

### Philippians

by Peter Steinke

### Part Two: Open and Closed Umbrellas

#### Introduction

Paul says to his Philippian friends that brokenness exists in life—"envy and rivalry"... "to afflict me"... "the same conflict"... "grumbling or questioning"... "near to death"... "maybe less anxious"... "look out for the dogs"... "I have suffered the loss of all things." Paul does not deny the shattered pieces of life. Nor does he pretend that it does not hurt. Brokenness is there—and inevitable; Paul is realistic about sin's power.

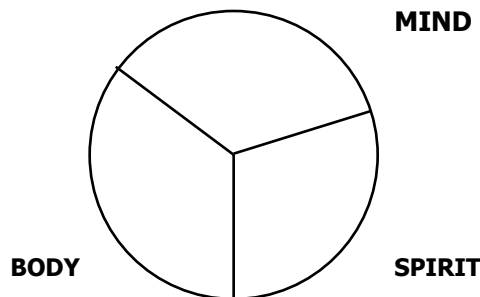
A kind of crude example gets the point across in a definition of a friend: "A friend is someone who tells you that you have bad breath." When people deal personally with each other, the pains, the hurts and the broken pieces can be shared.

But friends also speak of healing. The apostle greets his friends with, "Grace to you and peace," and rejoices that they have revived their concern for him. Healing is a gift God passes through our friends' hands.

Let's live under God's umbrella through brokenness to the time of wholeness, as friends.

#### Becoming Whole

Have participants draw the following diagram:



Ask the youth to read Philippians 2:1-3 and 3:8-11, selecting words or phrases that speak of the human body, mind or spirit, and write them in the appropriate "slices" of the circle.

Discuss these questions:

- What is wholeness?
- What encouragement does Paul offer to the broken?
- How do we become whole people again?

#### My Friend, Luther

Discuss Luther's following words, juxtaposed with passages from Philippians in terms of brokenness and wholeness.

Luther: "[God] does not say with this or that difficulty, but simply says, 'all who are heavy laden'...he not only refreshes us in the anxiety and assaults of sin, but he will be with us in all other troubles" (LW 51:129-130).

Paul: "For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:11-13).

## **Umbrella Worship**

Have umbrellas available, but keep them closed. Read the teenager's words below. Let others tell of their own brokenness. Open umbrellas and sing songs of healing and wholeness like "We Are One in the Spirit," "What God Ordains is Always Good" and "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past."

Brokenness hurts. For instance, change breaks into our lives. Change is not only difficult for the aged, but also for youth. Both change and pain are necessary for growth. But we are often so concerned with the pain of brokenness that we sometimes don't see the "window that's been opened" or the change or growth we've experienced in the process.

Perhaps the most difficult part of brokenness concerns personal relationships, especially when they are delayed or ended without our choice. Examples are moving, changing schools, breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, graduation, death and new jobs. We will have to face these factors throughout our lives, and we will have to leave some people behind.

It's all part of God's plan. The people He puts you into contact with also help to make you into the person you are. Even after you are separated from them, they are still with you, because your memories, thoughts and dreams will be influenced by them. People are a part of you. And even though it hurts to be separated from those you love, family and friends, how blessed you are that God gave you something so precious that the goodbye was incredibly difficult and painful.

Broken hearts! It seems like someone always has one. We hear that phrase in songs, movies and books. Sometimes we find it hard to accept that God could allow our hearts to hurt so much. Often people get angry at God, thinking, "He doesn't care!"

But He does. We know it. He gave us our feelings, and He wants us to experience both pain and joy. For only in experiencing sorrow can we know joy. Some people revel in a broken heart. They muddle around in their tears, moping over their hurt. They might make up for their lack of attention by feeling sorry for themselves. God wants us to express our sorrow, but we can carry it too far. We can only be healed if we surrender to God's grace. We need Christ in our hearts to make them whole.

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