

MONDAY MANNA

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THE BUSINESS OF BROKENNESS

By Robert J. Tamasy

What do you typically do with something that gets broken, like a smartphone, a watch, a pen, or even a car? Try getting it repaired? Dispose of it? Or find a suitable replacement? Such responses are common, but recently I was reading about a better way of repairing cherished possessions that can actually make them more valuable.

Have you heard about “Kintsugi”? Also called Kintsukuroi, it means “golden repair.” It’s a centuries-old Japanese art for restoring broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with precious metal, such as gold, silver or platinum. This process is rooted in a philosophy that regards breakage and repair as part of the valued object’s history, rather than something to be disguised or forgotten. In effect, this amounts to a celebration of the brokenness.

This caused me to think about the episodes of brokenness we experience throughout the course of this journey we call life. No matter how much we try to avoid it, failure figures as prominently in our careers as does success: Job interviews for promising jobs don’t work out. Much-anticipated promotions don’t come. Well-conceived business ventures don’t succeed. Sales contracts are not finalised. Entrepreneurs have to file for bankruptcy, sometimes more than once, when risks are not rewarded.

What if, instead of trying to ignore or conceal such failures and broken times, we gave them the Kintsugi treatment, seeing negative experiences as opportunities for growth, to persevere until we achieve success?

Brokenness can serve valuable purposes in our personal lives as well. In fact, the Bible teaches that God uses it to build us into the men and women He desires for us to become. Psalm 51:17 says, *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”* Why is this? Let’s look at some other Scripture passages to find an answer:

Brokenness develops necessary humility. Success has the tendency to make us feel puffed up, filled with pride and thinking more highly of ourselves than we should. *“For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in a high and holy place, and with the oppressed and humble of spirit, to restore the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite’”* (Isaiah 57:15).

Brokenness gets our hearts back on the right course. Sometimes our outward actions seem right, but deep down we realise they are based on the wrong motives. Being broken can cause us to re-examine not only what we do, but also why we are doing it. *“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and attentiveness is better than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:22).

Brokenness can turn our eyes back to God. When things are going well for us, both professionally and personally, we can become tempted to forget our reliance on God. *“So, rend your hearts and not your garments, and return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in loving devotion”* (Joel 2:13).

Brokenness helps us learn to be dependent. The business and professional world often promotes an attitude of, “I can do this all by myself.” Experiencing brokenness can bring us to the end of our trust in self-sufficiency. Jesus declared, *“I am the vine, you are the branches...apart from Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

What do you usually do with things once they become broken? Do you opt for trying to repair them, discarding them, or replacing them? Give a recent example.

Had you ever heard of the Kintsugi process for repairing valuable broken pottery? What do you think of letting broken areas remain visible, recognizing them as part of the object's history? Are there areas of your life and career that you would be willing to have treated with the Kintsugi approach? What about areas you wouldn't want to be seen?

How do you think God uses a process similar to Kintsugi in making needed repairs in our lives in a spiritual sense? Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 2:20. What do these verses tell us about how the Lord deals with brokenness?

Psalm 12:6 tells us, *"the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times."* How might this relate to our desire to overcome brokenness in our lives?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about principles it presents, consider the following passages:

Psalm 51:10-12

Proverbs 15:33, 16:18, 17:3, 27:21

Isaiah 40:28-31

Philippians 4:13