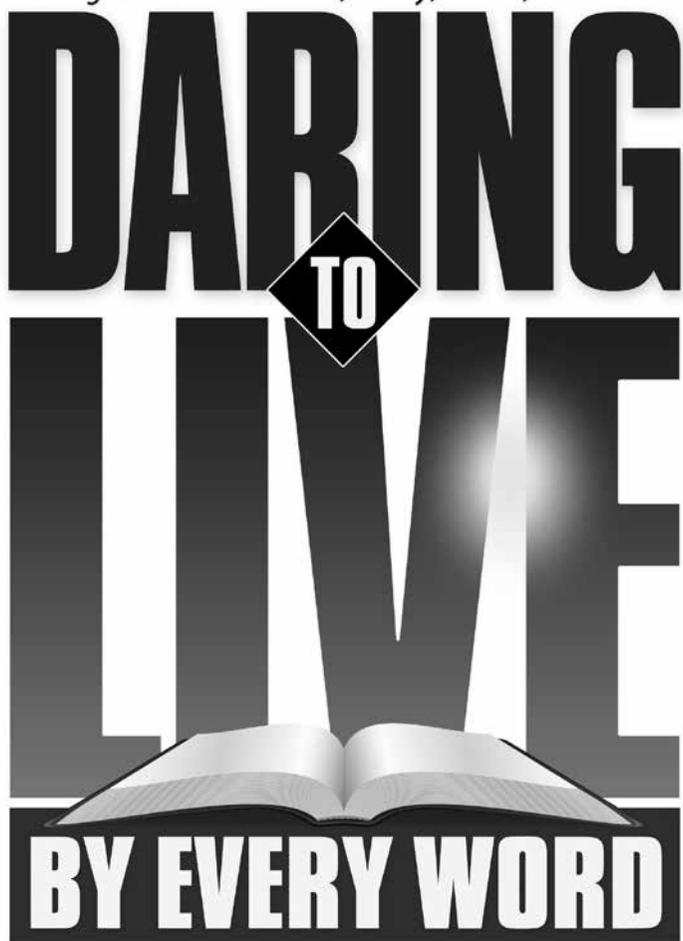


Loving God With Heart, Body, Mind, and Soul

DARING
TO
LIVE
BY EVERY WORD



M E L O D Y M A S O N



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Chapter 1

The Beauty in Brokenness

Roof Off, Walls Down

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise.

—Psalm 51:17

I will never forget the time several years ago, as I was preparing to lead a prayer service for a large event the next day, how the Holy Spirit convicted me of something specific in my life that I needed to make right with God. Overwhelmed, I sank to my knees on the floor that night as I prayed, “Oh Lord, please forgive me . . .”

However, while I confessed my sin to God, certain steps were necessary to make proper amends. But I couldn’t take these steps immediately, so I wasn’t sure what to do. Should I still go forward with my prayer ministry responsibilities, or should I get someone else to fill in for me until I had made things right?

As a respected leader in ministry, it was very humiliating to think of admitting to others that I had failed God in a specific area. I didn’t want to make a stir and appear spiritually weak to my teammates, or to the many strangers that were in attendance at the meetings. So with a heavy heart and tears in my eyes, I went to sleep that night determined

that I would ask someone else to lead the prayer service the next day.

However, the next morning as I set out to find someone to take my place, God stopped me in my tracks as the Holy Spirit began speaking to my heart. “Melody, you need to lead the prayer service this morning. Don’t get someone to replace you!”

“Wait, God . . . You can’t mean this,” I said as fresh tears came to my eyes. But the Holy Spirit continued to speak to my heart.

“Yes, I want you to lead. However, you are not to lead it as *the person you want everyone to think you are*. Don’t you see? I’m not looking for people to lead who cover up their sins and go on as if everything is OK. I’m looking for *yielded, broken vessels*; vessels that will humble themselves to such a degree that pride is gone. Only then can I use them for My glory. I know this hurts, but you need to share with the congregation what I convicted you of last night. Be honest about how you’ve failed Me! Then invite them to come with you to the Cross to put away all sin and compromise. You see, if people wait to come until they have everything in order, they will never come.”

Again, I began to protest. “I can’t do this, Lord! What will everyone think when they see how I’ve failed You?”

The Holy Spirit spoke softly to my heart as He turned my eyes toward heaven. “It doesn’t matter what they think. This is not about protecting your reputation. This is about bringing glory to God. But if He is to work, you must humble yourself.”

Oh, how I did *not* want to obey the Holy Spirit’s promptings that morning. If I could have run away like Jonah, or crawled in a cave, I would have done so immediately. But I knew what I must do. I had to obey.

Shaking and with tears in my eyes, I went before hundreds of people that morning and shared what the Lord had laid on my heart. You could have heard a pin drop in the room as everyone listened. “Jesus tells us to come as we are,” I said softly as I continued to wipe tears away from my eyes. “So I’m coming as I am, and I’m inviting you to join me at the foot of the Cross.”

At this invitation, everyone got out of their chairs and came forward to the front of the room. There was soft weeping here and there as different people asked God’s forgiveness for those areas of sin and compromise that had crept into their lives. And the Holy Spirit was there.

In hindsight, I think it was one of the most sweet, sacred prayer services I've ever experienced, for God did a deep work of cleansing among all of us that morning. Many hearts were broken, but how beautiful and healing the brokenness was.

In the book *Steps to Christ*, we are told:

If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23. There is help for us only in God. We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are.¹

Of course, in general, private sins should be kept private. What happens in secret, between God and us, is always more significant than what happens in public.² However, since the Holy Spirit convicted me to share, I knew I needed to be transparent and open that morning with those present.

I will never forget one elderly gentleman who came forward after the service. He told me how he had come to the meetings with a crusty heart of skepticism and doubt, but seeing me honestly share my struggles and my need of the Savior had convicted him of his own need, and as a result, that morning he decided to give his heart to the Lord.

"I've never seen leaders on the platform be real before like you were today, Melody," he told me through moist eyes. "It always seems like such a performance at religious events. But you showed me today that God is real because I saw how He was convicting you, breaking you, and changing you. Thank you." His voice was cracking as he spoke.

Roof off and walls down

Ellen White writes, "We shall often have to bow down to weep at the feet of Jesus, because of our shortcomings and mistakes. But we are not to be discouraged. . . . As we distrust our own power, we shall trust the power of our Redeemer."³

Thankfully, God is a God of mercy, and He understands our

weaknesses. It's because His mercies are new every morning that we are not consumed (Lamentations 3:22, 23). However, repentance is only genuine if we surrender ourselves to be genuinely changed.

I love what author Norman Grubb writes in his book *Continuous Revival: The Secret to Victorious Living*:

All Christian relationships are *two-way*, not *one-way*. They are *horizontal* as well as *vertical*. . . . We cannot, for instance, say that we have become righteous before God through faith in Christ and yet continue to be unrighteous among men.⁴

Let me put it this way. We can liken a man to a house. It has a roof and walls. So also man in his fallen state has a roof on top of his sins, coming between him and God; and he also has walls up, between him and his neighbor. But at salvation, when broken at the cross, not only does the roof come off through faith in Christ, but the walls fall down flat, and man's true condition as a sinner-saved-by-grace is confessed before all men.

Unfortunately, the trouble soon begins again after conversion—and here lies the basic hindrance to continued revival. Continued revival is continued brokenness; but brokenness is two-way, and that means that the walls [must be] kept down as well as roof off. But man's most deep-rooted and subtle sin is the subtle sin of *pride*: self-esteem and self-respect. Though hardly realizing it, while we are careful to keep the roof off between ourselves and God through repentance and faith, we soon let those walls of respectability creep up again between ourselves and our brethren. We don't mind our brethren knowing about the success we have in our Christian living. If we win a soul, if we lead a class, if we have a prayer answered, if we get good ideas from Scriptures—we don't mind if they hear about these things, because we get a little reflected credit because of them. . . . [But] if God has to deal with us over our impatience or temper in the home, over dishonesty in our business, over coldness or some other sin, by no means do we easily bear testimony to our brethren of God's faithful and gracious dealings in such areas of failure. Why not? Just because of pride. . . . The fact is, we love the praise of men as well as of God, and that is exactly what the Scriptures say stops

the flow of confession before men (John 12:42–43).⁵

Life lessons from Corrie

Corrie Ten Boom, along with her family, helped save the lives of more than 800 Jews during the Nazi Holocaust of World War II. As a result of her family's underground work in Holland, the entire family was arrested and sent to Ravensbrück, one of the most brutal concentration camps in all of Germany. Thousands died there!

By the time Corrie was miraculously released from the concentration camp in December of 1944, all of her closest family members had died while in prison. However, instead of nursing her wounds or growing bitter, Corrie went on to spend the remaining years of her life traveling the world, sharing the love of Jesus.

Corrie was known and loved for her compassion and her sweet spirit of grace and humility. And many were brought to Jesus by her testimony. Yet, she was still very human, just like you and me.

One time, while traveling in Cuba, Corrie shared how she had been struggling sitting through a long evening of meetings. She had just given a message about the love of God and then had to wait on the platform while two more men shared lengthy presentations. It was very hot and humid, pesky bugs were everywhere, and it was getting late. Corrie was tired, and her patience was wearing thin as the last speaker began to make a lengthy appeal.

“Surely, no one is in the mood to do anything but go home,” Corrie grumbled to herself. “I hope no one comes forward. I’m aching for my bed.”

But to her great surprise, many people began coming forward, responding to the call. Some had tears in their eyes. Suddenly, Corrie recognized the selfishness of her heart. Here she had hoped people would not give their life to Jesus that night simply because she was tired, hot, and weary. Immediately, she confessed her sin to God and asked His forgiveness, then she got up to pray with those who had come forward.

The next day, Corrie was asked to speak at a large church in an upper-class area of Havana. Many prominent and affluent people were present. As she came into church that morning, they handed her the program booklet that contained her flowery introduction. It read: “Corrie Ten Boom is a most popular world evangelist. . . . She is tireless

and completely selfless in her absolute dedication to the cause of the gospel.” As she read the introduction, her heart sank. “Oh Lord,” she prayed, “if only these people knew who the real Corrie Ten Boom is, they would not have come to hear me speak this morning.”

“Why don’t you tell them who the real Corrie is . . .” the Holy Spirit answered. Immediately, Corrie began to protest. “But Lord, if I tell them, what if they reject me?” Again she heard the soft but firm voice, “Can I bless a lie?”

So that morning, Corrie opened her heart and told her audience the truth. As a result, many hearts were broken, and the foundation for genuine revival was laid.⁶

Roy Hession writes, “To be broken is the beginning of revival. It is painful, it is humiliating, but it is the only way.”⁷

Unfortunately, there aren’t a lot of resources out there on how to be broken. It’s not as if you can look on Amazon and find a selection of books on how to mourn and weep over your sins, or on how to humble yourself. Besides, who really wants to be broken?

“Our culture is obsessed with being whole and feeling good. This drive affects even the way we view the Christian life. We want a ‘painless Pentecost’; we want a ‘laughing’ revival. We want gain without pain; we want resurrection without going through the grave; we want life without experiencing death; we want a crown without going by way of the cross. . . . But in God’s economy, the way up is down. You and I will never meet God in revival until we first meet Him in brokenness.”⁸

What is true brokenness? you might wonder. Some think it is constant morbid introspection. Others think it’s about being overly emotional in religious services, or depressed in spirit while everyone else is happy. Let me assure you, it is none of the above. While heart searching is needed, and at times the emotions will be stirred, these things in and of themselves are not the signs of true brokenness. The reality is that many people have cried their hearts out and never yet experienced true genuine brokenness.

“True brokenness is a moment-by-moment lifestyle of agreeing with God about the true condition of my heart and life—not as everyone else thinks it is, but as He knows it to be. Brokenness is the shattering of my self-will—the absolute surrender of my will to the will of God.

It is saying, ‘Yes, Lord!’—no resistance, no chafing, no stubbornness—simply submitting myself [no matter the pain or cost] to His direction and will in my life.”⁹

While the shattering of “self-will” is often a painful process, one of the recurring themes that we see again and again throughout Scripture is that God always does His best work through broken humble people. Just consider the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Naomi, Ruth, Esther, and many of the prophets.

Priceless dust

Brokenness is truly the most sacred offering and sacrifice we can give to God. Indeed, it is the only sacrifice we have to give. The Bible tells us, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

If you look up the verb “contrite” in Psalm 51:17, you find that it comes from the Hebrew word *dâkâh*, which means *to crumble, to beat in pieces, to break, to crush to powder, to dust, to utterly destroy*.

Think about it. If something is broken, you might be able to glue it back together, but you can’t glue dust back together. And that’s what we are in reality—dust, broken vessels!

“What an exalted privilege!” we are told. “Finite beings, of dust and ashes, admitted through the mediation of Christ, into the audience chamber of the Most High.”¹⁰

And to think, not only do we have an audience with God, but dust is the very ingredient that God uses again and again to work His best miracles.

In the beginning, God planted all the beautiful trees and plants in the Garden of Eden in dust so they would grow and produce fruit (Genesis 1:11). Then God formed man, His crowning work of creation, from dust and breathed into him the breath of life so that he would produce fruit (Genesis 2:7; Genesis 1:28).

Pause for a second here. Do we recognize that all our best fruit and labors, all our best works, apart from the breath of life, the blood of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit, are nothing more than dust? And yet, frequently, we get so arrogant that we glory *in our dust*!

Thankfully, even after the curse of sin fell upon the world, Jesus still cared about the dust. And so He returned to earth to continue His work among broken humanity (1 Samuel 2:8). While He used dust to

restore the blind man's sight (John 9:5, 6), it is the dust and brokenness of life that He often uses today to restore our spiritual sight. He was good at mixing water with dust to make clay. And it is as moldable clay (mud) in the hands of the Master Potter that we become all that He's created us to be even in this fallen world (Jeremiah 18:6).

As one author so eloquently writes, "Dust doesn't have to signify the end. Dust is often what must be present for the new [life] to begin."¹¹

Yes, dust truly can become beautiful if it is in the hands of a loving God. And surrendered dust is priceless!

As we begin this journey, daring to live by every word, let's give God our dust—the dust of genuine brokenness from a heart that says, "Yes, Lord! All I have to offer You is broken and flawed. Even my best efforts are merely dust, but I'm willing to give all my *dust* to You and become clay in the hands of the Master Potter. Roof off, walls down, whatever You say, I'm Yours."

Daring to Live by Every Word—Going Deeper!

Roof Off, Walls Down: Psalm 51:1–19

If you've ever raised a horse, you know that the horse has to be broken in—meaning its will must be broken so that it will be submissive to its master. The same must happen to our self-will before God can truly work in us. And that will only happen as we learn to yield to the Word. So open your Bible and pick up a pen and notebook as you consider the following "going deeper" Bible study questions.

- Isaiah 57:15—Where does God dwell?
- Psalm 51:17—How can we worship God more fully with our brokenness?
- 2 Corinthians 7:9–11—What are the results of godly sorrow?
- Psalm 51:1–19—What did David ask for in his prayer of repentance?
- 1 John 1:5–9—How does God respond to genuine repentance?
- Luke 15:11–32—What does the prodigal son's story tell us about God's heart?

26 Daring to Live by Every Word

- Psalm 139:23, 24—Write down a prayer in your own words, patterned after this psalm, as you seek God for genuine repentance and humility.

Along with each Going Deeper segment, I'm going to suggest a song taken from the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*. I encourage you to sing each song shared and soak in the message it brings. If you are not a singer, then find the song and reflect on the words. For this chapter, as you contemplate what you've read, I encourage you to sing or reflect on the well-known favorite, "Just as I Am,"¹² hymn no. 313.

To go even deeper, consider downloading the document "Clearing the Way for the Holy Spirit," by Scott Griswold.¹³ And may our prayer truly be, "Roof off, walls down, whatever You say, Lord, I'm yours!"

Time to dig deep into God's Word, get on our knees, and allow the Holy Spirit to take this message deeper into our hearts!