

GROWTH & HEALING

# SEVEN STEPS

A Weekly Guide For  
Small Groups

by David Stiles

WEEK

4

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



## Week 4 – Identify the Broken Places

After becoming a Christian (as described in the previous chapter), we may quickly realize that we still have *problems* and are not living an abundant, joy-filled life.

It will be important for us to *identify* those areas in our lives that are broken and in need of healing.

The Holy Spirit will help us through this process. He will bring what is called *conviction* to help us see these broken places. This is part of a process known as *sanctification* as we grow to become more like Christ.

As we seek to grow spiritually, however, there is a myth, or lie, that many people struggle with as they refuse to explore these broken places and say instead, “I’m fine.”

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lie #4</b> “I’m fine.”</p>
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You may have heard others say,

- “I’m fine, no worries here.”
- “I better keep that to myself.”

How have you heard others complete the sentence,

“I don’t want to look at the broken places in my life because \_\_\_\_\_.”

### Why do we avoid looking at the broken places?

There are a number of reasons why we avoid looking at the broken places in our lives. The main reason seems to be around the area of *fear*.

One area of fear might be regarding *God’s judgment*. In the Bible, in the book of Genesis, we can read about Cain who denied that he had murdered his brother named Abel.

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- Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9)

Clearly Cain knew where his brother Abel was, because he had just killed him. Yet, he denied any knowledge out of fear of God's judgment. However, we should ask ourselves, "If God is all-knowing, however, how can we hide things from Him?"

Another reason that we may avoid looking at broken places is the *fear of what others might think*.

Still another reason that we avoid looking at the broken places is the *fear of change*. Most people find comfort in familiar patterns and actions. The fear, then, is that, "If I identify broken places, I might have to do something different, I might have to change, and I'm not sure I can do that."

Finally, we may fear identifying broken places because the *pain* feels too great. It can be difficult facing issues of rejection, abuse, abandonment and other painful memories.

If you feel like things are too painful, you might prayerfully ask God for wisdom and strength as you proceed slowly in identifying broken places and revisiting painful events.

So, here is another question for you,

- Why is it difficult for you to look at the broken places in your life?

### **The Truth**

The truth is that we are broken people, sinners, with broken places in our lives. We have all sinned and have been sinned against by others.

The truth also is that Jesus is interested in us and the Holy Spirit will work with us, in us and through us on areas to positively affect our spiritual growth.

There are many positive Biblical examples of people identifying their brokenness and seeking Jesus:

- As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (Matthew 9:27)
- A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." (Matthew 15:22)
- "Lord, have mercy on my son," a man said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water." (Matthew 17:15)

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- But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' (Luke 18:13)

In each of the examples listed above, we can see a common thread...people identifying their brokenness and then asking God to help and heal them.

### **What If I Don't Think I Have any Broken Places?**

Some people may feel as if they have no broken places in their lives.

Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend have pointed out, however, that our conscience, our inner compass for knowing what is right and wrong, "fell with the Fall".

So, it is possible that someone might *think* that they have no broken places in their lives. According to the Apostle John, though, those who do not recognize their needs are mistaken,

- "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:17)
- "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9)

As C.S. Lewis has noted,

- "The natural life in each of us is something self-centered, something that wants to be petted and admired, to take advantage of others lives, to exploit the whole universe."

As we have seen, all people have broken places that need God's healing touch to help with their relationship with God and with others.

### **What If I Feel Like I Do Everything Wrong?**

Some, on the opposite side of the continuum may feel like they do *everything* wrong.

It is true that our lives are marked by sin. However, it is possible that some might think that they are constantly doing *everything* wrong, perhaps even wondering how God could love them because they are so bad, and experiencing feelings of hopelessness, anxiety and depression.

As J.B. Phillips has written,

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“There are many...who are made miserable by a morbidly developed (or overactive) conscience, which they quite wrongly consider to be the voice of God”

As you identify the broken places and bring light to past mistakes, it is important to identify if you are thinking of a specific thought or action, or something more general.

For example,

### **Specific Event**

-“I lost my temper with my son this afternoon.”

-“I shouldn’t have lied yesterday.”

-“I’m fearful that I’m going to lose my job, so I’ve been working a lot lately. I need to spend more time with my family.”

-“I drank too much last night.”

### **General Accusation**

-“I’m a bad person.”

- “God could never love me for my mistakes.”

- “Everyone thinks I’m a failure.”

- “God doesn’t care about me.”

A general accusation that demoralizes and brings discouragement is not from God.

**Identify**

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The fourth step then in our journey to spiritual growth and personal healing, is simply called, “Identify the Broken Places”.

**Step #4:**  
Identify the broken places.

To begin, simply ask the Holy Spirit to reveal an area of brokenness in your life.

It will be the Holy Spirit’s job to show us the broken areas that need God’s healing touch.

The goal of this process then, is not to make you feel like “a worm”, “worthless” or “bad”. The goal is to bring into the light areas of brokenness for God’s healing touch.

### **Our Feelings**

As you ask God for insight and wisdom, perhaps you identify brokenness in a feeling, such as when you feel:

- angry
- anxious
- bored
- cynical
- depressed
- “empty inside”
- guilty
- insecure
- pressured
- like saying things that you don’t really mean
- shameful
- that you need to rescue others
- that you never measure up
- that you’re different
- unappreciated
- worthless

Or you may *not feel*:

- accepted
- loved

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### **Our fears**

Perhaps as you pray for insight in this step, you are reminded of your fears, perhaps you are fearful of:

- looking at your past
- rejection
- the unknown
- trusting God

### **Our history**

Perhaps as you pray, you identify some broken places in your personal or family history:

- family patterns
- disappointment

### **Our actions**

Perhaps you have identified the brokenness in your actions when you:

- had a bad attitude
- blamed others
- blamed yourself for everything
- controlled others
- denied reality
- didn't trust God
- didn't trust others
- were greedy
- hurt ourselves
- hurt others
- were jealous
- lashed out in anger
- lied to help others
- lied to help ourselves
- manipulated others
- were people pleasing
- were prideful
- sought a replacement for God in:
  - o alcohol
  - o drugs
  - o escape
  - o money
  - o power
  - o relationships
  - o sex

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- work
- other (really any noun or verb): \_\_\_\_\_
- were selfish
- unforgiving
- filled with vanity
- filled with worry

### **If you're stuck on this step:**

Reflect upon, or ask someone these questions,

- "How has my behavior hurt others?"
- "What negative results have occurred because of my feelings, thoughts or actions?"

The following prayer might also reflect your thoughts and hopes in this area:

### **Prayer**

Lord, trusting that You are merciful and kind, I ask that You would reveal areas in my life that are broken and in need of Your touch. Amen.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What feelings, fears, beliefs or actions have kept you from God?
2. After spending some time in prayer, what area of brokenness in your life do you feel that God is "bringing to light"?
3. What have been the consequences of that brokenness? How has it affected you, your relationship with God, and your relationship with others?



