THE BROKEN WAY
Also by Ann Voskamp

The Broken Way: A Daring Path into the Abundant Life

One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are

One Thousand Gifts: A DVD Study: Five Sessions

One Thousand Gifts Devotional: Reflections on Finding Everyday Grace


The Greatest Gift: Unwrapping the Full Love Story of Christmas

Unwrapping the Greatest Gift: A Family Celebration of Christmas
THE BROKEN WAY
A Daring Path into the Abundant Life
STUDY GUIDE
SIX SESSIONS
ANN VOSKAMP
WITH KAREN LEE-THORP
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Someone has brought you a bouquet: cornflowers and fragrant freesia. You put them in your favorite vase, a Chinese-patterned porcelain with a graceful swelling around its middle. You turn to take the bouquet to the dining room table, but at that moment one of your children tugs on the hem of your shirt. Startled, you lose your grip on the vase, and it falls. Crashing on the kitchen tile, the vase shatters. Porcelain and flowers litter the floor in a spreading puddle of water. The vase is broken into more than a dozen pieces, broken beyond redemption.

Perhaps that’s how you feel: broken beyond redemption. Many of us do. It’s a lie. Broken, yes, we are broken, and we won’t be fully whole in this lifetime. But beyond redemption, beyond fruitfulness, beyond beauty, beyond an abundant life, no. No human person is so far gone that God can’t work in and through us if we let Him.

In fact, brokenness is His chosen way of working through us. God deliberately chooses broken people to be His vessels, and He calls us to be broken and poured out for others. As we follow Him step by step along the road before us, bad brokenness is broken by good brokenness.
So let’s sweep up the broken shards of our lives, mop up the water, and breathe a deep draught of the scent of those flowers we’ve been gifted with. And let’s begin taking steps down the surprising road He has laid out for us, the road named the Broken Way.

THE WAY AHEAD

This discussion guide is created to be used in a group of four to ten friends. If you have more than ten people, consider dividing into smaller groups of four to six for your discussion. You want an intimate enough group that even shy people are willing to share their thoughts and talkative people don’t dominate. There are cues for the discussion leader at the beginning of each section, so you won’t need special training to facilitate the conversation.

This guide contains six sessions to go with six video segments. You can meet weekly for six weeks or at a slower pace if you prefer. Each session contains these six sections:

- **This Session:** An introduction to the topic you will be exploring in that session.
- **Open Up:** An icebreaker that will help you get to know others in your group while you start discussing the topic.
- **Video Notes:** Key thoughts from the video segment, along with space to write your own notes of what stands out to you in the video.
• **Talk About It:** Questions for your group to discuss. You’ll interact with the Bible, the video, and your own stories.

• **Closing Prayer:** A time to share your prayer requests and pray for one another, with special focus on the topic you’ve been discussing.

• **Between Sessions:** Questions, activities, and journal prompts for you to complete on your own before the next session. Ideally you’ll spread these exercises over several sittings rather than trying to do all of them at one time.

For group meetings, each of you will need a copy of this study guide, a pen, a Bible, and an open heart. For the solo work between meetings, you’ll need:


• A pen

• Extra paper or a journal, in case you need more room to express your thoughts

### FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

If your group is sharing the responsibility to lead discussions, assign the six sessions to their respective facilitators up front so that group members can prepare their thoughts and questions before the session they are
responsible for leading. Follow the same assignment procedure should your group want to serve any snacks or beverages. Have people volunteer up front to bring refreshments for a given meeting so they know which meeting they are responsible for.

As discussion leader, your primary job is to keep discussions on track with an eye on the clock to be sure you get through the whole session in ninety minutes. You may also need to keep the conversation shared fairly by drawing out quieter members and helping more talkative members to remember that others’ insights are valued in your group.

You might find it helpful to preview the session’s video teaching segment and then scan the discussion questions that pertain to it, highlighting various questions that you want to be sure to cover during your group’s meeting. Ask God in advance of your time together to guide your group’s discussion, and then be sensitive to the direction He wishes to lead.

Urge group members to bring their study guide, pen, and a Bible to every gathering. Encourage them to consider buying a copy of The Broken Way book by Ann Voskamp to supplement this study.
Session 1

How Do We Live This One Broken Life?
THIS SESSION

Ask someone to read aloud or summarize the following paragraphs in order to focus the group’s thoughts on this session’s topic.

Ann’s mother was in and out of psychiatric hospitals when Ann was growing up. Ann’s sister was accidentally killed by a delivery truck. As a teenager, Ann dealt with the pain of these and other losses by cutting her arms with broken glass. Twenty years later, her skin still bears the scars of that cutting, and her heart still carries sorrow upon sorrow. Life deals out suffering to all of us, and we need to find a way to live in the world unafraid of being broken people.

The good news is that Jesus is on the side of broken people. He went to a cross brokenhearted over the lovelessness of the people He loved, and He let them break His body. If we dare, we can trust Him to heal our bad brokenness with His good brokenness.

This first session gives us a chance to go on record as broken people, to own our brokenness and start moving toward each other and toward God. It’s a chance to let some love into the cracks of our broken hearts so that they begin to heal. It’s an opportunity to see what Jesus does
with His brokenness. Instead of drawing back to protect Himself, He gives thanks, breaks, and gives away what He has to give. The question is, can we become like that?

“All I can feel is this unspoken brokenness splintering through me. What do you do if you’re struggling to remember who you really are? I’m not enough for any of this. Not enough for anything I’m doing, for anything I am facing, for anyone I am facing. Not enough for my life.”

—The Broken Way, page 15

OPEN UP

Give each person up to one minute to respond to the following question. Normally it’s not desirable to have everyone answer each question, but for this question at the beginning, everyone should have a chance to respond.

When you look back on the story of your life, tell about a moment when you felt broken. It doesn’t have to be your darkest secret, just a time when you were aware that you were flawed.
VIDEO NOTES

View the video segment for session 1. Use the following outline to note anything that stands out to you, any quotes you want to capture, or any responses you have.

How do you live unafraid of broken things?

For a seed to come fully into its own, it must become wholly undone.

Jesus, with His pierced side, is always on the side of the broken.

Despite my fear, I must trust Christ to redeem the broken in me.
Eucharisteo precedes the miracle.

Jesus breaks and gives the bread away.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

What didn’t make the list of graces? The failures.

His love is around us everywhere.
Maybe our hearts are made to be broken. So they can learn to let the love in.

TALK ABOUT IT

Discuss as many of the following questions as time permits. Ask for volunteers to read aloud the Bible passages and the excerpts from Ann’s book.

1. What in the video moved you? Is there a line or an image that stands out? Why?

2. Read Psalms 42 and 43. What word pictures does the psalmist use to express his feelings of need and brokenness?
Which of these word pictures speak to your experience? What is it about those that you resonate with?

Verses 42:5, 42:11, and 43:5 repeat the same questions and a determination, all addressed to the psalmist’s soul. If you were to ask these same questions of your soul, what might the answers be? Or if these questions don’t fit your life right now, what questions would you ask of your soul?

The determination in these three verses is “Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” How easy is it for you today to put your hope in God? Why?
3. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it away. What is the bread that Jesus has broken and given to you?

How have you responded? How would you like to respond?

4. In the video, Ann speaks of giving thanks for the brokenness. Can you imagine giving thanks for your brokenness? Why or why not?

“Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you’ll have it forever, real and eternal.”

*(John 12:24–25 MSG)*
5. Have someone read aloud John 12:24–25 on page 18. In what sense does a planted grain of wheat “die” in order to produce much at harvest time?

How is this like what needs to happen in our lives?

“The paradox of it breaks into me afresh: unless we die, unless we surrender, unless we sacrifice, we remain alone. Lonely. But if we die, if we surrender, if we sacrifice, that is when we experience the abundance, that is when we dance in communion. The life that yields the most—yields the most.”

—The Broken Way, page 41

6. What would it look like for you to die, surrender, sacrifice, or yield in grace and givenness—that is, to live cruciform—in your current situation? Think of one tiny step you could take.
7. In the video, Ann says, “Brokenness happens in a soul so that the power of God can happen in a soul.” How have you experienced the power of God in the very place of your brokenness?

8. God is at work, broken and given for you, in the other members of your group. What do you most need from the people in your group? Tell them what would help you—or what wouldn’t help you if you have a clearer picture of that. Write down what the others in your group say in answer to this question so that you can remember how best to serve, to be broken and given for them in the coming weeks.
“What if the busted and broken hearts could feel there’s a grace that holds us and calls us Beloved and says we belong and no brokenness ever has the power to break us away from being safe?”

—The Broken Way, pages 20–21

CLOSING PRAYER

Have a group member read the following paragraphs aloud. Then let everyone share prayer requests. Finally, take time to pray as a group. It’s fine for someone to offer a one-sentence prayer or even to pray silently.

You’ve probably brought brokenness to this group that you’re shy about sharing. You don’t want to burden group members with your neediness and risk rejection. The unspoken truth, though, is that we are all broken. And Jesus always stands with the broken, so there is no shame in it. How can the group pray for you at the place of your brokenness? You will honor them if you gift them with a glimpse into your broken heart.

Also, as Ann said in the video, eucharisteo or thankfulness always precedes the miracle. In addition to sharing your place of brokenness, share also something you want to thank God for.

As you pray together, begin with thanksgiving, and then move to asking God to enter each person’s area of brokenness and transform it over the coming weeks.
BETWEEN SESSIONS

Session 1

Work through this section on your own before gathering with your group for session 2. Ideally, spread out the personal study over several sittings.

You probably have much more brokenness in your life than you shared with the group. Wallowing in our limitations isn’t helpful, but acknowledging the real things we face is a first step toward dealing with them constructively. This five-part solo work will be about acknowledging what is broken in your life.

MY BROKEN AREAS

Circle the areas listed below where you experience brokenness.

A broken heart
Brokenness of spirit

A broken mind
Brokenness of belief

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A broken childhood  Broken-down health
Brokenness of hope  Broken promises
A broken adulthood  Broken-down energy
Broken-down strength  Broken faith
Broken friendships  Broken-down joy

In the box that follows, say more about one of your areas of brokenness. You can journal in words or you can draw a sketch that depicts this broken thing in your life. If you have colored pens, you can choose colors that express your feelings about this broken thing.

Is it helpful for you to express your brokenness instead of keeping it bottled up inside you? How, or why not?
“Maybe you can live a full and beautiful life in spite of the great and terrible moments that will happen right inside of you. Actually—maybe you get to become more abundant because of those moments. . . . Maybe the deepest wounds birth deepest wisdom.”

—The Broken Way, page 24

What reasons do you have for being thankful in your areas of brokenness? For example, have they given you empathy for Christ’s suffering? Have they drawn you to a better understanding of your need for and debt to God? Thankfulness is the key to brokenness that makes you better rather than bitter. Write out your reasons.
Write a thank-you letter to Jesus for the good brokenness He experienced for your sake. Tell Him how He has already made a difference to you in your areas of bad brokenness.

Dear Jesus,
MOVING FORWARD

Maybe up till now you have carried around your brokenness like a backpack full of bricks. It’s time to let Jesus unload some of those bricks and put them into His own backpack. In the Bible, the patriarch Jacob wrestled with God all night, and after that night he always walked with a limp. Sometimes God lets us keep a limp as a reminder of our encounter with Him. Sometimes He leaves us with a debilitating or even fatal illness. But often we are carrying around more of a burden than He desires for us. Learning which things He wants to take away and which things He wants us to keep as reminders—that takes time.

What is one area of brokenness in your life that you think God wants you to hand over to Him to heal or transform? Write it here.

Spend some time in silent prayer with your hands held open, offering this issue to God. Allow this sentence to roll around in your mind: “Lover of my soul, I give this to you.” If reasons for not letting go of this area of brokenness come to mind, offer those as well. If doubts come to mind about whether you can hand it over to God, give Him those too.

The situation may not be fully fixed in one sitting—God doesn’t do magic at our bidding. You may need to offer this issue to Him over and over. If so, do it. To remind yourself that you’re being shaped, draw a cross on your wrist or place a cross somewhere you will see it again and again to encourage you to take time each day to lift up your hands and...
give Him this thing. Additionally, give Him all of your anxieties and frustrations connected with this thing. Brick by brick, hand it all over.

**SACRED READING**

In each session of this study, you’re going to have a chance to reflect on a short passage of Scripture and focus on the transformative journey of living cruciform, broken and given. Take fifteen to twenty minutes each week for this practice to chew on a single passage in a way that fits you best, and consider how your brokenness is shaping you like a cross.

Here is this week’s passage:

> For I am poor and needy,  
> and my heart is wounded within me.  
> I fade away like an evening shadow;  
> I am shaken off like a locust.  

*(Psalm 109:22–23)*

This week’s passage is intended to bring your brokenness to the surface. You won’t be left there, but you do need to start there. This passage is from a type of psalm called a lament. Many of the psalms are laments because the ancient Hebrews thought it was very important to go to God honestly with their brokenness and allow themselves to feel the sadness.

Try to sit with this passage for fifteen to twenty minutes. Where is
God in such a passage? Where does the passage take you? You can do your reflection in any of the following ways:

- You can repeat the passage over and over to yourself, pausing at different words to let them sink in.
- You can pray aloud to God about the passage.
- You can make a sketch that shows what this passage means to you.
- You can journal about the passage, writing about where it takes you and where you find God in it.

As you close your time of reflection, offer a prayer of thanks to God that He is able to handle your honesty about your brokenness and that He doesn’t leave you alone in it. Write the prayer here if you’d like.
Use the space provided to reflect on any of the following topics.

- How you are doing when it comes to letting God take one of the bricks from your backpack.
- How you are doing when it comes to expressing your areas of brokenness so they don’t stay bottled up inside you.
- How you might better remind yourself and grow in gratitude for what God is doing in your life.
As you reflect on what you have learned in this session, you may want to read the opening section of the book, *The Broken Way* by Ann Voskamp, chapters 1–3. In preparation for session 2, you might want to read chapters 4–6. Jot any highlights in the space below.