

Sacred

THUMBprint

What is God doing to get your attention?



Brokenness

**7 Day
Devotional**

Rick Carlson

*Out of my bondage, sorrow and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee.
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

William T. Sleeper, 1887

Introduction

There is an interesting science that has developed in recent years that studies ancient fingerprints left on pottery and other objects. Obviously, the scientist cannot tell us who the people are who left those prints but we can be assured by today's scientific methods that these people were as unique as you and me.

There are hand and foot prints in Egypt that date back 4,000 years. There is even a ridged print that could date as far back as 10,000 years.

The ancient Babylonians and Chinese used thumbprints like signatures in official documents and business transactions. Scientists don't know if they understood the uniqueness of each print or if they thought that the touch of the document had some kind of mystic spiritual connection.

Not until about 100 years ago did the science of fingerprinting come to the forefront. Now it is an accepted science used especially in law enforcement.

Take a look at your thumbs. The characteristics of fingerprints include nine patterns with names like "loops and whorls" that are consistent in all humans. The combination of these nine patterns gives each person their own unique set of fingerprints. Reading and pondering the THUMBPRINT Devotionals will certainly affirm the uniqueness of your own spiritual identity but more importantly we will drill deeper into the question, "What is God doing to get your attention?" by exploring how to respond to God's advances.

The truth is, lots of us go along through life just minding our own business when all of the sudden, something happens. It may be bad or good. Either way it is significant, and makes us aware of the circumstances or events that have gotten our attention. It's kind of like a wake-up call. Sometimes we are really shaken up and we want to blame some one or get even or quit.

The purpose of this devotional series is to:

- drill deeper to the awareness of God's presence
- enlighten you by what the Bible says about God's work in your life
- challenge you to authentically respond to God

Throughout the Bible God took action to get people’s attention in as many unique ways as there are thumbprints. God inspired people, warned them, confronted them, saved them, fought for them, fought against them, taught them and loved them. God had his reasons and purposes for taking action in people’s lives.

The six THUMBPRINT profiles are based on the acronym T.H.U.M.B. plus O. Here is how the individual profiles correspond to the letters in the acronym:

Profile	Letter	Description
Pilgrim	T	Thirst: Thirsty for God, longing for the truth
Philosopher	H	Hunger: Hungry for meaning and significance in life
Warrior	U	Undercurrent: Up against unseen forces in life, undercurrents that threaten to carry you away
Prophet	M	Mystery: Curiosity about the mysterious, the awesome works and actions of God
Saint	B	Brokenness: God gets our attention through illness, disappointments, devastation, pain and grief
Observer	O	Observer: Low or no awareness of God’s presence in the circumstances of life but you are watching and waiting

The “B” represents “brokenness.” Brokenness is a common theme that weaves through all the profiles. The simple fact is, we are all broken by our sin. We are not able to fix or redeem ourselves. Only through the death and resurrection of Jesus is our sin forgiven and our brokenness healed. But brokenness takes on many forms. You may be broken physically, emotionally, psychologically, relationally or spiritually. God uses our brokenness to get our attention. This does not necessarily mean that God inflicts brokenness to wake us up to his presence but rather, he enters the places and times when we are bruised and shattered and reveals his presence.

When God has your attention, things that you thought were once important no longer have the same hold on you. When God gets your attention, your life will never be the same.

Day 1: Brokenness



In the last week before Jesus' crucifixion, he used a metaphor that I believe will be helpful to us today as we ponder God's Word. He said,

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (John 12:24)

His point was simply this. It is in the breaking of the seed that there is wholeness, and in its death there is life.

One day Jesus stood up in the Synagogue unrolled the scroll of Isaiah and began to read.

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the **brokenhearted**... (Isaiah 61:1)*

What is the state of your heart today?

*Are you facing difficulties or challenges that are bringing you to your knees?
Are you carrying a heavy weight of trouble that is crushing your family, killing your reputation or destroying your dreams?
Are you convicted by your sin and it breaks your heart?*

Being brokenhearted is like planting a seed in the ground. Until the hard shell of unrepentance is cracked open, defensiveness against trusting God is put down or resistance to God's way is surrendered, there can be no true transformation in your heart.

The kind of transformation Jesus offers you and me is no less miraculous than the new life that springs from a seed that is broken open and dies in the ground.

Difficult experiences, tragedies and grief are often misinterpreted as punishment as if God is a mean kid with a big stick. But the truth is that God *allows* us to go through the pain and suffering of our heart breaking because these times bring us to see the raw, naked truth of our sin. They stand us squarely in front of a mirror to see a reflection of who we really are and they force us to answer the question, "What is God doing to get my attention?" If so, then what am I going to do about it?

You see, God allows us to experience brokenness because it is in brokenness that we experience the full measure of God's grace, healing and wholeness.

PRAYER

Lord, plant me like a seed in the ground. Let the miracle of transformation proceed as I surrender to your complete will and purpose for my life. Awaken me today to the hope of your transforming work. I can't wait to see what you are going to accomplish. Amen.

Day 2: Brokenness



Bad things happen. It is part of life to experience stuff that can break us -- disappointments, disrespect, demotion, loss, rejection, denial, betrayal, injustice, injury, sickness, divorce, abuse, frustration, fear, calamity, accidents, bankruptcy, death and any number of other realities. Any one of these can bring us to our knees.

The one person in history who is remembered for the crushing blows of life is Job. His friends told him to curse God and die. Yet, through it all Job responded to God,

*“My ears have heard **of you**, but now my eyes **have seen you.**”*

Job understood that through the brokenness he encountered the living God in a real and profound way.

God gets our attention through brokenness. The saddest most tragic thing that can happen to a person is to go through a difficult or even devastating time in life. This brokenness peels them back to the raw core of who they are. And through it, they never allow themselves to see God because their hearts are so hard.

Do you have an encrusted heart-- encrusted with a shell of denial, rebellion, or unrepentance that needs to be broken?

Take a deep breath. Your brokenness is awakening you to the presence of the living God.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, plant me in the soil of your grace. Break whatever resistance I have to your interventions. Bring to life whatever you want in me to bloom. Let a harvest of faith come from this season of my life. Amen.

Day 3: Brokenness



Throughout the Bible we find evidence of people who, through their brokenness, were awakened to God's love and presence in their life.

The story of the anointing of Jesus' feet in Mark 14 is among a handful of stories told in all four Gospels:

Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. "But not during the festival," they said, "or the people may riot."

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. Mark 14:1-5

The Gospel of Mark paints an amazing picture of brokenness. The Passover Feast was only two days away and so the city of Jerusalem swelled from a population of about 30,000 to over 300,000. It was a crazy time to be in the city.

Simon the Leper decided to throw a party in Jesus' honor. We don't know anything about Simon other than he used to be a leper. It is safe to assume that Jesus healed him from the terrible disease. Simon, of all people, knew the harsh realities of being a broken person. As a leper, he would have known the terror of having your body dying a little bit every day. He would have been forced to be isolated from his family, his work, the Synagogue, everything that made his life normal and worth living. And now, as a used-to-be-leper, he was filled with joy. It is not a stretch to say that every day for Simon, the used-to-be-leper, was a celebration at his house. Used-to-be-broken people are very thankful people.

By the time Simon threw the party, the religious leaders had already made up their minds to kill Jesus. All they needed was the right plan and the right opportunity. You see, those leaders, those powerful, rich, educated, impressive people were also flawed, broken people. They just couldn't see it and would never admit it.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I make myself completely available to you. I give you my deficits, flaws, weaknesses and brokenness for you to reveal your glory. May the hope of healing and wholeness capture my heart and mind today. Amen.

Day 4: Brokenness



In the middle of Simon's (the used-to-be-leper) party,, an un-named woman made her way to Jesus. One of the reasons why the book of Mark is so credible is that in the climax of Jesus' story, at the end when things start really heating up, it is *women who demonstrate faith*, and show true courage. The men all turn into wimps. Some things never change! For example,

The widow whom Jesus observed giving her temple offering. She was a hero.

This woman who anointed Jesus. She was a hero.

The women who went to find the body of Jesus on Sunday morning. They were all heroes.

If Mark were writing fiction in that culture, the men would have been put in a much more generous and heroic light. Instead they are faithless, grumbling, treacherous, betraying, denying cowards. According to Mark, it's not important for us to know the woman's identity or whether she was invited to or just crashed the party. The important part to Mark was what she did.

She brought with her an alabaster jar which is a container that cannot be resealed. It is opened by breaking the long neck. Once the neck of the jar is broken open the contents must be used or else they would spoil. The jar was filled with pure nard which is the fragrant extract of a plant imported from India.

This was a costly gift for the woman to give. The value was estimated at about 300 denarii. If you want to know why the fiscal conservatives at the party were grumbling and snorting under their breath (as it is best translated) look at your 1040 tax form – look at the line that says “gross income total” and that would be the value of this perfume.

In her thesis on Brokenness, Anne Murchison pointed out that when the woman broke open the Alabaster jar, it was an outward symbol of the divine work that God was about to do in her heart. The jar is like the heart surrendering to God in brokenness.

The woman laid everything in her life on the line. Her true sacrifice was a broken and contrite heart. She was not self-conscious or concerned about what others were thinking. Neither was Jesus. Without hesitation she completely poured out her soul like perfume over his head and then cried tears of repentance that washed Jesus' feet. It was truly a beautiful picture of brokenness.

The aroma poured out on Jesus of the nameless woman's broken heart affected everyone in the room. And as Jesus said, wherever the Gospel is preached her sacrifice will be remembered.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, let the fragrance of my humble offerings to you express love that is never self-conscious and always given out of extravagant generosity. Today, from a generous heart, I give you the best of who I am. Amen.

Day 5: Brokenness



A few years ago, Gerald Sittser Associate Professor of Religion at Whitworth College, tragically lost three family members in an auto accident. As part of his journey of grief he wrote a book titled, “A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss.” In it he said,

The choice to love requires the courage to grieve. Catastrophic loss will either transform or destroy us, but it will never leave us the same . . . Sorrow never entirely leaves the soul of those who have suffered severe loss. If anything it may keep going deeper. But this depth of sorrow is the sign of a healthy soul, not a sick soul. It does not have to be morbid and fatalistic. It is not something to escape but something to be embraced . . . Sorrow is noble and gracious. It enlarges the soul until the soul is capable of mourning and rejoicing simultaneously, of feeling the world’s pain and hoping for the world’s healing at the same time. However painful, sorrow is good for the soul.”

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, If sorrow is to be my companion, let contentment be our united identity. If grief is to be my cup, let joy be the meal. I may not understand all that you allow to happen in my life but I choose to cherish and learn from it all so I can know you more. Amen.

Day 6: Brokenness



Ponder the lyrics to this hymn by William T. Sleeper written in 1887:

*Out of my bondage, sorrow and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

*Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

*Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

*Out of earth's sorrows into Thy balm,
Out of life's storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

*Out of the fear and dread of the tomb,
Jesus I come, Jesus I come;
Into the joy and light of Thy home,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

*Out of the depths of ruin untold,
Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

PRAYER

Lord, there is no one else to turn to, no one else to lean on, no one else who understands and no one else who can help me. I come to you, Lord Jesus. Let the peace of Christ rule in my heart today. Amen.

Day 7: Brokenness



Psalm 51:17

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

Whole Again (Come Alive)

*You know the cracks upon my heart
And save my tears inside a jar
You see beyond my veiled smile
As a father knows his child*

*You take all my brokenness
All my hurt and all my mess
Every piece in faithful hands
And somehow make me whole again*

*While time and trust taught me pain
You were there to show me grace
A thousand times I've been let down
But You redeem the hurt I've found*

*You take all my brokenness
All my hurt and all my mess
Every piece in faithful hands
And somehow make me whole again*

*You breathe upon
My weary soul
And I come alive*

*You take all my brokenness
All my hurt and all my mess
Every piece in faithful hands
And somehow make me whole again*

*Songwriters: Lincoln Brewster, Mia Fieldes
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PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the trials that bring us to brokenness and press me in to you. Please give me eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to understand your ways that I might turn and be healed. Unless you do, I cannot repent in brokenness. Thank you for the gift of holy moments and healing tears that bring me to my knees in brokenness—that makes room for your grace to forgive, comfort, heal, deliver and transform me—that makes room for more of you in my life. Continue to pour out your Holy Spirit upon me that I might be free to worship and serve you in greater purity of spirit and truth. In your name, Jesus. Amen.