

How do you survive as a pastor if you are bipolar?

Broken

by Bill McConnell

Order the complete book from the publisher

Booklocker.com

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9101.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**



BROKEN

A NOVEL ABOUT GOD, FAITH AND BEING BIPOLAR

BILL McCONNELL

Broken

Bill McConnell

Copyright © 2017 Bill McConnell

ISBN: 978-1-63492-156-5

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2017

First Edition

All Scripture Quotations from the New International Version
Copyright 1973, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.

23

They parked the car in the tree shaded parking lot, neither man talking, the weight of the moment silencing all conversation. David took a moment to look at the administration building which was directly in front of them. It was one story, shaped like a T, two wings and a long central part that consisted of the kitchen, housekeeping, maintenance and the staff offices. The two wings housed those patients who needed around the clock supervision. There were two more buildings that David could not see that held the rest of the patients. He had no idea how many patients there were, how many staff or even how much it was going to cost Maya for him to live there for a year. There weren't any fences he could see, not that he was thinking about escaping, which would land him in jail.

“Let's get your stuff and get you checked in.”

All David was allowed to bring were his clothes, everything else would be provided for him. Russell led the way into the building, the heavy metal front door closing behind them made hardly a sound. It was quiet and no one was in sight as they looked down the hallway. They turned and went to the left, the right being blocked by a locked door that required a code to open. Walking two doors down the left hallway they came to administration, an open room that did not have a door. There were two people in the office, a man and a woman, both sitting behind desks. The woman got up from her desk and walked to the counter the two men were standing behind. It had all the appearance and feel of checking into a hotel.

“Hello David, I’m Caroline. I’m going to call a staff member so you can take your clothes to your room. Then we’ll want to talk to you for a bit. Is that okay?”

“Sure.”

There wasn’t anything else for Russell to do, so he shook David’s hand and said,

“Find a way to make this work for you, David. If you need anything, please call me.”

David didn’t know how to respond. He knew how much the lawyer had done for him in the previous weeks and felt at a loss on how to show his gratitude. He just silently nodded his head in recognition, hoping the lawyer knew how much he was appreciated. And with that he was on his own, entering a world from which he would emerge one year later with a future that was both known and unknown.

He waited until a staff member arrived to take him to his room which was in a separate building. They walked down the hallway, out a side door and into the bright sunshine. Neither man spoke until they were ready to enter the building where David would live. The staff member turned to David, saying,

“The building is locked, so you can’t exit without permission. That’s for your protection. After you’re evaluated the doctors will determine when and how much freedom you get. It’s hard at first, but you’ll get used to it. Just do what the docs say and you’ll be okay. By the way, I visited your church a few times.”

His tone was friendly and meant to be reassuring, but the mention of visiting the church only reminded David how far he had fallen. David only nodded in reply, not knowing what to say in such an awkward situation. The door opened with a code and after punching the four numbers, they went inside to what would become David’s home for the next year.

Unlike the administration building, there were a few people walking around as they walked down the main hallway to David's room, all dressed in white. There were rooms on each side of the hallway, a large common area, conference rooms, staff offices and a kitchen. David didn't know what he was expecting; his first impression was how still and quiet it was. Where the doors were open, he glanced into the rooms as he passed by. The rooms were tidy, about the size of a normal bedroom, though the doors all had small windows. All the rooms that had open doors were vacant; no one seemed to be home. He guessed that everyone he had seen so far was staff, because of how they were dressed, so he asked,

"Where is everybody? I mean the patients?"

"Either in group, or working at their job. Almost everyone has a job, you'll find out what yours is in a few days. Here we are."

David's room was just like all the rest. It had a bed, dresser and small desk. There were a few pictures on the wall but not much else to give the room any personality.

"You can put your bag on the bed. When you're done with Dr. Curren you can put your stuff away. Let's get you down to her office."

Dr. Curren was one of four psychiatrists who worked at the hospital. The hospital had space for 80 patients and was always full. The hospital specialized in treating people who suffered from depression, bipolar and assorted forms of mania and phobias. There were a few patients who had schizophrenia and lived in the locked section of the administration building. The average stay was three months, that was generally the time it took to get a patient stabilized on medication and adjusted to living back in the outside world. It wasn't a place where people stayed for an

indeterminate amount of time; they did not take patients they felt could not be transitioned back into society.

“Here we are.”

They had walked back down the main hallway, stopping in front of an office. The staff member knocked lightly, and then opened the door. He gestured for David to enter, and then closed the door after David went inside.

“Hello, David. Please have a seat and we’ll get started.”

She was over forty, but not much. David sat down across from her and looked around the office. Bookshelves, pictures of her family behind her, some plants on a table under a window, a window that had wire mesh on the outside. She had worked at the hospital for five years managing the care and treatment of the 35 patients who lived in what was Building A.

“I’m Dr. Curren. I’ll be overseeing your care while you’re here. Your situation is different from most of our patients; I want you to know that from the outset. Our patients don’t have set times they are here for. The average stay is about three months, but as you know you’re here for a year. We’ll try and make this a good year for you, but you need to know a year is a long time to be in a facility like this. It’s not something we would normally do.”

“I’m guessing Maya had something to do with that.”

“Yes, she did. She is on the board here and has been very generous with her time and money. When she told us about your situation, we felt we could make some changes to accommodate you.”

“I appreciate that. My lawyer has assured me that it’s better than going to jail.”

“Yes, that’s definitely true. You would not get the help you need if you went to jail. They try to help those who have

mental illness, but they're seldom successful. They are too many ill people and not enough resources."

He had only been in her office for a few minutes and had already been labeled. It was one thing to visit a psychiatrist once a week and talk about your life and take medication, even when you knew you were bipolar. It was another thing to spend a year in an institution that would ensure everyone would know you were mentally ill. Then David said something he had said before to his lawyer.

"I'm not crazy."

"I know that. But you are bipolar. You have been diagnosed with a disease that affects how you think and act."

"I lived with this for years without anyone being the wiser. I went and got help when it got worse. I made one mistake, a mistake brought on by circumstances that probably will never happen again."

David spoke with some emotion as he sat across from her, looking around the office and not making eye contact. He was breathing heavily and gripping the sides of his chair tightly, causing his hands to begin to turn white. She had seen this before, the denial and the justification of actions that brought people to the hospital. She also thought that the enormity of living in the hospital for a year was just now beginning to become a reality for David now that he was in the building.

"It's amazing to me that you could manage your illness for years without anyone knowing. I can't imagine what that cost you in terms of using all your emotional strength to keep your symptoms under control. But David, this illness catches up to everyone, and in the end, it caught up to you. Let's leave this for another time. I imagine you want to know how things work around here."

David realized he was close to losing control and just managed to bring himself back from the brink. He was embarrassed that his first meeting with a staff member confirmed to her he was just like everyone else who was bipolar; unable at times to manage his emotions in a way that would keep him from having a manic episode. How he would be able to hide those episodes like he had in the past he had no idea; he would never be out of their sight, which was a terrifying thought.

“David? Did you hear me?”

“Yes. I’m sorry. What do you want me to do?”

They spent the next hour going over what his world would look like during the next year. He would eat his meals in the common hall with the other patients, he would participate in both individual and group therapy and he would be assigned a job. He would be able to go outside and enjoy the grounds, which prompted a question.

“Will I be able to run?”

“Yes. There is a path that goes around the edge of the hospital. Just tell us when you want to run and we’ll let you out of the building. I know you think you can manage your illness by running, but you know that’s not possible now. Let’s talk about your medication.”

She looked down at his medical records that had been sent from his psychiatrist. Setting them back down on her desk, she said,

“Did you bring your medication?”

There wasn’t any point in hiding the truth from her, she would find out when they gave him the required physical and took his blood.

“I haven’t taken any medication for a while. There were reasons, but I suppose they don’t matter now.”

“No, they don’t matter now. Without your medication, you’ll never make any progress, but I suspect you know that.”

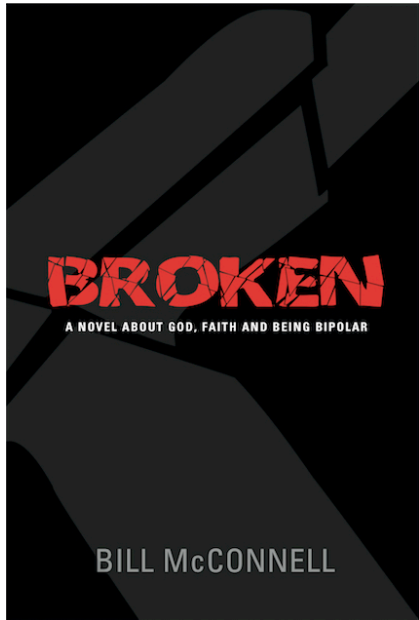
She let the words sink in, and then said,

“Let’s get you to your room so you can rest until lunch. Then you can join group therapy at 2. If you want to run after that, it would be a good time.”

She walked with him down the hallway to his room, saying as she left,

“Leave the door open. It’s our policy to leave your door open until you’re ready to go to bed.”

David had an hour before lunch, an hour he spent on his bed laying on his back and staring at the ceiling. He would be allowed supervised use of a phone, and he wondered as he lay there if Laura would ever take his call. He had no way of knowing she was in Denver, working to make a new life for herself. If David had been able to think clearly, he might have realized he could use the next year to ready himself for whatever life he would have after leaving the hospital; but he would not think in those terms ever again, because he doubted there was any kind of life available to him.



How do you survive as a pastor if you are bipolar?

Broken

by Bill McConnell

Order the complete book from the publisher

Booklocker.com

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9101.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**