you live and work, a “living witness of the risen Christ.”

In so doing, we often serve as “angels of God” without even knowing it. Healing often takes place in a faith community through the practice of hospitality. Be known as one who goes around doing good.

Nouwen felt that compassion to others was not a skill to be acquired but an attitude of the human heart. He believed that “when we see the other person and discover in that person gentleness, kindness and other beautiful gifts which he or she **is not able to see**, then our compassionate heart is revealed!” What a profound thought!

Let me share with two insights into this fascinating challenge of “spiritual hospitality.”

Insight #1: the gift of “spiritual hospitality” is a “love gift” to Christ

Colossians 3:17, 23-24 reminds us that our service to others is *service to the Lord Christ*. This concept is at the very core of biblical servant leadership.

In our leadership responsibilities we can be hurt, misunderstood, and rejected or we can be appreciated, affirmed, and accepted. The response, however, does not dictate our action. We love because He first loved us.

Illustration: When Anne and I moved to Manila, Philippines, both of us were overwhelmed by the pervasiveness of poverty in the country. Anne shared her despair with a Filipino friend, a female dentist. Anne’s friend encouraged her to focus on the few she could help, not on the masses she could not. Anne took her advice and focused on some women in need around us. She bought glasses for one lady, new teeth for another, and for another she sponsored a beautician’s course and attended the graduation ceremony. Anne befriended these ladies and invited them often to our home. By serving those few, she was serving Christ.

“The mystery of hospitality is how often our small tasks are translated by grace into God’s great work. Service to others through hospitality, biblically understood, is service to Christ.

Remember the concluding words from Matthew 25. “The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Our gifts of hospitality to others are not selective “spiritual gifts” given by God to only a few for use in the kingdom.

Rather, our gifts of care and concern to others are practical expressions of our love for Christ.

For sure, with the commitment to a lifestyle of “spiritual hospitality” comes a key question:

How do I deal with my unfinished agenda for the day when I attempt to “create space” and make room for others and in so doing not accomplish what I think needs to get done?

“A few years ago, I met an old professor at the University of Notre Dame. Looking back on his long life of teaching, he said with a funny twinkle in his eyes: ‘I have always been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I slowly discovered that my interruptions were my work.’”

Henri J.M. Nouwen, OUT OF SOLITUDE

Remember, we serve Christ through the interruptions of our work.

In so doing, we assist others in their growth and maturity in Christ. Again, the gift of spiritual hospitality is a love gift to Christ.

Insight #2: the “gift of spiritual hospitality” is a love gift from Christ.

The miracle of miracles is that we are blessed when we reach out to others.

Christ turns **our** “gifts of hospitality” to others into “gifts” from Him **to us**. We find our Lord in the midst of our service to others.

How often we experience God’s abiding presence in the midst of our very ordinary expressions of “making room and creating space for those with whom we live and work.”

Nouwen defines compassionate actions or spiritual hospitality as “being to others what Saint John was for his listeners and readers: A living witness of the risen Christ!”

Something happens to us and in us as we reach out to others with gifts of hospitality.

What a miracle of God’s mercy. Blessing upon blessing! The grace of Christ flows **to** us and **through** us when we work, play and study with the mind of Christ! This is what it means in Phil. 4:6, “Let your gentleness be known to all...”

Again, the gift of hospitality – this gift of creating space and making room for others – by grace alone, becomes a love gift from Christ to us. We grow and mature in our faith as we increasingly “practice hospitality.” Remember, the miracle of miracles is that we are blessed when we reach out to others in Jesus’ name.

Let me remind you that hospitality in Christian perspective is much more than being nice and feeding friends.

It is a way of life for believers and dictates how we approach those with whom we live, work, and serve.

For the strangers, the disenfranchised and lonely, our family members, friends, and the good and godly Christians who disagree with us and do not embrace our vision, creating space and making room for them is the **essence** of hospitality, biblically understood.

And we experience the “surprises of God” in our lives in the process of enabling others to grow, mature and sometimes change. Through “providing space” and “making room” for others to grow, we are given “space” by God to grow and mature in Christ-likeness.

Hospitality, biblically understood, is nothing less than the amazing grace of God working in us and through us as we live and lead as “wounded leaders” in our leadership assignments.

Let’s Review. Our brokenness, sufferings and wounds can serve as blessings to us if:

#1: we embrace brokenness

#2. we practice hospitality.

Characteristic #3: A suffering servant leader EXPRESSES GRATITUDE.

Gratitude is grounded in a focus on God and His mercy and grace, and not in a preoccupation with people and their problems.

I first heard the words to the chorus “Give Thanks” in 1989 when I attended the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Manila, Philippines. You may know the words.

*Give thanks with a grateful heart; Give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because He’s given Jesus Christ, His Son.
And now let the weak say, “I am strong,” Let the poor say, “I am rich,”*

Because of what the Lord has done for us. Give thanks.¹

Five thousand delegates from 192 countries participated in the ten-day conference. At the time of the conference the Berlin Wall stood firm. The Central and Eastern Europe Soviet bloc remained in tact. Numerous African countries were involved in civil wars.

Yet, I heard testimonies of God's grace from delegates from these and other countries where Christians were regularly persecuted. I was profoundly impacted. These believers accepted I *Thessalonians 5:18* as an **imperative** and a way of life for them.

"Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

The scriptures remind us that God desires a **thankful** people, a **grateful** people, not a murmuring, grumbling, faultfinding and complaining people. In our real world of living and leading within the Christian community, **how can we recapture a spirit of gratitude as we work daily with problems, people, and the conflicting perspectives of those whom we serve?**

Will **we** live as faithful disciples with consistently grateful hearts in the difficult situations we face and the multiple demands placed on us in present and future leadership assignments?

How can we recapture a spirit of gratitude as a way of living and leading? Listen again to I *Thessalonians 5:18*: "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

TO WALK IN **GRATITUDE** AS A WAY OF LIVING AND LEADING, biblical servant leaders must be **ATTENTIVE** ("Give thanks..."), **INCLUSIVE** ("in all circumstances"), and **GOD-CENTERED** ("for this is God's will in Christ Jesus").

Let's look more carefully at each one of these imperatives of gratefulness or gratitude, the third core quality upon which successful servant leadership is built. The three imperatives of gratitude: Attentive, Inclusive and God-Centered, are essential for a consistently **grateful** Christian, and therefore servant leader.

OUR GRATITUDE MUST BE ATTENTIVE -- "Give thanks..." – (I *Thessalonians 5:18a*).

Do you recall the story in Luke 17 of the ten lepers cleansed by Jesus? Ten were cleansed, yet only one of the cleansed lepers returned to Jesus to thank him. Were the other nine not aware they had been cleaned?

Attentiveness to what God is doing enables us to "see" and "focus" through the "eyes of our eyes"—our spiritual eyes.

We look for the miracles and marvels of God in our lives—our equivalent to the crossing of the Red Sea, the pillar of fire by night, and the manna by day, the daily protections from our 'enemies', or the 'healing' of our leprosy!

*And with this attentiveness comes gratitude to Him who promised never to leave or forsake us! God really is for us!

¹ Words and Music by Henry Smith, 1978

When we are continually preoccupied with busyness, the tyranny of the urgent, and the incessant running to meet everyone's expectations, then our thoughts cannot be focused.

*In my own flurry of activities, I must continually remember to say, "Thanks You, Jesus!"

A Spirit-empowered attentiveness to God alerts us to the presence of God manifested in a piece of music, a bird, a daffodil, a kiss, an encouraging word from a friend, a thunderstorm, a newborn baby, a fresh blanket of snow, a full moon, a sunrise, a sunset or a rainbow.

There are gifts of God we often take for granted.

*What about the grace-gifts from individuals—people with whom we live, work, or worship—colleagues and friends on a college or university campus, in local churches or in a regional conference?

*And what about our family members and fellow employees...or even employers? Are we attentive to the small and large gifts God gives us through people close to us! Or are we taking them for granted...always expecting more?

To be aware and alert to the presence of God manifested in the *predictability* of a job or the *unpredictability* of the people with whom we live and work requires a spirit-empowered attentiveness to God.

From this perspective, the difficult people with whom we work (or will work!), the conflicting expectations placed on us, the multiple demands and the sheer exhaustion we experience can be placed in perspective. Through attentiveness to God's activities in our lives, the people around us and the place we work can be made a source of joy—abiding joy—in the midst of seemingly impossible situations. The Spirit of God within us enables us *though attentiveness* to 'give thanks.' Our gratitude must be attentive.

OUR GRATITUDE MUST BE INCLUSIVE — "in all circumstances" — (I Thessalonians 5:18b).

Job asks, "If we take happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow, too?" Nouwen wrote in an article of the spiritual work of gratitude:

"To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives—the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections—that requires hard spiritual work. Still, we are only grateful people when we can say thank you to all that has brought us to the present moment."

Don't focus just on the circumstances you normally would call wonderful. God may use difficult circumstances in a wonderful way. So we thank Him in the difficult circumstances, also! Manning told the story of a grateful, old woman in an extended care hospital:

"She had some kind of 'wasting' disease, her powers fading away over the march of the month. A student worker spoke to her on a coincidental visit. The student kept going back, drawn by the strange force of a woman's joy. Though she could no longer move her arms and legs, the elderly lady would say, "I'm just so happy I can move my neck." When she could no longer move her neck, she would say, "I'm just so glad I can hear and see." When the young student finally asked the

old woman what would happen if she lost sound and sight, the gentle old lady said, "I'll just be so grateful that you come to visit.""

Remember to be thankful, grateful, for all things, "including" the little things.

Jesus said, "...whosoever can be trusted with very little can be trusted with much..." (Luke 16:10).

*If you are grateful in small things, even in a small way, you will more naturally express gratitude in great things.

*Don't forget the ten lepers. For whatever reason, nine of the ten cleansed lepers chose not to return to give thanks.

The discipline of giving thanks in all circumstances is so painful and difficult at times, especially when we have been hurt deeply.

*But I am learning to say, "Thank you God even in these times for the lessons You are teaching me about myself, my relationship to you, and others."

*Remember Nouwen's quote from the old priest who told him, "My whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted until I discovered that my interruptions were my work."

Our gratitude must be inclusive—the joy and the sorrow, the small blessings as well as the large gifts from God, the interruptions and the routine. "Give thanks in all circumstances..." (I Thessalonians 5:18b).

OUR GRATITUDE MUST ALSO BE GOD-CENTERED -- "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." – (I Thessalonians 5:18c).

The theocentric or God-centered character of gratitude is anchored in ruthless trust that there is a God who is Sovereign and whose providential care guides His people.

*By divine mercy, we have been given the unearned gift of salvation. We received this gift through no merit of our own.

*Our sins have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ.

When we celebrate that we have received a gift we can never repay, we notify others with our faces and our actions.

*The tenor of our lives becomes one of humble and joyful thanksgiving.

*We rejoice in the gift. "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, his love is everlasting." (Psalms 107:1) "Now thanks be to God for His gift [of grace]." (II Corinthians 9:15)

I was moved recently by a friend whose testimony reflects these passages. She said, "**I am learning new ways to see life and work as a means to express gratitude to God for his grace, mercy, and faithfulness.**" New ways to see life and work! – *that* is gratefulness!

God has reminded me throughout this year that the foremost quality of a trusting disciple and a Christian leader is *gratefulness*.

*Gratitude arises from the acceptance of all of life as grace—as an undeserved and unearned gift—a grace gift—from the Father's hand.

*And God has reminded me that GRATITUDE IS GROUNDED IN A FOCUS ON GOD AND HIS MERCY AND GRACE, AND NOT IN A PREOCCUPATION WITH PEOPLE AND THEIR PROBLEMS.

*I state this with conviction because the opposite of gratitude is, of course, ingratitude, and the antithesis of giving thanks is grumbling

Remember ingratitude and negative attitudes were among the Israelites major problems and caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years before entering the Promised Land.

Grumblers are like a crew of vineyard workers who had labored from dawn to dusk and felt cheated when the latecomers received the same wage (Matthew 20:1- 16).

Grumblers complain about the unfairness of life, the poverty of their resources, the insensitivity of their spouse or employer, the liberals, the conservatives, the hot weather, the cold weather, the rich, the poor, the administrator of a Christian college or university, the pastor of the local church, the district superintendent, the regional director or the general superintendent!

*Grumblers complain!

Gratitude, however, is not grounded in murmuring, grumbling, fault-finding, or complaining, but in the conviction that *God is big enough* to handle any situation we encounter! Praise God!

I have come to see in a profound way that it is gratitude that makes us joyful, not the other way around.

*Too often we are not grateful to God because we are sad when things don't go our way.

*Slowly, very slowly but surely, I am coming to see that joy does not make us grateful.

*Rather it is **gratitude that makes us joyful**. "Give us inner eyes—spiritual eyes—to see and embrace this profound truth, O God!"

As a Christian leader, a biblical servant leader, do we find it difficult to imagine that **gratefulness** can become the basic attitude of our lives?

*This will only be possible when our gratefulness is Attentive ("Give thanks..."),

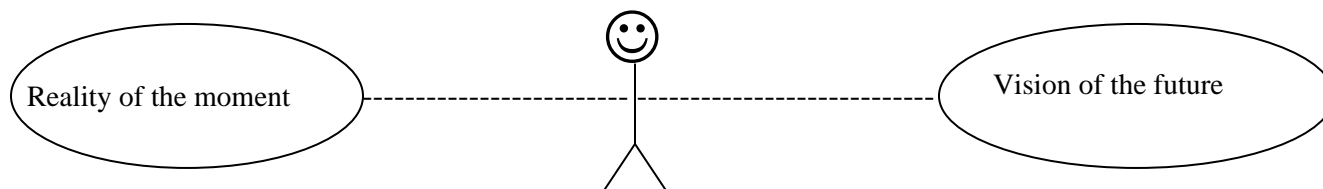
*Inclusive ("in all circumstances...") and

*God-Centered ("for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.").

The challenge for the servant leaders who desire to make a profound and qualitative difference in the lives of the led is this: Give thanks to God in the midst of the most difficult situations for this is the foundation of a spiritual life needed to sustain you during the months and years ahead.

*Don't let the routines of life dull us to the surprises of God!

CONCLUSION:



JOY and BLESSING!

A. Joy *and* Blessing comes to a “wounded leader” with a broken heart who:

#1: EMBRACES BROKENNESS - Brokenness can develop Christ-like character qualities in us.

#2. PRACTICES HOSPITALITY – An attitude of hospitality helps us make room or create space for the challenging people with whom we work and live.

#3. EXPRESSES GRATITUDE – Gratitude is grounded in a focus on God and mercy and grace, and not in a preoccupation with people and their problems.

B. Remember, something happens **in** us as biblical servant leaders when we relate to others within the community from this perspective.

WE grow. WE mature. WE develop leadership character. WE are blessed! Others may or may not change, but something happens profoundly to us and in us through this process.

C. Sing with me the chorus I mentioned earlier:

“Give thanks with a grateful heart; Give thanks to the Holy one; Give thanks because he’s given Jesus Christ, His son. And now let the weak say, “I am strong,” Let the poor say, “I am rich, because of what the Lord has done for me.” Give thanks!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kinsler, F. Ross. editor. *Ministry By the People*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983.

Manning, Brenning. *Ruthless Trust*. San Francisco:HarperCollins, 2000.

Nelson, Alan E. *Broken in the Right Places: How God Tames the Soul*. Nashville: Nelson Publishers. 1994.

Nouwen, Henri. J.M. *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. Image Books. 2006.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Out of Solitude*. Ave Maria Press. 1977.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *The Wounded Healer*. Garden City: Image Books, 1979.

Poul, Christine. MAKING ROOM: RECOVERING HOSPITALITY IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION. Grand Rapids: Eerdmann Publishers. 1999.

Upper Room Reflections. epublishing@upperRoom.org

See also www.nazareneblogs.org/lebronfairbanks for additional material from E. LeBron Fairbanks

The Blessing of Brokenness is a short story by popular American author, Karin Slaughter. As Mary Lou Dixon, an employee of the Christ Holiness Church, sits in the church overseeing a repair crew, she muses on the downward slide her life has taken over the last year and thinks about her Uncle Buell's Bible Teaching: "Only Jesus can put you back together once you've been broken by sin," Buell had preached. The Blessing of Brokenness opens on a woman sitting in a church pew watching the cross at the front of the church. Karin Slaughter is one of my favourite thriller writers and so I was suitably thrilled when she began bringing out digital short stories which I could easily download onto my Kindle and zip through on my commute to work. Another blessing of brokenness is the blessing of a God who upholds us. It says in Psalm 145:14, "The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down." Sometimes our brokenness seems to be far more than we could ever bear. You will find rest for your soul there, friend! Come to Him and find rest today. This is just another blessing of brokenness—a God who upholds us. Brokenness Makes Us Stronger. Maybe you are suffering today for the cause of Christ. Maybe your brokenness is one of persecution because of your faith in Him because you have chosen to be His child. In Acts 5:41 Luke says, "Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." Blessed by God The Angel said to this crippled man, "Let me go." Ironically, the word "Jacob" means "that which grabs, that which holds." Jacob was still grasping, but this time, for the first time in his life, he got a hold of the Lord. He said, "Oh God, I need You. God, I will not let you go except You bless me." God had been waiting to hear those words for so long, and at that moment, something wonderful took place. The angel asked Jacob for his name. God knew it, but He wanted Jacob to confess his name which further meant "liar, cheater, crook, God's Blessing of Brokenness. October 22, 2018. Bookmark Read Later Share. To prepare us for this work, He sometimes uses brokenness. That wouldn't be our chosen method, but God knows hardship is sometimes necessary to strip us of our selfish ways. Do you want to achieve what God has planned for you to do? In humility, ask Him to bring any brokenness that He deems necessary. Bible in One Year: Luke 4-5. Get Involved Bookmark Share. Other Daily Content. New. The Will of God in Your Life. The same God we seek in crisis can guide our everyday. Bookmark.