

Dangerous Prayers

Lesson 5

BREAK ME (Part 2)

And when [Jesus] had given thanks, he broke [the bread] and said, “this is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:24)

Chapter 2.6 Jack-In-The Box

Back in **Chapter 2.2**, we saw where Gary Walter, a mentor for Pastor Groeschel, made the pastor a bold promise he never wanted to hear, “God will break you.”

Pastor Groeschel was so confident in Gary’s prophetic statement that he never doubted him. Not only was he confident that God would eventually break him, but he was confident that God would use it. The “breaking” would make the pastor better. It would sharpen his leadership, deepen his faith, and increase his intimacy with Jesus.

Let’s look at the prayer Pastor Groeschel started praying:

“God I trust you so much. I know that you love me, that you are always working in me. If you want to do something more in me, then do it. If it’s painful, then I welcome the pain. If you want to use trials to make me stronger, build my faith, make me closer to you, then use them. God, do whatever it takes to free me from my love for this world—to crucify my love of comfort. God, break me.”

Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 15:31 (AMP)**, “I assure you, believers, by the pride which I have in [your union with] Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily [I face death and die to self].” In asking God to break him, Pastor Groeschel was dying to self.

Remember those old jack-in-the box toys you played with as a kid? You’d crank the little lever on the side of a tiny box as creepy music played. Round and round it went, and even though you didn’t know when it would happen, you knew it was only seconds away. It would happen. At some moment, Jack would suddenly pop out of the box and scare the pants off of you.

Pastor Groeschel felt just like that concerning how God would break him. He knew it was going to happen. The music was playing and when he least expected it, the box would spring open. And, God would break him.

A few months in after starting the new church things started happening:

- They lost the facility they were meeting and had no place to meet.
- A news reporter wrote a scathing article about him that questioned his motives and created rumors and gossip that hurt the pastor’s family.
- The work load was crushing, the hours grueling, the burden overwhelming.

As a young pastor, he made leadership mistakes that hurt people. Close friends got mad and left the church. He had to let staff members go. One was a close friend. That felt like a death. One was a family member. That felt worse than a death.

As each painful event unfolded, he'd call Gary and ask him, "Am I broken yet?" Each time Gary would gently tell him, "not yet."

Insight: When you are broken, you will know it. There will be no question. You will not have to ask.

Scriptures: Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:28; Psalm 34:19

Chapter 2.7 Breaking Bad

Pastor Groeschel's jack-in-the-box finally popped up in a way that was both undeniable and far worse than anything he could have anticipated. His best friend in their church during those first years was a guy he called Jason. When they started the Life Church, Jason left the church he was pastoring and moved to their city to help in their church. Since they were too small to add staff and Jason was sorting out a few things in his life, he worked another job and they dreamed about his joining their staff one day in the near future. He quickly became Pastor Groeschel's closest friend, confidante, and ministry partner. Let's see what happened.

1. Like most people do, Jason had some secrets. No one knew it at the time, but he had done something that left him feeling like his back was against the wall.
 - a) Trying to maneuver from that position, he made a bad decision that Pastor Groeschel knew Jason regretted.
 - b) When the author found out about it, he had no choice but to talk to him about it. Jason's decision betrayed the pastor's trust and wounded their friendship.
 - c) When he was asked about what he did, at first he denied it. Then with nowhere to hide, he became defensive and started yelling at the pastor.
 - d) Jason said some more harsh words to Pastor Groeschel who responded back just as harshly. Jason stormed out of the room, got in his car, and sped off angrily.
2. The next Sunday, Pastor Groeschel wasn't surprised when Jason didn't show up for church. He had made a very bad mistake and then said some things he shouldn't have said. He was hot and the pastor was hurt. But even though the betrayal was significant and the author felt both betrayed and angry, Jason was still his best friend.
 - a) Pastor Groeschel said he knew that Jason would calm down and that they would eventually talk it out. He thought that they would forgive, forget, and move on.

So, he thought! The healing conversation never happened.

Two weeks later Pastor Groeschel had just finished preaching a message titled "Loving Those You Don't Like." Jason naturally came to mind, so on the drive home from church, the pastor told his wife that he was going to call Jason that night and try to make things right between the two of them.

At home just as he was about to pick up their landline phone to make that call, he notice the message light blinking on their answering machine. When he pressed play, he heard Jason's wife sobbing. Through tear-choked cries, she said that Jason was dead. He had taken his life.

How do you think Pastor Groeschel felt?

Scriptures: Psalm 102:1-11; Ephesians 4:26, 31; Colossians 4:6; Psalm 32, 51

Chapter 2.8 Bound By Brokenness

Gary had told the author that he'd know when he had been broken, that he wouldn't need to ask anyone. At that moment listening to his best friend's widow, he knew it without a doubt. Life would be different from that moment onward. He would never be the same.

But he wasn't the only one. Everyone close to Jason suffered and grieved and ached the same way. They were all broken, not only by his loss but by the circumstances around his passing. The next few days were a blur. They did the best they could to comfort each other, all the while trying to help Jason's family make major decisions.

After the tragedy, Jason's family never went back to the house where they found him. His wife and two kids moved in the house with the pastor and his family during their transition. They cried until the middle of the night and fell asleep when they were too exhausted to cry anymore tears.

- 1) Several days later Pastor Groeschel officiated at the funeral, there was standing room only. He tried to offer hope to those grieving alongside of him.
- 2) Though no one knew it, the last words Jason and he had spoken to each other were words they'd forever regret. Jason had done wrong, sinned and lied. He had betrayed God and his best friend. But the author said he didn't care any more about the betrayal. That was only a moment in time.
- 3) He was feeling guilty for not trying to mend the friendship sooner. He said his hardened heart, stubborn pride and wounded ego got in the way of forgiving Jason and focusing on how he could help him.

The following Sunday, he tried to preach. Though he had a sermon planned and started it, within a few minutes he knew there was no way that he'd ever get through it. So, in front of a small crowd of people, he broke down sobbing. In one of the most publicly transparent moments of his life, he talked through all the pain and brokenness that they'd experienced since starting the church.

Before Jason's death, he was hurting, exhausted, overwhelmed and scared. After Jason's death he was simply wrecked, shattered, broken and scarred.

Through tears, he told the church he felt guilty. Guilty that he hadn't reached out to Jason. Guilty that he hadn't done more. Guilty that he didn't know Jason was hurting. But his guilt reached far beyond Jason's tragedy. He felt guilty that he hadn't been a better dad because he was focusing so much on their growing church—and guilty that he hadn't been a better pastor because he was trying so hard to be enough for his wife and kids.

Insight: No matter how hard he tried, he simply wasn't enough.

He told the church that he felt broken and needed more than just prayer. He needed love and grace. He needed them as friends and he needed more of God that he had known in the past.

On that day, something changed in their young church. It went from being a small-crowd of people gathering, to a church family, a real grace-filled community. When he asked for support, almost everyone left their seats and came forward to pray, cry, and worship. Some people kneeled. Some people lifted their hands to heaven.

They were all broken together.

Insight: It's easy to impress people with our strengths, but real connections are forged through our shared weaknesses.

Scripture: James 5:16

Chapter 2.9 Blessed By Brokenness

The last chapter dealing with "Break Me," centers around a friend of Pastor Groeschel named John, but everybody called him Paco. He was a workout partner of the author. They were workout partners, not crying buddies.

- 1) Something happened to Paco. He started to have severe ringing in his ears. The pastor saw a new side of his tough buddy that he had never seen before. For Paco, the ringing never stopped and there was no cure. Paco's case of tinnitus was described as a train driving through his brain, twenty-four hours a day, every day.
- 2) After traveling to the top experts and specialists, Paco got the best advice from a fellow tinnitus sufferer. The guy explained that the noise would never go away. And the only way you can endure it is to get closer to God than you've ever been and pour out your life serving other people.
- 3) Sounds like it doesn't make sense. Just act like everything is okay and get closer to God. Paco hadn't seen another person with serve tinnitus function as well as this man. So, with nothing to lose, Paco tried it.
- 4) Daily, he pressed into God like he never had before: reading God's living Word, meditating on his truth and love, worshiping, praying, fasting. Paco and his wife, Jennifer, started a small group and began pouring into others. They "adopted" a single mom and her kids and starting serving them selflessly.
- 5) In giving their lives away, the roaring in the brain never got better, but somehow John started getting better. The pain didn't lessen, but John's joy increased.

John explained to Pastor Groeschel that tinnitus is the worst pain he could ever imagine. And yet, by God's grace, he'd never been closer to God than he was that moment. He told the author that in brokenness he found joy. In the brokenness and pouring out of his life, John found hope. In the middle of his worst pain, he discovered a peace from heaven that he didn't have the words to explain.

Insight: In our brokenness, we often experience God's greatest blessings.

When Gary told the pastor that he'd be broken, the author panicked. He wanted to avoid it at any cost. But had he tried to avoid the pain he would have missed the blessings. The apostle Paul cried out desperately to God for healing and deliverance from some unknown trial. In three different seasons, Paul begged, pleaded and petitioned God to take it away. But when God said no, Paul discovered something he would have missed otherwise. God's grace was enough. **(2 Corinthians 12:5-8)**

Dangerous Prayers Craig Groeschel, Author, Zondervan; King James Open Bible, Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The Daily Walk Bible, NLT, Tyndale House Publishing, Inc.

Insight: God uses those who are broken and dependent on him.

Peter listened to Jesus as he explained that his body would be broken. Just a little while later, after Jesus had been arrested, Peter experienced his deepest breaking. Three times Peter denied even knowing Christ. On the third time, the Bible says someone asked Peter if he was with Jesus. "Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking the rooster crowed.

The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter" (**Luke 22;60-61**). Can you imagine the shame, the sorrow, the brokenness Peter felt? But then when Peter experienced the grace of Jesus after the resurrection, no one was better to preach on the day of Pentecost. Years later, when Peter was asked to deny Christ, this time he refused. When the enemies of Christ wanted to crucify Peter on a cross, tradition tells us that he said he was unwilling to die as his Savior died. Instead, he asked to be crucified upside down. The same man who cowered in fear stood boldly in faith. He was a different man. Peter was broken and poured out.

Insight: True brokenness before God isn't a one time event; it's daily decision.

Insight: When things get difficult, many run from God. Don't do that. Run to him.

Brokenness isn't just for monks and missionaries. Brokenness is actually the first step. It is basic Christianity. The gospel is an invitation to come and die: die to our sins, die to our past, die to our flesh and to die to our fears.

When Jesus looked at those he loved and thought of those who were to come, he made a choice. He chose brokenness. His body was broken for you and for me. His blood was poured out for our sins.

Lord, break me, is not a safe prayer. It takes faith. But God's most intimate blessings await you on the other side of being broken.

Homework: Read and meditate on **Isaiah 6:1-8**.