

TO MY FELLOW CRACK-POTS

BY DR BILL WEBSTER

Not too long ago, I was talking with a lady who had recently lost her husband, and was having rather a difficult time with it all. "Bill", she said dejectedly, "I feel like I'm cracking up. Nothing seems worthwhile any more." In an attempt to cheer her up, and also to make an important point, I told her the following story:

"A water bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots was perfectly made and never leaked. The other pot had a crack in it, and by the time the water bearer reached his master's house it had leaked much of its water and was only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologise to you." "Why?" asked the water bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "For these past two years, I have only been able to deliver half my load, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house," the pot replied. "Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts"

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again the pot apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path,

and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Every venture of life involves risk. Attempting anything assumes both the possibility of success and the risk of failure. Sadly, we are often reluctant to admit that failure has a place, far less a necessary role, in our lives. The ideal of perfection, or success, forces people into roles that are inflexible, and thus RISKING becomes a hazardous impossibility because we leave ourselves no place to fall. We would all prefer to be like the perfect pot, living up to and maximising our full potential, and be seen to be doing so.

Yet it doesn't always work out so perfectly. All of life is a risk. The opportunity to love creates the possibility of losing, and the necessity of grieving. Nonetheless, that is a risk most of us are willing to take, because the alternatives are even more unacceptable. That is not to suggest that such experiences are easy, or that we welcome them with open arms. Sometimes, after a significant loss, or in difficult times, we can feel like we are a cracked pot, and just not living up to our full potential. How much more we could do if only we "had it all together". Sometimes, sadly, others around us reflect similar sentiments.

But in God's economy, nothing goes to waste. Each of us has our own unique flaws. We are all cracked pots. But don't be afraid or ashamed of your flaws. Acknowledge them, and you too can be the cause of beauty. If you will allow it, your very weaknesses can become your strength .. or someone else's.

Ⓓ

Bill Webster has a new web site at GriefJourney.com where you can find interesting articles, books and tapes, and his TV program 24 hours a day. Let your grieving clients know about this helpful resource. You can now download Bill's brochure directly from the internet site, and e mail him for a copy of the new discount prices for SAIF members.