The Great Exchange – God's Renewal for My Brokenness

BECKY HARCOURT

Church leader, Becky Harcourt, shares her experience of how God broke in and transformed her life.

Many years ago, I had a life-changing dream. In it I knew, the way you know things in dreams, that I was the owner of a house and all the land surrounding it. Around the back of this house, I discovered a patch of ground that had been dug up ready for planting, but on the edge was a big, dead bush whose roots would, I knew, interfere with anything new that was planted. I heard a voice say, 'It's going to be hard work, but that will have to be dealt with before anything new can grow.' Then I woke up.

Almost thirty years later, I'm so grateful for that dream and how God used it to motivate me to get the help I needed. You see, I knew what that dead bush represented, and I wanted to deal with that issue, but it was through the dream that I began to understand the undermining effect it was having on me.

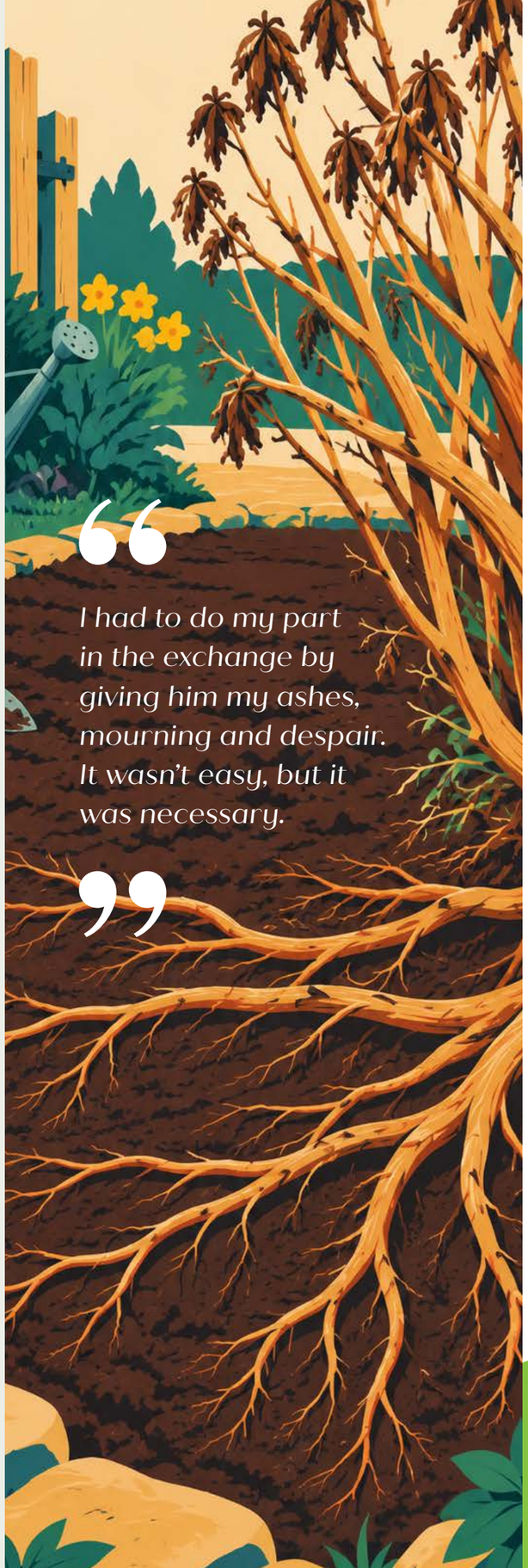
That bush symbolised all the trauma, guilt and shame I was carrying due to an accident in which my younger sister died when I was the one responsible for looking after her. I was 13 years old at the time and, because of the accident and her death, I pretty much shut down emotionally and become very guarded in my relationships because I felt so ashamed.

I had been raised in a Christian home and had asked Jesus to live in my heart as a young child, so I did have God in my life, and my faith in him wasn't affected by what had happened. However, I wrongly assumed that God must blame me for the accident in the same way I blamed myself, so I would never allow myself to talk to God about it, and if any memory of my sister came to mind, I would immediately push it down as it was just too painful to think about. In every way I could, I detached myself from what had happened, which means I became well and truly stuck.

Years later, when I had the dream about the bush, I was still stuck, still shut down emotionally and still guarded in my relationships. Yet, in the intervening years, I had begun to learn about how God speaks today, which helped me to pay attention to the dream. I also understood more about how Jesus' death on the cross doesn't just guarantee my place with him in eternity, but it's also a resource for my healing (physical, emotional and mental) in the here and now.

I decided to attend The Healing Prayer School. This is a ministry run by Lin Button, who just happens to also be a member of our church. Lin had been part of Leanne Payne's European team (Leanne was a great teacher and writer on emotional healing) and Lin had started her own ministry doing the same sorts of things. Each year in the spring, Lin runs a five-day conference with worship, teaching, and lots of Holy Spirit-led prayer. It was through attending one of those five-day conferences that I began to emotionally thaw where I had been frozen and numb for many years.

Through the teaching and prayer offered at that conference, the trauma I'd lived with, represented by the bush in my dream, began to be cut back. In the years that followed, it was cut back more and more until it was just a stump that could be dug up by the roots and thrown onto the fire.



What that meant was that I needed to take all my pain, shame and guilt to the cross. It was too much to deal with all at once, but bit by bit I would hand it over to Jesus, and in exchange would receive God's renewing and restoring love and mercy. Just as Isaiah 61 promises, God gave me a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair, but I had to do my part in the exchange by giving him my ashes, mourning and despair. It wasn't easy, but it was necessary. As a result, I'm free of guilt and shame and instead of being stuck, I'm on the move.

I now like to think that the empty dug-up garden bed I saw in my dream is flourishing, full of colour and life because, as I worked with the Lord to deal with the dead bush, the seeds that he'd planted in me were able to grow and mature. I'm so grateful.

I've also been able to help others discover God's renewing love for themselves. I'm now part of Lin Button's Healing Prayer School team and so, alongside Lin and others, I have the privilege of taking part in the teaching as well as praying for the people who come along. I've been blessed to see God touch and renew so many people through this ministry.

The exchange we read about in Isaiah 61 isn't just pretty words, it's real. Jesus died on the cross so we could receive what the Father always wanted to give us – life in all its fullness.

(To find out more about Healing Prayer School, go to healingprayerschool.org.uk. The five-day conference in 2027 will be 5-9 April at All Saints Woodford Wells.)

BECKY HARCOURT

Becky leads, alongside her husband, at All Saints' Woodford Wells in NE London. She is also an ambassador for both Open Doors and New Wine.

