



AUTHOR BIO



*Breaking Old Rhythms:
Answering the Call of a
Creative God*

Available March 2013

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Amena Brown

As a poet, speaker, journalist and event host, Amena Brown's words excite, ignite and inspire. Whether in front of audiences as intimate as fifty or as sprawling as twenty thousand, she has something to say that matters.

Amena's debut book release, *Breaking Old Rhythms: Answering the Call of a Creative God*, explores how experiences such as deejaying, learning to dance, having a broken heart and practicing the rules of improv can teach us about our life's rhythm and how we can better tune our ears and lives to the rhythm of God.

The author of spoken-word CD *Live at Java Monkey*, Amena has performed and spoken at events across the nation such as The RightNow Conference, Creativity World Forum, Catalyst Conference, Chick-fil-A Leadercast, as well as touring with Gungor.

She and her husband, Matt, also known as DJ Opdiggy, travel and perform a presentation of poetry, monologue and deejaying. They also host a regular open mic in Atlanta every fifth Thursday at Urban Grind Coffee.

Along with her spoken word recordings, Amena has participated in numerous professional and live recordings including two poems on Gungor's album *A Creation Liturgy*, a collection of video poems with Bluefish TV and the Voice Bible, and as a featured speaker in the Women of the Bible DVD series.

She also speaks at conferences and events for high school and college students, young adults and women, where she has facilitated several workshops and breakout sessions on creativity, singleness, relationships, writing, building artistic community and becoming an artist entrepreneur.

As part of a generation that is searching for the real and the genuine in an age of constant carbon copy, Amena is both regal and dramatic in her creative interpretation on the stage, and in her candid and expressive conversation one on one. This nonconformist lends her voice to finding inspiration, truth and purpose and encourages those she encounters to do the same.

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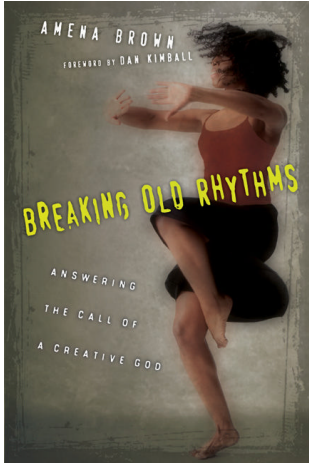
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Spoken Word Artist Offers Lessons in Breaking Rhythms

What inspired you to write *Breaking Old Rhythms*?

Amena Brown: Broken rhythm has been a theme in my life and in my journey of faith. Everyone has experienced broken rhythm whether they could name it that or not. We've all experienced times where we thought our life was going one way and it took a drastic turn or where we were faced with a choice to either stick to what's comfortable or take a risk and do something different than what we imagined. I also wanted to write about how art, music and hip hop have informed my relationship with God. Wherever we are in our journey of faith, we all have a need to be closer to God. I wanted to write a book that talks about the experiences that help us grow closer to him, if we embrace them.

***Breaking Old Rhythms* is derived from Bruce Lee's martial art principle "broken rhythm." What is significant about that principle as it pertains to our lives?**

Amena: In martial arts and boxing "broken rhythm" means using irregular rhythm to triumph over an opponent; by being unpredictable a fighter increases his chances of winning. In *Breaking Old Rhythms* I am using the principle of broken rhythm to apply to life and the journey of faith, to communicate how God uses the unpredictability of life to help us see him more clearly. Infusing these principles with lessons learned from dance, music, hip-hop culture, and stories of singleness and family, gives the book a distinct approach. *Breaking Old Rhythms* is not a guide or a how-to. Instead it takes a storytelling approach, in hopes that the reader will find the beat of his or her own stories there and be encouraged to draw closer to God's rhythm in the process.

What was the most significant "broken rhythm" in your own life? What impact did that have on you?

Amena: One of my most significant "broken rhythm" experiences was leaving my corporate job to pursue writing, speaking and performing as a full-time job. I learned pretty quickly that being a full-time artist doesn't mean sitting at my laptop in my pajamas all day and writing when the mood hits me. Through breaking what was my 9 to 5 rhythm, I learned the importance of being an artist and an entrepreneur.

How and when did you become a spoken word artist?

Amena: I started performing poetry in speech competitions, but never my own poetry. I would perform Maya Angelou, James Weldon Johnson or Paul Robeson. My mom is the one



who really encouraged me to perform my own work, so I did for the first time at seventeen years old and have been performing my own poetry ever since. I grew as a spoken word poet once I moved to Atlanta to attend Spelman College. Atlanta had and still has a thriving poetry scene, so I learned to sharpen my craft from watching so many great spoken word artists command the stage and take unique angles on different topics in their poems. My husband and I host a quarterly open mic in Atlanta. Being connected to the poetry scene still sharpens my writing and performance.

How does your work as an artist, particularly a poet, play into *Breaking Old Rhythms*?

Amena: As a poet, music and rhythms inspire me. I'm constantly looking to jazz, hip hop, film, storytelling and visual art for inspiration, and all of these things have unpredictable rhythm. In my search for inspiration, I have grown closer to God through experiences in the oddest of places, from a hip-hop club to a coffee house, in my cubicle and in the silence of my apartment. In order to write better and live more truly, I have realized it's necessary to break old rhythms often.

What do you hope readers take away from *Breaking Old Rhythms*?

Amena:

- Everyone has a rhythm, including God. If we are going to follow any rhythm, it should be his.
- God is a deejay, he mixes and masters everything that happens into our life and makes something beautiful of it (Romans 8:28).
- God can heal our broken hearts and use even painful experiences to bring us closer to him.
- We need stillness and silence to know God, and we should allow that to break our rhythm.
- Following Jesus is not a rote, mundane or monotonous experience. He shows us his rhythm and his beat and gives us the freedom to freestyle.