

When Life Breaks...

When I was growing up, my Dad worked as an instrumentation engineer, and he was always bringing home old parts and pieces of equipment for me to play with. I assembled them in various ways, though they never actually “made” anything productive. It was a fun way for me to use my imagination, but I was certainly no “MacGyver”.

My son Zach had great creative power when it came to working with his vast collection of Legos®. He built so many things, and considered each one a treasure. He would show me his latest project with great pride and explain in detail what it did, and I would agree with him about how wonderful it was. He would put something together, and then later take it apart because he needed some of the parts for something else.

One time one of his creations fell and broke, and I did not understand the seriousness of the situation. I didn't realize that this particular item was special enough to be kept forever, so I put it with the other parts. I remember Zach's tears when he brought me the pieces to put back together. So we worked on it until it was almost exactly back the way it was. Zach felt better and seemed relieved, but in some way it was more than just the creation that had been broken. I put it up on a shelf and where it has remained intact until this day.

Sometimes our life is broken, too: failure, divorce, or some other loss. We can't always put it back exactly; we can sometimes make it better, or make it different, but we cannot fix things back perfectly. We struggle to put the pieces back together, and find that we may have to build something else. The old adage about making lemonade if life gives you lemons doesn't quite fit. This is more than just adding sugar to lemon juice; it involves a chemical change that results in a different taste.

When life breaks it is usually catastrophic, like pieces coming off of a large space structure as it reenters the atmosphere. We are not just talking about a few pieces that become disconnected, but an entire structure that is broken and ripped apart. We have to search for pieces to prop it back up again, and eventually fuse together for a rebirth. We are a medium that cannot be worked too fast or we break or deform permanently.

We may search for what seems like forever to find a particular piece that we need to put our lives back together (I remember Zach's continual scraping sounds as he hunted among the thousands of Legos®). This turns out to be a lifetime project.

We still have to work to put the pieces back together, but our newly fashioned soul will not emerge from the fire like Aaron's calf¹. It must be patiently crafted with the help of an inspired artist. We are like Humpty Dumpty, where only God can truly put us back together again. With Him we can even hope for some improvement.

1. Exodus 32:24