

A life of broken pieces

By [Elizabeth Hagan](#)

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*"This is not the life I'd want!"* It's a declaration I hear often as a pastor.

It's something I've said about my own life too. Living the life you don't want to have is a scary place to be. It's difficult to even utter aloud. It's dark. It's lonely. And it's the time that many of our friends want to bail (which makes it worse, of course!)

Sleepless nights are the norm. We change our behaviors in extreme shifts. We move slower or faster. We eat more or less than we should. And we often fall off the face of the "land of the living" for a while too.

We find ourselves in this place because we wish we were married. . .

We imagined we'd make more than minimum wage by now . . .

We never thought we'd get cancer. . .

We want children and can't have them . . .

We imagined four generations around this dinner table . . .

We imagined that one day we'd be just like our parents and we're not . . .

And the reasons could go on and on.

As we mourn these unmet dreams, our cries are loud and raw. There's nothing worse to realizing that your life is forever in a thousand little pieces and may *never* be fixed. There's nothing worse than crying more tears than your eyes have ever shed. There's nothing worse than utter brokenness!

It's desperation—like seeing to a 5,000 piece jigsaw puzzle without the box top for a guide. You've got a lot of pieces in your hand (that you don't want!) but know you have to put back together somehow. Quitting looks appealing, because the thought of moving through our pain feels worse than living it. Besides laying down to die, is there another way?

This is what I have learned about brokenness: the broken pieces of our stories are not as bad as they might seem in the beginning. Of course this is not to go down the slippery slope of “everything happens for a reason” theology. No, absolutely not! Rather it is to claim in our lives *what is*, without being brought down by what is not. Or what everybody else has.

Sure, the broken pieces of your story and mine are cracked and ugly. Sure, we might always stick out like a sore thumb in a particular kind of crowds. But, what if our broken pieces came with gifts too? Yes, I said it: gifts!

Gifts like fitting into a different puzzle that is more beautiful than the original one could have been.

Gifts like connecting with other similar pieces we might have otherwise ignored.

Gifts like realizing the cracks around our edges aren't ugly but are lovely in places the “perfect” pieces are not.

There's one thing I know for sure, once you've been broken, you really don't like being around the nice and shiny pieces as much as you did before. So, maybe our life calling is to unite, to stand together as a broken body and say: “This is what *real* life looks like.” Who really needs to be *normal*?

As a Christian pastor, this is what I most want to preach every Sunday. This is who I know Jesus to be. It's what the church can be at its best: a community with lots of bumps, cracks, and sharp points. We're all broken. But it's okay. We're on our way to being whole, one piece at a time.

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