

# God uses broken vessels, pastors are assured

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INDIANAPOLIS—God calls and uses broken people for his service, participants at the Monday morning session of the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference learned.

Brokenness is “the recognition of our shattered pride without a need to glue it back together again,” said Ed Litton, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of North Mobile, in Saraland, Ala.

Litton, who closed the morning session of the Pastors Conference June 9 with an altar call for “broken” pastors, told the tragic story of losing his wife 10 months ago in a car accident.

“In that instant, my life changed and I began a journey to a place I did not care to go,” he said.

Johnny Hunt, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Ga., gives a message the opening night of the 2008 Southern Baptist Pastors’ Conference at the Indiana Convention Center June 8. The two-day event precedes the June 10-11 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis. (BP Staff Photo)

When God leads his servants to such a place, he forces them to face their deepest fear, Litton said. But God restores them in ways they cannot imagine to prepare them for significant ministry, he said, preaching from Psalm 23.

“Some of you are facing the worst fear of your life. And some of you are on the verge of the greatest movement of God in the history of your life, your ministry and your church,” he said. “God doesn’t call complete, fully contained, self-actualized people who have it together. He calls the

broken.”

### **Brokenness as a learning process**

George Harris, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Kerrville, Texas, said brokenness isn't sought or caught. Instead, it's "a process that God takes us through in order to get us to hear him," he said.

Preaching from 1 Kings 19:1-4 in the Old Testament, he noted that after a series of miraculous spiritual experiences, Elijah found himself in a deep depression, wanting to die.

"All through Scripture, we find there are great men who have come to moments of brokenness injected with pain or some type of physical circumstance," Harris said, telling his own story of how God "broke" him after major injuries from a motorcycle accident robbed him of speech for several months.

It's at that low point God spoke to Elijah—and speaks to Christians today—to give a refreshed life, a renewed commission and a new task, Harris said. "God encouraged and revived Elijah."

### **Brokenness as struggle**

Hayes Wicker, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Naples, Fla., added that brokenness does not come without a struggle.

"God wrestles with us to bring blessedness from brokenness," he said.

Preaching from Genesis 32:24-31 and describing Jacob's struggle with God, Wicker explained that brokenness leads to blessings, awareness, change, a supreme Christ and a strong faith that comes from desperation.

Describing his moment of brokenness as a pastor when he made inappropriate leadership decision, Wicker said, "I became so desperate for a touch from God. ... And now I can say, 'Bless you crisis; bless you

controversy.'

"We are beginning to sink today," he said. "We are sinking as a denomination, in our homes and in our churches.

"We tend to want to be mended but not ended ... (But God) wants to pin our wills to the mat of submission so that we cry, 'Lord'" Wicker said. "The ultimate goal of revival is that Jesus be Lord."

### **Brokenness is more than being wounded**

Alan Day, senior pastor of Edmond's First Baptist Church, Edmond, Okla., said it is important that being wounded not be mistaken for brokenness.

"Most of us have been through breaking, but I don't know if most of us have been through (being) broken," said Day, who dealt with some health issues that caused him to lean totally on God in order to pull himself out of depression and discouragement.

"God's pattern is breaking the man of God, the preacher, before that man of God can ever be fruitful," Day said, noting that brokenness is essential for real intimacy with God, for hearing God and for leading God's people.

"Pastors are once again being called to brokenness, revival and spiritual awakening," Day said. "God wants to do something in your church. He is only going to do it when pastors become broken men and allow God to fill us with himself."