Brokenness: How God Redeems Pain and Suffering

Early in his penetrating book *Brokenness: How God Redeems Pain and Suffering*, author and pastor Lon Solomon makes this reality-check statement: *One of the most significant days in the life of any follower of Jesus Christ is the day when he or she realizes that the greatest obstacle they have to ministering with power for Jesus Christ is themselves: their self-life, self-reliance, self-dependence, self-trust, self-sufficiency, self-love, and self-wisdom.* From there, he presents a compelling case for how God uses brokenness in the life of a Christian to expose our self-absorbed ways in order to make us useful for His sovereign purposes.

If you are like me, you will find the pages filled with challenging and convicting truths. But ultimately, you will find a poignant reminder of a loving and purposeful Father who uses brokenness to fashion us into His likeness.

Check out these **Book Notes** to get a glimpse of what this insightful book includes.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life

Title: Brokenness: How God Redeems Pain and Suffering

Author: Lon Solomon

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Book Description:
Why do I feel this way? What is God doing to me? Have you ever asked these questions?

Don't be discouraged…God wants you to have a beautiful, intimate, and rewarding relationship with Him. He's willing to let you experience pain and suffering so that He can work in you and through you in power. Lon Solomon provides a clear and encouraging explanation of what God is trying to achieve in our lives through Brokenness. You'll never be the same.

Book Quotes:
To sum up, the Bible knows nothing of a God who is uninvolved or only marginally involved in sending negative circumstances into people's lives. As far as the Bible is concerned, God makes the final decision about every situation that enters people's lives. God may choose to use intermediate instruments to accomplish those circumstances: other people, weather, even satanic forces. But it is God who personally designs, authorizes and sets limits on every one of the negative circumstances that strikes people's lives. This is the worldview of the Bible. LOCATION: 263

Therefore, I disagree with Rabbi Kushner's answer to the question, why bad things happen to good people? I believe that the bad things that happen to anybody, happen because Almighty God decides to send those things into people's lives for his own divine purposes. LOCATION: 267

This exalted purpose has nothing to do with consequences for negative behavior or discipline for sin in our lives as Christ-followers. This exalted purpose involves God's deliberate strategy for producing brokenness in the lives of Christ-followers. It is only when we know and believe this that we will be able to embrace the process of brokenness with the peace and surrender that the Lord wants from us. LOCATION: 283

God has put precious little methodology in the Bible…The Bible is remarkably silent in the area of methods…In pondering this, it occurred to me that nowhere in the Word of God does it say that God anoints a method with his Spirit. God anoints men and women. At Pentecost (Acts 2), it wasn't Peter's sermon that was anointed but Peter. God didn't anoint the Exodus but Moses. It wasn't David's sling that God anointed in the Valley of Elah but David. It wasn't outdoor preaching that God anointed but George Whitefield and John Wesley. The same was true of Deborah and Jonah and Esther and Dwight Moody and Charles G. Finney and Mother Theresa and every other man or woman who has ever shaken this world for Jesus Christ. LOCATION: 336-339

Men and women are God's method. For every great task, God has always prepared a man or woman first. LOCATION: 359

As the twenty-first century American church, we must refocus our thinking. We must resuscitate our understanding of God's principles of revival and spiritual power. We must reject the world system's approach to ministry and spiritual power even though it may be sugar-coated with a few Bible verses. We must begin to seek out and rear up true men and women of God, who understand the ways of God like Moses did. And the ways of God always have, and always will, lead through brokenness. It is the only pathway for producing powerful, godly men and women. LOCATION: 367

Brokenness is not an optional experience for the person who desires God to use them in a mighty way. As we will see in the pages to come, brokenness has been a critical part of the spiritual preparation process for every man and woman whose life God has ever used. LOCATION: 372

To say it another way, you and I as followers of Christ, cannot and will not see God's anointing and power manifested through us until brokenness becomes a reality in our lives. And the more broken we are, the more of God's anointing and power we will experience. LOCATION: 374

I still thought usefulness to Christ was all about methods and knowledge and human experience. I knew nothing about needing God's Spirit to flow through me unhindered. I didn't realize that spiritual usefulness is all about spiritual formation in my own heart. I was ignorant of the process by which God prepares his servants. LOCATION: 394

One of the most significant days in the life of any follower of Jesus Christ is the day when he or she realizes that the greatest obstacle they have to ministering with power for Jesus Christ is themselves: their self-life, self-reliance, self-dependence, self-trust, self-sufficiency, self-love, and self-wisdom. LOCATION: 429

God has a solution for our problem. His solution is brokenness. The concept of brokenness is one of the most beautiful and precious in all of the Word of God. It is also one of the most vital if a Christ-follower wants to know and experience the power of Almighty God. LOCATION: 433

In God's economy, the way up is the way down. In God's service, brokenness always precedes true usefulness. If we fail to grasp this truth, we will often be confused by the way God is directing our lives as Christ-followers. LOCATION: 470

The point is that when Moses emerged from his forty years on the backside of the desert, he was a totally different man. During these forty years, God spiritually broke Moses. LOCATION: 479

Clearly, Moses knew nothing of the ways of God at age forty. He was wise in the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness to God. He was a mighty man, but he relied upon his own human strength and ability instead of God's. He had leadership skills, but they were rooted in the impulsive ways of the flesh. He had the right objective in mind, but he knew nothing of waiting on God's timing and plan to accomplish it. LOCATION: 494

So God sent Moses out into the desert to attend Wilderness Theological Seminary where the only faculty member is God himself; the classes meet on the backside of the desert; the one degree offered is a Ph.D. in the ways of God; and the length of study is as long as it takes for the lessons to be learned. In Moses' case, this was forty years. When he graduated, Moses was not the same man. LOCATION: 499

How did God transform Moses from a well-meaning man into a powerful and effective servant of God? The answer is that he broke Moses of his self-life. He broke him of the self-trust, the self-assurance, the self-sufficiency, the self-wisdom, and the self-will that characterized his life during his first forty years. In their place, God substituted trust, reliance, wisdom, and strength that was rooted solely in God himself. LOCATION: 513

Brokenness is the process by which God dislodges our self-life and teaches us to rely upon him alone in every facet of our lives. Brokenness is the process whereby God crushes all our self-dependence and, in its place, substitutes an utter dependence on God and God alone in every area of our lives. LOCATION: 521

The bottom line is this: spiritual usefulness without spiritual brokenness is a spiritual impossibility. LOCATION: 536

Instead of immediately speaking to his disciples about all the glory, pomp, and pageantry that they have just experienced, Jesus talks to them about brokenness. He says, "I tell you the truth, 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). Although many Christian commentators have struggled to interpret what Jesus really means in this passage, Watchman Nee has grasped the Lord's point perfectly. In Nee's explanation, Jesus draws on truth from the physical world to teach truth about the spiritual world. A kernel of wheat with its hard outer shell intact is useless. The wheat cannot sprout and grow. There is life on the inside, but it cannot be released. However, when the wheat's hard outer shell is broken and cracked open, then the life of the wheat can come out and grow and bear fruit and bring blessing to its world. The real issue is not whether there is life inside the kernel of wheat but whether the life that is inside can get out and make an impact on the world around it. And this depends on whether its hard outer shell has been broken. LOCATION: 541

Since bringing forth fruit for God should be a normal part of every Christ-follower's life, and since Jesus directs us to brokenness as the source of all fruitfulness for God, we have no choice but to conclude that brokenness is a strategic issue for every believer in Jesus Christ. In fact, I would go so far as to say that brokenness is the basic issue for every Christ-follower who wants to live for God, serve God, and make a serious impact on the world for Jesus Christ. Indeed, the biographies of all the great men and women of God reveal that this was the one central issue with which, sooner or later, every one of them had to come to grips. LOCATION: 555

At this point you may very well ask, are you saying that I cannot be used by God at all unless I'm broken? The answer is that no one is ever fully broken. No Christ-follower ever reaches the point of zero resistance. Brokenness is an ongoing, lifelong process. LOCATION: 585

But it's true that the more broken we are, the more God can and will use us. Brokenness and usefulness are directly proportional. LOCATION: 587

Brokenness is not a curse. It is a blessing that every follower of Christ needs desperately. Perhaps the fact that it is so seldom spoken of in modern Christianity helps explain why our modern brand of Christianity is so

insipid and powerless. LOCATION: 625

As Christ-followers, we can see the great benefits of being broken but we recoil at the process that it takes to get us there. We know that God never uses success to break anybody. The process that leads to brokenness is bloody and painful and heart-wrenching. And the only reason that anyone would seek it is that they are convinced that the product is worth it. LOCATION: 685

No one regrets being broken, because on the other side of brokenness lies new intimacy with God and new power to serve him. However, no one who has been through the process would dare say it was easy or that they ever wanted to go through it again. LOCATION: 692

Even though brokenness is a lifelong process, God's plan of brokenness always calls for at least one bedrock, shattering experience for every Christ-follower. This is an experience like God gave Moses in Exodus 2 and 3. LOCATION: 703

What kind of experience is this bedrock, shattering experience? It is an experience that knocks every single human prop out from under us. It can be a sudden experience like the loss of a loved one or some other terrible tragedy. It can be a more lengthy experience like a chronic illness or an ongoing series of human defeats and failures. LOCATION: 707

It is an experience that brings us to the utter end of ourselves. It is an experience where God shatters our self-reliance and self-sufficiency and self-resourcefulness with one mighty blow. Through such an experience God forever alters our view of self, God, life, and ministry. LOCATION: 710

As we can see, God's technique for brokenness is a lifelong process that begins with a shattering bedrock experience: an experience in which God strips us of every human prop and security; an experience through which God delivers the blow that initially crushes the hard outer shell of self-life; an experience that allows the Holy Spirit to begin to flow through us in genuine power. LOCATION: 769

In general, we may say that God's target in brokenness is our self-life. However, when it comes to God's bedrock shattering blow, we may identify a more specific target. Generally, God targets a person's greatest human strength — the source of their greatest security and confidence. Why? Because God is aiming to bring down the entire self-life system in that particular individual. To do so, he goes right to the heart of the matter. LOCATION: 772

God's target in brokenness is a Christ-follower's human strengths. And God's goal is not to destroy these qualities but to purify them. LOCATION: 810

Regardless of the specific tool he may choose, God's bedrock experience always involves failure, frustration, loss, setbacks, weakness, illness, heartache, suffering, disappointment, and pain. God never breaks anybody with success! God never delivers the crushing blow of brokenness by means of Bible study, prayer, sermons, witnessing, and fellowship. LOCATION: 815

As Charles Stanley has aptly said: "Jesus is all we need — but we never learn that Jesus is all we need until Jesus is all we've got." LOCATION: 824

At one time or another, as followers of Christ, so many of us have asked God to make us usable; to make us powerful servants of Jesus Christ; to do whatever is necessary to bring this to pass in our lives. When we pray such prayers, we are really asking God for brokenness. So God sends problems, suffering, and heartache our way. He sends failures, setbacks, and losses that are uniquely fitted for us. We so often refer to these things as tragedies. LOCATION: 866

But here's the real tragedy: our ignorance of the principles and process of brokenness often causes us to curse God when all he's trying to do is answer our prayer. We often resist the process and resent the Lord for putting us through it simply because we don't understand how it all fits together in God's strategy for making us spiritually useable. LOCATION: 869

Here's the point: God had done a work of brokenness in my life. He had knocked every human prop out from under me. He had smashed my self-sufficiency, my self-wisdom, and my self-resourcefulness. He had reduced me to Jesus plus nothing. LOCATION: 906

Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, summed up the attitude that lies at the heart of brokenness. When surrounded by a hostile army against which the army of Judah had no hope, he said: "O our God…for we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (2 Chron. 20:12). This is brokenness. No self-wisdom, no self-reliance, no self-sufficiency. This is total dependence upon God plus nothing: "our eyes are upon you" LOCATION: 926

We must be taught that the brokenness experiences that God sends our way are for our highest good, that trying to escape them is foolishness, and that brokenness experiences are part of God preparing us for the best he has for us! LOCATION: 963

Brokenness terrifies us. We're scared of what brokenness is going to require of us. We're scared of what God may do to us. We're scared of the cost of being broken…Therefore, fear causes us to shrink back from surrendering to God's will in breaking us. LOCATION: 103-1008

The solution to this hindrance is for us to cling to God's promises. Biblical truth is the only effective antidote for fear. The Bible tells us that God's perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). In other words, resting in God's deep love and concern for us will cast out our fear. LOCATION: 1009

As has been said, the will of God will never lead us where the grace of God will not keep us. LOCATION: 1012

We either say yes or no to God. When it comes to brokenness, there is no straddling the fence. We must either surrender to God and let him have his way, or we will resist God and hinder the process of brokenness in our lives. Brokenness demands total surrender and there is simply no other way. LOCATION: 1053

Brokenness before God is the sweetest experience that a human being can have. But you and I can only get there by making the deliberate choices that allow God to accomplish this result in our lives. LOCATION: 1058

The result is that I discovered that God makes no mistakes and he wastes no experiences. I learned that he loves me as deeply as he says and that the painful experiences he sent me flow from his unconditional dedication to make me a better, healthier, and more spiritually useable person for the sake of his glory. If you're a Christ-follower and you're going through deep waters, please be assured that the Lord feels exactly this same way about you. LOCATION: 1079

In the wilderness after the exodus, God was leading his people Israel like a flock even when they couldn't see or understand how God was doing so. David's point is clear: even when I can't trace God's footprints, I can still trust God's heart. God's hand is always trustworthy, his heart is always true, and his presence is always there, even in the darkest of circumstances. LOCATION: 1092

There is nothing so beautiful in God's sight, or powerful in God's hand, as a Christ-follower who has been broken. LOCATION: 1107

The products of brokenness are most dramatically seen and experienced in three areas of life: our relationship

with God, our relationship with people, and our service for Jesus Christ. LOCATION: 1109

One of the greatest products of brokenness is a new intimacy with Almighty God. Broken followers of Christ know God in a way that other people — even other followers of Christ — do not. Broken followers of Christ have an intimacy with God that they never had before. LOCATION: 1112

If God gave us nothing else out of brokenness except this deep and special intimacy with himself — this alone would make it all worth it. LOCATION: 1152

Broken Christ-followers are approachable, teachable, sensitive, turfless, and forgiving. LOCATION: 1155

Broken Christ-followers are approachable people who are easy to talk to, easy to ask questions of, and easy to open up to. There is a softness about broken followers of Christ. They are comfortable and relaxing to be around. Every encounter with them leaves us feeling uplifted, encouraged, and spiritually strengthened. LOCATION: 1157

When God breaks us, he takes all the porcupine out of us. You see, broken Christ-followers no longer have any vain ego to defend. They have already lost all face before God, so to lose face before men is no big deal. They have been utterly humbled by God and they have nothing left to protect. LOCATION: 1165

A broken Christ-follower has learned that they do not know as much as they once thought they did. In fact, the more God breaks us, the more skeptical we become of our own human wisdom and judgment. We begin to develop an overwhelming need for God's wisdom, even if God chooses to send it to us through other people. We find ourselves more willing to listen to others. We become genuinely teachable. LOCATION: 1174

A broken Christian has an uncanny ability to sense where other people are — spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. Broken Christians are able to sense movement in other people's spirits, to sense non-verbal messages from them and to sense when others are hurt, disappointed, struggling, uncomfortable, scared, jealous, angry, frustrated or confused. LOCATION: 1181

A broken Christian knows that all they are, all they have, and all they will ever be is due totally to the grace of God. They know that any position they may presently hold, any riches they may presently possess, any honor they may presently enjoy, or any power they may presently wield is all the result of the sovereign will of God. LOCATION: 1194

Broken Christ-followers have learned to see God's hand in all that people do to them. They have a godly view of their circumstances. They understand the truth of Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Broken people have seen this verse come true in their lives. LOCATION: 1218

Broken followers of Christ can look back and see how God used even the unkind and hurtful things that people have done to them as part of his blessed breaking process. LOCATION: 1220

When this transformation in outlook takes place — and it always does when God breaks us — it totally changes our response to mistreatment. Holding grudges becomes unthinkable. Bitterness becomes unacceptable. And forgiveness comes easily and naturally because we see so clearly that people are merely tools in the hands of Almighty God. LOCATION: 1223

Like Moses and Joseph, broken Christ-followers discover a new freedom to forgive people from the heart. It's not something that they contrive by the energy of the flesh. It is a supernatural freedom, set loose by the Spirit of God. Forgiveness is one of the great legacies of brokenness. And it forever changes how a broken follower

of Christ relates to the world. LOCATION: 1236

Brokenness brings new spiritual power into a person's life and new effectiveness in service to God. Every broken follower of Christ testifies to this new influx of power, anointing, and fruitfulness. LOCATION: 1244

I challenge you to reject the play-it-safe brand of Christianity that is so popular today and to embrace the kind of total surrender to God that every powerful servant of Christ has embraced. I challenge you to volunteer for whatever brokenness the Lord feels you need in order for your life to become truly useful and significant in God's hands. LOCATION: 1387

If you're in the midst of being broken and it looks awfully bleak on the human level — or if you're afraid to volunteer for brokenness because it looks awfully tough on the human level — then God has a message of encouragement for you: keep your eyes firmly fixed on the reward ahead. Remember, the product is worth the process. Brokenness is the path to higher ground. LOCATION: 1392

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.