

**REBUILDING YOUR LIFE
WHEN YOU'VE LOST EVERYTHING**
Adapted from Rick Warren's Sept. 3-4, 2005 Message

The worst natural disaster in American history happened this wk.
The destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina was devastating.

- Thousands dead
- Hundreds of thousands lost everything
- Billions of \$ in damage

- A great American city, New Orleans is fighting for its life.

There are always 3 stages after a disaster:

1. **RESCUING** - finding & saving those still alive (*days*)
2. **RESUMING** - getting services running again (*weeks - months*)
3. **REBUILDING**- (*years*)

There's an entire book of the Bible about rebuilding a city. "*Nehemiah*"

READ NEH. 2:17&18

Note: rebuilding is "**hard work**" *Much harder* than starting from scratch!
You have to deal with all the damage first.

But even more difficult than rebuilding a city... is rebuilding a life.

→**FACT**: None of us are going to live without loss. Nobody does. You are going to have storms of stress... floods of failure... gust of grief... torrents of tragedy

- In those seasons- we always want to ask "**Why?**"
But that is the unanswerable question!

We're not going to know why on this side of eternity.
Besides explanations don't encourage us.

- It's more helpful to ask "**What?**"
What should I do now that it has happened?

TODAY I'm changing my message from the notes printed on the back of your program and instead talking on, "Rebuilding Your Life When You've Lost Everything." Specifically 7 steps from God's Word → plus you'll learn how you can share in what we are doing as a church family, and as part of the larger church family in our community.

Communion

We share together this meal together as the body of Christ. Today, as we do, let's remember those congregations that would be doing just this same thing today but Katrina has changed everything and they are grieving the loss of loved ones, homes, cities, church buildings, "normalcy"

Bread – Prayer – Pass (with Song by Worship Team) – Partake

Deacon's Fund Envelopes – Today's D.F. offering going to CBA H.K. Relief

Cup – Prayer – Pass (with song by W/T) – Partake

Song?

Commissioning for Seth – YWAM – Maui (Somebody's got to do it :o)

Offering – Remember Current Needs of General Fund Also

Announcements: Christine for SS Kick-off and Church Retreat

Scripture: (Jim) Change to **Psalm 18:1-6**

You cannot live without loss

If you haven't already faced a major loss - your turn is coming.
It's just a matter of time

When it happens, you'll need to take 7 steps to rebuild your life

1. **RELEASE YOUR GRIEF**

Loss always produces strong emotions: grief, fear, depression, anger,
These feelings are scary. Often we don't know what to do with them.

What does **God** want you to do those feelings?

Don't...

Resist them "I won't let myself feel anything; they're real"
Rehearse them - torture yourself by second guessing yourself
Reduce them - (minimize) "*It's no big deal*" *Pretend it doesn't hurt*
Repress them - push your feelings down inside
A lot of people are *stuffers*. *One day they explode!*
If you don't deal with your feelings now- you will eventually!
"When I swallow my feelings, my stomach keeps score."

Instead...

Release them - to God in prayer!
*"The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.
The cords of the grave coiled around me. In my distress I called to the Lord; I
cried to my God for help."* – Psalm 18:4-6

Illustration: Don't often listen to KTIS on Saturday but yesterday I caught a story from a journalist from Seattle who had been traveling in Africa. His group stopped at a church where they had a prayer area. One woman was praying and he recorded her prayer – it was more of a cry, a deep call of distress. As I listened the emotions welled up inside of me. Didn't even know what she was saying but the intensity of her emotion touched my heart. How much more did it touch the heart of the One to whom she prayed.

Release your grief to God. *"Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."* – Psalm 62:8

- In a storm you need a "refuge" & God wants to comfort you.
- Don't turn *from* him, turn *to* him!

2. **RESIST BITTERNESS!**

You are the one who must decide: Do I want to be bitter ...*or get better?*
It's your choice- but you can't be *both*.

ILL: This week as we've watched TV- The difference in reactions ...

TRUTH: No correlation between life experiences and real happiness!

- Many go thru major loss & still stay positive
- Others become filled with self-pity & complain the rest of their lives

ILL: After 30 yrs in ministry- little sympathy for "whiners"

I know so many people- devastating circumstances...yet remain cheerful
While other - whine at every little problem!

HEB 12:15b "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." Bitterness never changes anything- Only prolongs the hurt!!

So how do you resist bitterness?

o **Accept what cannot be changed.**

Truth: Much of life is beyond your control
The only way to overcome some things is to accept them!
Your past is past. Nothing will change it now
"Faith" is facing the facts w/o being discouraged

o **Focus on what's left, not what's lost.**

Find something to be thankful for. Gratitude destroys depression
Truth: There are people who'd love to have your problems – Heather was sick and we were up all night – another family had just lost their 3 year old in a freak accident. I don't want to trade my problems!

o **Play it down & Pray it up.**

3. **REEVALUATE YOUR LIFE**

Disasters have a way of changing our perspective. It clarifies our values.
We realize what matters most

DISASTERS

o If you **measure your life by the things you've accumulated** (car, clothes, toys, pos)
& *one day those things are all taken away*

It forces you to reevaluate what life is really all about!

o If your definition of **family is tied to your house or yard or neighborhood**
& *suddenly it's completely destroyed*

It forces you to re-think the true meaning of a family

o If your concept of **church** is a building - with sanctuary & steeple
& *it is instantly reduced to a heap of rubble*

It forces you to realize that church is people, not a bldg!

Jesus: "*Wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in my name...*"

A small group meeting in a home is a CHURCH!

FACT: In the days ahead, millions of Gulf State residents & millions more watching them are going to be evaluating their lives, they are going to be asking those crucial questions of the heart:

- *Who is my family? Is it only those I am biologically connected to? What if they're gone? Can I still have a family if my family is gone?*
- *What is a church? Who is God? Where was He? Does He care about me?*
- *What is life all about? Why was my life spared? What am I here for?*

We must help them understand the meaning & purpose of life!

LUKE 12:15 Jesus said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard...a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Never confuse: what you live on with what *live for* - your possessions / purpose

ILL: One family lost everything but said "We were lucky!"
Why? "Because nobody died!"

The greatest things in life aren't things!

1 TIM. 6:7 – "For we brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of it."

Only 1 way to have real security: Build your life on the things that you can't lose!

Can you lose a home? ... career? ...health? ...youth/beauty? loved one?

→ Can't lose God's love for you. Promised: "*I will NEVER leave you..*"

MATT. 16:26 – "What good will it be for the person who gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?"

Jim Elliot "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose!"

4. **RECEIVE HELP FROM OTHERS**

God never intended for you to go through life w/o assistance from others.

We were created for community. Formed for fellowship.

Eden: "*It is not good for man to be alone*"

If - going to rebuild your life after a loss- *must allow others into your life!*

ROM. 12:5

Often when we're in pain- we isolate ourselves. *Big mistake!*

You need the support & perspective of other people.

A) This is why we stress finding & then joining a church family

That way you have relationships in place *before the crisis comes!*

You need: God's Presence... God's Promises... and God's People!

We invite you to join our church family. Register for Class 101 – Sept 21!

B) But you also need to join a small group.

Best place for support: a Small Group!

“40 Days of COMMUNITY” begins October 2 (4 Weeks) – time of growth for us – especially as it comes at the time it does – but you really have to be in a group to get the most benefit from this event! (

As I said last week, we are looking for H.O.S.T. Homes – (sign up on bulletin board!) – See program for acrostic – Heart. Open. Serve. Tell – 6 weeks for 90 minutes – no teaching (video curriculum – piece of cake! – serve some!!) Chance to grow deep in community with other Immanuelites! Chance to pray with others – and work with others – about the crisis on the Gulf Coast and how we can help in our communities.

5. **RELY ON THE LORD**

Let me be clear: You *cannot* rebuild a healthy life without God.

There are 5 inner qualities essential to rebuilding your life.
They are the results of depending on Christ.

- 1) You need **PEACE**. **ISA. 26:3**
“You will keep in perfect peace the one whose mind is steadfast, trusting in you.” Notice where peace comes from!
- 2) You need **HOPE** to rebuild your life **PS. 62:5**
“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.”
Humans can live weeks w/o food ...days w/o water ...minutes w/o air
but if we lose hope, life is over!
- 3) You need **COURAGE** to rebuild your life. **PS. 3:3**
“But you are a shield around me, O Lord, my Glorious One, who lifts up my head.”
- 4) You need **WISDOM** to rebuild your life. **PS. 16:7**
“I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”
None of us know what the future holds.. God does!
- 5) You need **STRENGTH** to rebuild your life. **ISA. 12:2**
“I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”
Note: These are all gifts! “*gives me*”

The acid test of your faith: how you handle *a major loss*
 The key to Crisis control is Christ control

ILL: Martin Neimuller-pastor- survived 3 yrs in Nazi death camp
"You are much stronger than you think when God dwells in you"

ILL: When typhoons hit rural Pacific islands
 (No storm shelters; no evacuation routes – you ride it out! The islanders
 lash themselves to unmovable palm trees-till storm passes)

When everything is being uprooted, coming unglued in your life
 You need to be attached to God. He never wavers.

How do you get those 5 elements of
 Peace... Hope... Courage... Wisdom... Strength?

- o *Lean* on Jesus for peace
- o *Look* to Jesus for hope
- o *Learn* from Jesus how to be courageous
- o *Listen* to Jesus for wisdom
- o *Live in* Jesus for strength

ASK: What do you need to recover from?

- A break up or divorce? A death of a loved one? Broken dream?
- A financial disaster? A health problem? A crisis in your career?

JOB 22:23 – “If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored.”

ILL: Yrs ago talked with a woman-incapacitated by depression
 She poured out her life story of loss:
A bankruptcy ... An abortion... 2 failed marriages...
 Thru tears she asked **“What is there left to trust in?”**

I suggested that she put her trust in Jesus! We prayed together.
 Looked up: *"For the first time, I feel there's hope in my life!"*

RIGHT NOW, before we look at the last 2 steps-
 I'd like to lead you in a prayer like I did with that woman. **(BOW)**

“Dear God, I've messed up a lot a things in my life, and I've had some losses. Today I want to start the rebuilding process with you in charge. I want pour out my heart to you. You know how I feel better than anyone. I need you in my life. I don't want to be a bitter person. I want to be a better one. Please forgive me for not trusting you and for hurting others. Help me forgive those who've hurt me. Help me remember that life is not about accumulating things but fulfilling your purposes for me. I want to let go of my pride and fear that has kept me from letting others get close to me. Help me get into a small group. Most of all Jesus, teach me to rely on you moment by moment- so I can know your peace & hope & courage & wisdom & strength. In Jesus' name. Amen.”

Congratulations! God's purpose is greater than any problem you're going thru.

That's why step 6 is...

6. REFUSE TO BE DISCOURAGED Discouragement is a choice!
 Remember, you're not on your own anymore. So keep moving!

There's one more step in rebuilding you life:

7. REACH OUT TO OTHERS

God has wired the universe so that we get better by helping others!

- We're blessed to be a blessing.

- What we sow, we reap. The more we help others....

With this week's disaster, we have a huge opportunity to practice this step.

Results of Deacon's Fund Offering (Get that...)

So I'd like to close with sharing some ways you can be a part of the relief effort.

Before I do: REPORT FROM JIM ABOUT EFFORT TO MOBILE, AL

How can you be a part of this effort?

1. By Praying. 1 SAM. 12:23

2. By Sharing 1 JOHN 3:17

3. By Serving GAL. 6:2