

A Holy God; a surrendered life; a fearful thing

By Rick Warren

Richard Baxter once said, “A surrendered life in the hands of a holy God is a fearful thing.”

That’s where we need to be as we lead our congregations toward total surrender to God.

What does it mean to be surrendered to God? The Bible’s word for surrender is also the word for brokenness. We know from the Bible that God uses broken vessels. It’s a divine principle.

The greatest example of this is Jesus. In Luke 22:42, Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (NIV) In the New Testament, ‘cup’ always represents suffering. When Jesus looked into that cup, he saw every sin ever committed. You know that – every sin committed by me, and by you, and by the members of our congregations.

He saw every reason why I shouldn’t be a pastor; yet, he still called me to be one. He saw every reason why you shouldn’t be a pastor; yet, he still called you to be one. Get this – he saw every attack made upon you because you are the leader of your congregation. He saw every lie told about you; he saw every misunderstanding caused by selfish intentions; he saw betrayal. Yet, he still called the people of your congregation to be his own, and he asked you to be their shepherd.

Jesus looked into that cup of suffering and saw he’d be shouldering the blame for all those sins. He was the good Shepherd. He looked into that cup of suffering and said, “Father, if it is possible take this cup away from me. But nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.” That’s surrender! That’s total submission to the Father. That’s brokenness.

It shows us a divine principle: God takes us, he breaks us, he blesses us, and then he uses us. But, in order to use us, we need to be broken of our own sin and pride, just as Isaiah cried out, ‘I am a man of unclean lips,’ when he came face-to-face with Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord, God, Almighty.

God will never “reject a broken and repentant heart.” (Psalm 51:17 NLT)

God cannot use us to the fullest extent until we come to our own Gethsemane. We need to come to a place, and then remain at that place, where we say, “Father, not my will, not my ambition, not my desire to be popular, not anything, but *your will* be done.”

When we do that, God will do all kinds of amazing things through us. But it starts with brokenness. God will never “reject a broken and repentant heart.” (Psalm 51:17 NLT) He promises us that.

I’ve told my staff many times we don’t want to hire anyone who hasn’t had problems in life. They’re usually not very effective in ministry. I want people who have been broken. It makes people more real; it makes them more honest.

Why do we need our hearts broken? We need broken hearts over what’s happening in the world. Bob Pierce, who founded World Vision, said it like this: “Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God.”

God is looking for spiritual leaders who have surrendered everything to him.

May you and I both become that kind of leader for Christ.