

how to form power of brokenness circles

The Power of Brokenness was written to help you gain greater insight into God's plan for miraculous life change. It can be used as a personal Bible study; a 12 week small group curriculum; a step study or mentoring guide. Some group leaders use it as a series of twelve teaching outlines prior to open sharing time that we call circles. But, no matter how you use it, there is only one requirement for true life change. The entire process must be submitted to Christ.

Throughout its pages, it is our intention to continually point you to Jesus Christ and to encourage further study of scripture. Without His Spirit in control of our time together, there can be no true healing. Putting Christ first in all things is important for creating an environment in which we can share, heal, pray (and be prayed for) and experience the miracle of His divine action in our lives.

Acting in the fruit of the spirit, as in Galatians 5:22-26, (see opposite page) and praying constantly for unity, harmony and divine assistance are the keys to forming a biblically based circle. When two or more of us come together, as those who seek a new way of living under Christ, we become a church. This church formation happens regardless of our location, size, or backgrounds. When we are gathered in Christ's name, we become part of His body. Any non-scriptural ideas, man-made rules or non-biblical guidelines that we create in church or small group settings will always lead us away from God's truth and move us toward division or injury.

Leading people to a place of transparency can create emotional and spiritual challenges, therefore we need to maintain order in all that we do based on His Holy Spirit and not on the making of rules and religious frameworks. We need to encourage people to share based on what God is doing in their lives and what they desire to change.

Here are a few important small group guidelines to help you along the way, each based on the direction we get in Galatians about how to be a church:

1. **Christ** is the most important person in any circle or group. We must ensure that our group time is open and submitted to Christ, that we continually ask for His wisdom, and that we ensure that His inspiration is part of our group time. When we are led by the Holy Spirit to pray for someone or an issue in the group, if knowledge is given to us for our lives (or the lives of others) we must apply these biblically based gifts without fear or reservation. When we allow God to lead our group experience, we may begin to see things happen that may be out of the ordinary church experience. God is a God of love and a God of order. Do not let group time descend into unstructured chaos, but by the same token, do not be afraid for there to be freedom within the group for God to show us who He is. Christ promised us as believers that when we gather in groups of two or more, that He would be in the midst of us. Give Him a chance to speak. Select people to lead your group who are filled with God's Holy Spirit, who have strong spiritual gifts and who can be Christ-like in their leadership. Our job in healing is not to know things, but to know Christ. When we trust in His power to heal and are prepared to put forth the effort of discipleship, we will see His awesome power move in our lives.

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2. **Love** is the filter through which all ideas of group time, sharing, structure and discipline must pass. Circle time must always be based on love. Any non-scriptural ideas about running group time, no matter how practical they may seem, must be rejected in love. God may put people in your life who are difficult to love, but pray that you can act in love at all times and use conflict resolution skills given to us by Christ in Matthew 18. Love one another by being in love with each other, regardless of background, personality, issues or struggles. Remember that many people will come into the center of our church families or circles who have never experienced real love and acceptance. We are in a spiritual battle against an enemy who is confused by love, confuse him by loving constantly!
3. **Joy** in all things is a pathway to finding a deeper more meaningful relationship with Christ. The spirit in which we come together will influence the success of our small group time as we try to grow in our relationship with Christ. If we meet in a spirit of religion, it will be rules and pain that will dominate our experience. If we meet in a critical spirit, we will produce a group that will likely be divided and critical. But if we meet in a spirit of joy, God can use us, speak to us, and work through us in unique and powerful ways.
4. **Peace** requires that all of the disputes that we have with others immediately be put to rest. This requires both vigilance and action based in love. When someone is acting out or causing issues during group time, that individual must be quickly and gently restored so the peace of the group can be maintained. This acting out will most often take the form of a group member talking about everyone else's problems except their own or people using religious ideas to judge others within the group. Maintaining peace demands that we not gossip in our circle time and that we will not judge one another in these group settings. (It is only if someone asks you to disciple or sponsor them, that you have been given license to privately speak into their lives in such an intimate way.) Lastly, when an individual comes to a circle and avoids talking about anything personal, you can be assured that they are not at peace. If we as leaders can ask them to share on why they are there, what they are feeling or what they see God doing in their lives, we can begin to see something miraculous happen.
5. **Patience** will allow us to stop and ask for God's direction when problem solving. Remember that He can and will protect His church if we will simply wait for Him and not act out of our flesh. There are only two spirits we can act in, His Spirit or the spirit of the world. Patience, personally and with one another, is one of the greatest weapons we have to destroy our human tendency to act in the spirit of the world. There is no room for rash or emotionally driven response in a small group environment if we want the Holy Spirit to dominate.
6. **Kindness** means taking action. When we act in kindness, open up in kindness, or rebuke in kindness, we bring restoration, joy and hope to people. As circle leaders we want to speak words of life and encouragement into group member's lives. Kindness must always be our first response to the unkind.

7. **Goodness** is at the heart of the character of Christ. Goodness demands that we come together with Christ's ability to heal as the constant measure of our actions as people. To help to meet the needs of those within our circle, we can best help others by openly and transparently sharing our testimony of faith. We model this by sharing our experience, strength and hope and how we ourselves have been healed or are healing through God's goodness and grace.
8. **Faithfulness** is required of us in order to have a safe place to share and grow. We want to come to a place in our lives where what we have done and who we are becomes part of our public testimony of faith. Being full of faith means that we have totally placed our trust in things (of God) that are unseen by others. It is not usually part of the human condition to admit our failures openly. This is because others in the world may want to try to use our failures against us or to attack us in those places of weakness. But, our faithfulness as believers allows us to share openly and trust that the outcome will build God's kingdom and help us to find healing, even if someone else tries to use our faith against us. Faithfulness also demands that we are good stewards of the information that we are given. We must ensure that when we share with one another that our information is given in the confidence of faith.
9. **Self Control** is a key to ensuring that all of the other components of the fruit of the spirit are working. We may think that we have the right to tell someone else what they should or should not be doing. If that information is not guided by Biblical thought (or the Holy Spirit confirmed by scripture) then we are not exercising self control. If we become frustrated with another person in our circle and act out in that, we are not acting in the Spirit and have lost our self control. If we dominate sharing time; talk for longer than 3-5 minutes; use coarse language or fight over doctrinal positions, we are not exercising self control. Every moment we waste talking about religious ideas is a moment stolen from us in discovering who Christ is.

For a leader's guide on conducting a Power of Brokenness Circle, see page 5.

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For more resources, log on to www.saltriverministries.com

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Brokenness is the acknowledgment of grace where self-will is superseded by God's will. While righteousness demands payment for evil done, brokenness recognizes that payment can not be made regardless of our human effort and rejoices in the forgiveness of sin...

leader's guide for conducting a power of brokenness circle

Circle meetings can take place in one hour or less. They can be held immediately before or after your regular church service time. To begin, have all participants first meet in one large circle then break into smaller groups later as noted below.

1. Open in prayer, praying earnestly and in the spirit for direction and healing. If there are any announcements, make sure that anything that you communicate has a strong biblical basis for being announced.
2. As a circle leader, introduce yourself and explain your role the group and why you are leading. Explain what God is doing in your life and what your hope is for everyone who participates. Consider rotating this leadership role from week to week.
3. Talk about the group and ensure that all people attending are in the right place. The only requirement for participation is a desire to strengthen one's relationship with Christ.
4. Take time to do a separate small group or one-on-one time with new attendees so that they can be quickly brought up to speed. Ensure that you understand where a new person is coming from. Some people need badly to be in group settings the first time they attend and oriented after group, but others need the assurance of the group structure so that they can be comfortable in that group.
5. Review and enforce all small group guidelines on page 5. As needed, gently restore people who are using the time to preach, cross talk (engage in one on one dialogue at the expense of all others in the group that is not directed by the Holy Spirit), or those attempting to fix or give advice within the group.
6. Prompt open discussion by introducing a topic or personal testimony, tying that Sunday's message to a particular chapter heading in the book or by reviewing the Bible study notes within the chapters. This should take only 20-25 minutes at most.
7. At this time, if you have more than 4 or 5 in your larger circle, break into smaller groups for another 25 - 30 minutes after your open discussion or teaching time. The smaller and more intimate the groups are, the better the sharing will be. This also allows for those who are developing their gifts in leadership to start by leading smaller groups. Gender should not be a factor in that larger circle open teaching time, but should be considered in group sharing times. You may find doing open sharing in a larger group with both men and women from time to time to be refreshing and fulfilling, for the most part it is much easier for women or men to open up about issues in their lives when they are surrounded only by same sex participants.
8. Close with prayer. Ask if specific healing is needed. Be prepared to listen to God's spirit and seek His will in that prayer time. Deep, intentional and focused prayer time is key to healing. Do a time of open prayer and offer people the freedom to stay for a more personal and directed time of prayer. Ask for formal prayer requests and pray for one another during the week. Encourage additional Bible study time that unifies the group between meetings. Make it a point to ask circle members to reach out to others who might benefit from joining or starting their own Power of Brokenness group in another church.
9. Create and distribute phone lists of those willing to supply contact information so fellowship time, accountability and sponsorship opportunities can be formed outside of the meeting. The real work of church doesn't happen in a meeting, it happens afterward. Encourage participants to continue meeting with one another in fellowship time. Consider hosting events, barbeques or coffee times to support them in doing that.
10. Ask participants to think about service opportunities in the ministry. Have a list of service needs available so that people can give of themselves. Selfishness is at the root of all of the sins that we struggle with. We need to give everyone a chance to defeat personal selfishness.
11. Follow up with those who miss circle meetings to ensure they are well. Group leaders should keep an active phone list in place and follow up with people that miss two consecutive meetings to find out if they are in need of support.
12. Regularly bring group leaders together monthly for encouragement, support and to respond to any questions and concerns that will come up in any front line ministry.

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