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# Jars of Clay

## Hidden treasures of brokenness

**B**rokenness is not a popular subject. Yet it is a prerequisite to being used in great ways by God. In fact, I know of no believer who has been significantly used who has not also experienced “the dark night of the soul.”

Our Father uses times of brokenness to teach us to trust Him, to rely on His wisdom and strength rather than our own, and to move from pride in our ministries to a place of deep humility. The lessons are often deeply painful and may last years, but the end result is character that cannot be forged any other way.

The apostle Paul learned this firsthand, leading him to write, “We have this treasure [the gospel] in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:7-10).

The school of suffering is inevitable. The question is: How will we respond? Will we see it as a place where the Father can mold us into a person of humility, character and dependence, or will we respond with anger, bitterness and independence? I have seen Christian leaders do both: In the first case, they come through the dark night of the soul with a deeper grace and strength of character. In the second, the response is one of cynicism and bitterness that is often taken out on others.

A.W. Tozer once wrote, “It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply.” This is not hurt that comes from a vindictive God, but one that comes from a gracious God who wants us to know the joy of living out of His strength rather than our own.

I know that some who read this issue are in the school of suffering right now. My counsel is to allow God to do what He wants to do, so that He can use you all the more in the future. I say the same to congregations that are experiencing pain. The pain may be unfair and unjust, but the result can be beautiful—as the life of Christ comes to our lives more deeply.

How are you responding? ■



DR. WILLIAM J. HAMEL