

Broken and Whole: A Leader's Path to Spiritual Transformation

Stephen A. Macchia

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Stephen Macchia, founding president of Leadership Transformation and director of the Pierce Center for Disciple-Building at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has put together an exceptional practical guide for Christian leaders on how to experience restoration in the context of human brokenness through God's love. In *Broken and Whole: A Leader's Path to Spiritual Transformation*, Dr. Macchia invites his readers to follow an alternative route—the path that goes through the recognition and confession that we all fall short in our attempts to successfully lead, we all make mistakes in life and need to learn how to find strength in the midst of our weaknesses.

The author approaches the topic from the perspective that great spiritual leaders have frequently come to the point in which they acknowledge their strong and positive traits but also their faults and shortcomings. In this process, they have allowed God to redeem and restore who they are as a person and as a leader. In his own words Stephen says: "Leaders who embrace their brokenness and submit it authentically into the hands of God are the ones who marvel at God's redemptive work and serve others with renewed passion." (12) This realization does not come from other's stories and experiences only. Macchia himself reveals throughout this book, in remarkable transparency, how he has learned to embrace his own brokenness in order to experience God's love, redemption, and restoration in his life and ministry.

Dr. Macchia suggests the understanding of brokenness in four different subcategories. The first two originate in external factors such as suffering and heartache coming from unexpected natural circumstances or direct actions inflicted by others. The other two develop in internal realities such as sinfulness and imperfections associated with our wicked nature and wrong choices. No matter where brokenness may derive from, if understood correctly, the process of restoration is the same: waiting for God to bring hope anew for the redemptive transformation available to all.

The book of 1 Corinthians, specifically chapter 13, is then presented as a practical source of healing to troubled and broken leaders. In the chapters of *Broken and Whole*, each one of the sixteen words or expressions used by the Apostle Paul in the "love chapter" to address the needs of the fragmented church of Corinth are explored in detail. Dr. Macchia

thus guides the reader to understand the correlated negative side of each of those phrases in order to identify the reality of one's weaknesses and brokenness in bold contrast to God's ideal for relationships centered in true love.

Without any doubt, this book is a wise and seasoned orientation presented as a call for authentic Christian leaders who are invited to examine themselves in the context of their own personal limitations in order to find the necessary strength to move forward in their "belovedness and blessedness." (14) Stephen Macchia candidly affirms that, "discovering the true you as you grow in knowing and experiencing the true God will deeply influence your way forward in all areas of life." (201) For that purpose, *Broken and Whole* conducts the reader into a deeper comprehension of the interconnection between one's human brokenness and the lavish love of God—the point where anyone may in fact not only better understand but also live the biblical assurance, "For when I am weak, then I am strong."

With several real leadership stories and life-changing experiences contrasted with rich biblical teaching, *Broken and Whole* is a must-read for those who seek to gain new insights on how to develop important personal traits such as patience, gentleness, hope, and perseverance, among others. Additionally, for those directly engaged in Christian leadership this book can also be used as a manual for reference when warning signals appear in any of the personal areas mentioned above.

For instance, the very first chapter entitled "Impatience Isn't a Virtue" has the power to easily shake up our minds if we give the time and necessary reflection on the reasons for our own impatience. If this is a "broken part" of your own life (as it is in mine!), as you read the pages you will sense the Spirit of God speaking directly to you (as He has done to me!). The same will be true when you go over the other descriptors of love in the subsequent chapters.

The thought provoking questions presented in the "Spiritual Leadership Audit" at the end of each chapter proves to be an outstanding tool for self-reflection and a direct invitation for the recognition and confession of our own brokenness as we look for new ways to serve, as Christian leaders, with a clear understanding of ourselves in light of God's wondrous love. Stephen Macchia concludes his book with a thoughtful benediction for those who are on the same journey looking for ways to be the transformed and transforming leader God wants them to be.

The content of *Broken and Whole* has the power to change one's life. I highly recommend it for those who are looking for emotional and spiritual wholeness as they move forward in the challenges and opportunities of Christian leadership, learning from their weaknesses and brokenness, as they decide to step on—and live—the "most excellent way."