

PROGRAM 54 TEASER

Broken bodies are bad enough. But there's something even worse—broken hearts that see only hopelessness, despair and unending internal pain. We've all been there at one time or another. Maybe you're there right now—trying to hide a broken heart behind the façade of a forced smile. There's one expert I know who is a master at mending broken hearts. I know—because He has mended mine many times. Yes, I'm talking about Jesus—who knew what it was like to have His own heart broken and who knows how to mend yours. Join me today as we explore Christ's prescription for “Mending a Broken Heart”. I hope you'll find this time together more than just talk.

MENDING A BROKEN HEART

Page 1 Broken Hearts Are Everywhere

When you're sensitive to the needs of others, you don't have to look far to find broken hearts. They are everywhere, often hidden by brave smiles until a kind word or loving deed done by another causes the facade to crumble and the tears to flow. God is in the business of mending broken hearts, both yours and others. How He does that—and how He can use you as part of his mending the hearts and lives of others—is what this program is all about.

Broken Hearts Are Everywhere

It was during a Shalom seminar in Pennsylvania when, in the space of only a few hours, I touched three people who had broken hearts. One lovely young mother couldn't do enough to help us, and her smile warmed everyone. But beneath that gentle and gracious surface was a heart that had been broken many times by a husband who would verbally and physically abuse her.

Minutes later, I met a man who had, only months before, lost his wife of almost fifty years. He couldn't talk about her without choking up, and yet he desperately needed to open up.

A few hours later, I spoke kindly to a Korean maid who was cleaning the rooms in the motel where I stayed. Those words of appreciation lifted the lid on her bottled up emotions. She began sobbing as she told me that her husband had walked out on her and that she was now alone.

All three of these people were believers in Jesus, demonstrating that we Christians are not immune to broken hearts. Perhaps you are suffering through a pain-filled marriage. Or the feet of a loved one you adored are now missing from under your table, as you eat alone in a house that has seen death still a voice that once sounded with laughter through your home. Or perhaps you have just been ripped in half through the agony of divorce.

Broken hearts are everywhere. Like the young couple whose one year old child died after they pled with God to heal him. Their screaming ache was compounded

by the fact that nearly two million little babes are murdered in the wombs of their mothers each year in America—their lives deemed unimportant and a nuisance to the comfort of others. And then these parents, who value life and wanted their baby to live, had to watch him die.

Who would dare give an easy answer to such parents. Or to the parents of two teenage girls who shot themselves in a suicide pact because their painful experiences proved too heavy to handle? Their deaths further inflated the suicide epidemic sweeping America, where young and old victims of broken hearts and hopelessness pull triggers, swallow pills, leap from buildings, or use a hundred other means to embrace death, while loved ones are left to groan, "Why, oh why?" There are also no easy answers for broken-hearted people who have lost their jobs and face futures with giant question marks. Or others whose homes or health are destroyed by various kinds of calamities and who view the continuance of life as a burden and not a blessing.

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Page 2 Pain Can Be Gain

We've all had shattered hearts at one time or another. And who is to say whether some are broken less or more than others. A broken heart is a broken heart—especially when you're enduring one. I've been there. The past years of Norma's and my life together have seen God's greatest blessing as well as deep personal growth in our lives. They have also been years filled with special pain. The 1979 sudden death of our two partners in the infant work of Shalom. The death of Norma's brother from cancer. The pain of burying my mother and father within a space of six months. A person whom we counted on in the work walking out just when the needs seemed to be the greatest. Going to a new area of ministry in New England and finding that many ministers and lay Christians didn't even seem to want to talk to newcomers.

And there was more. Broken bodies because of pushing them too far. Exhausted minds. Shattered emotions. Financial uncertainties. Great spiritual battles against demonic forces that sometimes seemed to roll in like waves of the sea.

It was hard for us to believe that those and other pains and heart-breaks would lead to a richer life with God. It's easier to emphasize the positive things that make us feel good, rather than admit that it's the things that hurt the most that often draw us closer to God—that lets us see through our tears that Jesus really wants to be our Lord and our love. And those seasons of pain and suffering have continued down through the years.

There's no real growth nor godliness without pain. That fact is borne out by our source and pattern of godliness, Jesus Christ, "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus understands suffering, because He endured such. I want to offer you a simple action plan that can help you to not merely endure the pain of a shattered heart, but bring you through in triumph.

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Page 3 Don't Be Afraid Of Tears

1. Realize That God Has Been There

No one could have had his heart broken more than God as He watched his only Son manhandled and crucified. And no one could have had his heart broken more than a loving and spotless Jesus who became our vile sin so that we could share His righteousness. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

You'll find Him there with you when tears fill your pillow and no human beings, try as they might, can understand. I recall a little boy who had to go to the school principal's office because of a problem. The wise principal unraveled the lad's turmoil and calmed his fears. When the boy was instructed to return to his classroom, he asked the principal, "Sir, would you walk with me?"

Adults are no different from the child in this respect. We need someone to walk with us, and God insists on being that special one. But it's the reason I like to keep my eyes opened and ears tuned to those around me. People with broken hearts need other people to walk with them, too. Psalm 147:3 is beautiful, "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds."

2. Don't Be Afraid Of Tears

No one is more powerful than Jesus Christ, and yet He wept at the death of Lazarus. Secure men can weep. Tears are therapy. Rabindrath Tagore, the renowned Indian poet, said, "The bursting of the petals say the flowers are coming." Someone else said "When your heart bursts with pain and grief, remember that the bursting is only the breaking of the constricting sheath petals to let the flower out. On a mission station in Northern India, they found that when the tops of certain plants were withered by the frost, they gave a second crop. The frost

helped them to discover something. Now, after the plants have given one crop, they cut them back so that they give a second."

Learn to talk to God like a child to a father. You and I are being "processed"—being conformed to the image of Jesus. That can spell "ouch." But it's worth it. Whether your heart has been broken by someone who wished to break it—or whether it is broken through guilt at having failed a loved one in a crisis situation—or anything else in your past, cry it out to the Lord. Tears of confession have worked wonders for me. They will for you, too.

3. Experience God's Healing Through Music

The Holy Spirit often uses music to minister to a broken heart, especially music that reminds us of God's tender love, mercy, kindness, care and compassionate touch. Sometimes your heart will be so bruised that you feel powerless to obey the admonition, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5: 19). When that happens, just listen to music with heaven's message and heart beat, and you'll begin to sense anew the Lord's nearness.

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Page 4 Stitching Up Your Wounds

4. Live In The Word Of God

Many people have told me that their single greatest source of strength during unbearable pain was their Bible. That's because only God's Word gives adequate answers in our most intimate pains, screams, doubts, or fears. His Word is light invading darkness, hope breaking in on fears, salve covering raw wounds, and promises replacing panic.

How sweet are the words of Psalm 27: 1, 5, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? ... For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock."

Or have you ever felt like the psalmist who couldn't understand why God let good people suffer while godless folk seemed to prosper and revel in their foolishness? Listen to his complaint, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches" (Psalm 73:12). He even complained that it didn't pay to be righteous, "Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Psalm 73:13, 14).

But then God went to work on his broken heart, let him see how the wicked live in slippery places (vs. 18) and are suddenly consumed with terror (vs. 19). Then he realized the secret to mending a broken heart he is realizing the nearness of the invisible Lord, "Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.

You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You" (Psalm 73:23-25).

See how the Word of God begins mending a broken heart and stitching its wounds? When panic sets in, the forty-sixth Psalm speaks of God as our refuge and strength; our very present help in trouble. No wonder we're told not to fear even

though the earth should change and mountains be shaken into the oceans (Psalm 46:1, 2). And there's nothing sweeter than Psalm 34: 18, "The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart ..." Close—yes, He's so very close to broken hearts that need mending.

And what a touch He has. In a remote African village lay a sick old man. A doctor from the government hospital said he must go immediately to the nearby hospital for treatment. The old man refused, saying he wanted to be sent to a little mission hospital. "Why?" asked the doctor. "The government hospital is closer and has very modern equipment. Why would you want to go to such an ill-equipped hospital?" "Because," answered the man, "The hands there are different. There you are touched with hands that care."

God has hands that care, and He also uses others who have experienced pain to reach out to broken hearts. And the greatest salve will always be His Word. When you walk through the fire He promises to be with you (Isaiah 43:2). When dismay envelopes you like a dark fog, He speaks, "Fear not, for I am with you..." (Isaiah 41: 10). When cares pile up and threaten to crush to powder your already broken heart, He quietly urges, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Or when the death of a loved one has devastated you, or the cruelty of a divorce or a painful marriage must be endured, or your life's work goes unnoticed and unappreciated, or you feel rejected by fellow Christians and maybe even your own loved ones—the Holy Spirit's determination is to break through all your confusion, chaos and concern with the reality that it is impossible for you to ever be alone, because God Himself has said, " ...I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake nor let you down, relax My hold on you. Assuredly not! So we take comfort and are encouraged and confidently and boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not be seized with alarm—I will not fear or dread or be terrified. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5, 6 Amplified Bible). Wow! What a promise!

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Page 5 Take a Walk!

5. Take A Long Walk With God

Take a long walk with God and just talk it all out. Everything! Enoch did. So did Noah, Abraham and many others who learned that only God can turn our pain into gain. I've found long walks with the Lord help me see things from His broad perspective rather than my narrow one.

6. Open Your Heart In Prayer

Why have I placed prayer as my sixth point rather than what it should normally be—the first point? Because there are times when one's heart has been broken to the point where you can't even pray. You're numb and just stare in the silence of the world that has turned to stone. But that's when the Lord comes to us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26) and loves us when we think He's a million miles away and our situation is hopeless. Because we love him, we begin to share in prayer our ache, tears and fear that we can't go on anymore unless He carries us. And that's when we find only one set of footprints in our sands of sorrow, because He carries us in His arms when we're too weak to walk.

7. Become Involved With Others

Why does Jesus so understand everything you're going through? It's because He's been there, "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). The Amplified New Testament is even more detailed, "For because He Himself in his humanity has suffered in being tempted, tested and tried, He is able immediately to run to the cry of, assist, relieve those who are being tempted and tested and tried and who therefore are being exposed to suffering."

Isn't that beautiful? Because Jesus has suffered as no other, He can identify as no other in the suffering of others. Your husband fails you or dies? Jesus becomes a

husband and fills each room with His presence (Isaiah 54:5). Your best friend walks out on you? Jesus becomes the “friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). Your employer fires you and you face an uncertain future? Jesus calls himself your Lord and guarantees that He will supply all your needs if you'll put him first (Philippians 4:19) Even if your father or mother would forsake you, the Lord would take you in His own tender care, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me” (Psalm 27:10).

8. You're Comforted To Comfort

Jesus involves Himself with our most profound pain and makes us aware that others have broken hearts, too. We used to pass them by, but now we notice them for we, too, have suffered.

That is exactly the way a sovereign God planned it when He said, " ... God who is the source of every consolation and comfort and encouragement ... consoles and comforts and encourages us in every trouble, calamity and affliction, so that we may also be able to console, comfort, and encourage those who are in any kind of trouble or distress, with the consolation, comfort and encouragement with which we ourselves are consoled and comforted and encouraged by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3,4 Amplified Bible). God comforts you so you can reach out to comfort others. And that thought is what can lead to the conclusion of this message.

The longer I live, the more I see that it's the people who have suffered the most who seem to love the most. They have known broken hearts and thus reach out to others who are shattered by calamity. Perhaps your own heart has been crushed and you think you'll never be the same again. Quietly absorb the principles I've just shared. God is already reaching out to minister to your wounded and worn out spirit. And always remember that as He heals our broken hearts, the Lord expects us to follow Him in the direction He is always heading—to minister to other broken hearts all around us. Get ready to pray together with me.