

Broken Loves

Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.

-C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

*W*e all start off in this world with a blank love slate. That is not a real thing- I just made that up. Think of a newborn baby. They are wholly dependent on others for their care. They do not know what it means not to trust.

A stranger could pick up a baby and that baby will snuggle down and sleep. They smile; they attach; they connect. They do not understand people can possibly *not* love. Love and trust are natural. Distrust, fear, and hatred are learned.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to work as a live-in nanny for my cousin. I watched her 1-year-old son and her nephew who was just four months old when I started. The littlest one, baby S, had the sweetest smile and was one of the happiest babies I had ever met.

One day, as he was still figuring out how to stand, I sat down with him on the floor. I scooped my arms

underneath his and picked him up, steadying him as he plopped his little feet underneath him.

I held him, waiting until I could feel him bearing weight. Then, I let go. He would stand upright only for a split second before he started to tip over. That moment of standing always seemed to surprise him. *Wait? People do this!?*

Just as he realized he was standing, he would start to fall. I would let him go a tiny bit before I would grab him, keeping him from falling and banging his head on the floor. The belly laughs rolling from his wide, bright-eyed grin were contagious. There was a wonder, a thrill, a joy.

It became a game for him. He would start to laugh in anticipation when I stood him up. He got excited about standing up because he loved the feeling of falling (and being caught). Future adrenaline junkie in the making.

What if I had dropped him? What if I had pulled him up, let him go, and watched him fall? I doubt he would have been laughing then. What if I had let him fall and left him there crying on the floor? That would be horrible.

For some of us, that is our story with love. It was all great until something happened- someone dropped

the ball, someone walked away, someone messed up. We were experiencing love as intended. Then, it broke.

Maybe your parents grew distant. Maybe they gave you up. Maybe your family is great but somebody else “dropped” you- a boyfriend, a friend. You might even feel like God dropped you. Perhaps the only person you feel ever loved you is now gone- claimed by some tragedy, disease, or old age, and you feel left behind and alone.



*The picture we have of love suffers blow after
blow. Eventually, it's a pile of shattered
glass on the floor.*



Love goes from being safe and beautiful to broken and dangerous. We are hurt. We are wounded. We are scared. We stop trusting and start suspecting. The picture we have of love suffers blow after blow. Eventually, it's a pile of shattered glass on the floor. We push back, isolate ourselves, and wait for the hammer to drop again.

When love gets broken, we get hurt. We hate talking about it because no one likes feeling like

damaged goods. However, if we do not take the time to clean up that broken glass, we spend our lives suffering scrapes, cuts, and wounds.

We never look at love the same again. It becomes suspect. We become defensive or desperate, shallow or suspicious. We may even try to convince ourselves love does not exist. After all, we thought we had it once, and now it is gone.

Maybe love is not broken for you. Perhaps it is cracked a little, or foggy. You do not have to have a trauma to struggle with seeing love clearly.

In their book, *The Sacred Romance*, authors John Eldridge and Brent Curtis talk about the message of the arrows. The arrows are things contrary to love, things that would seek to hurt us.

When it comes to those arrows, our lives might seem like we are constantly in the climax of an adventure movie. We live non-stop in the fight scene, fending off one bad guy after another with our slow motion martial arts, cat-like reflexes, and gold medal swordsmanship.

Every day, every relationship, we are dodging arrows fired from a thousand skilled marksmen. We are immersed in a new drama, wondering when it is all going to end and we can live a “normal” life. Maybe

marriage, or maybe good friends, maybe moving out of home, maybe more money... *something must fix this!*

We want life to be easy like it was when we were little. We felt we could really trust and love people. We want love to be a good and safe thing. We want places where we feel secure, accepted, and whole. It is hard when the places that should be safe are not or when the places that once were safe are no longer.

That is the danger of broken loves. We all experience them one way or another. We are familiar with broken loves- love that was supposed to be there and is not, comes at a cost, or just simply stopped. We come to believe that these shabby shards are all there is, and it changes us- not for the better.

Reflections

Date: _____

What are some ways I have witnessed or encountered
“broken loves?”

What are some ways my *own* love is broken? (*For instance,*
“I can get really mad at people I love and might say harmful things
to them.”)