

## **REBUILDING YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU'VE LOST EVERYTHING**

*Rick Warren*  
Sept. 3-4, 2005

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:

- o RESCUING - finding & saving those still alive (can take *days*)
- o RESUMING - getting services running again (can take weeks)
- o REBUILDING- (can take 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.*

Even more difficult than rebuilding a city is rebuilding a life.

o FACT: You can't live without loss. You're going to have  
storms of stress... floods of failure . gust of grief... torrents of tragedy

o 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.

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

TODAY (Title) - Specifically 7 steps from God's Word

Also - hear a testimony from a couple who's lost it all & rebuilt  
- .learn how you can share in what our ch family is doing...

(Song)

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"

**Rehearse** them - torture yourself over & over. Second guess

**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! **PS. 18:4-6**

Life isn't always happy.

Jesus said it's ok to grieve. "*Blessed are those who mourn...*"

So tell God exactly how you feel. He can handle it! **PS. 62:8b**

o In a storm you need a "refuge" & God wants to comfort you.

o Don't turn *from* him, turn *to* him!

## 2. **RESIST BITTERNESS!**

You must decide: Do I want to be bitter ...or happy? ...*or get better?*

It's your choice- but can't be *both*.

You are as happy as you *choose* to be! (a choice)

ILL: Watching 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!

ILL: Cerebral Palsy: 11th Command: *Thou shalt not bellyache!*

**HEB 12:15b** 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 "no feet"

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 stained glass & a 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 asking the deepest questions:

*Who is my family?*

*What is a church?*

*What is life all about? What on earth am I here for?*

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

**LUKE 12:15** Never confuse: what you live *on* / what *live for*  
net worth / self-worth    your possessions / purpose

My guess -there are cars rusting in submerged New Orleans water  
with bumper sticker: "*He who dies with the most toys wins*"

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**

Only 1 way to have real security: Build your life on that *which cant be taken away*

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

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

#### **MATT. 16:26**

*Jim Elliot "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep for 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

You have relationships in place before the crisis comes!

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

We invite you to join our church family. Take Class 101, 201, 301 & 401

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

**Best place for support: a Small Group!**

*"40 Days of PEACE"* begins in 2 wks- must be in a group to benefit

#### 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. 28:3** (circle)

You can either *panic or pray*. / *worry or worship*

2) You need **HOPE** to rebuild your life **PS. 62:5**

ILL: Oprah: *"Why does PDL appeal to so many millions of people?"*

*Because everybody needs hope!*

Humans can live weeks w/o food ...days w/o water ...minutes w/o air  
but can't live 1 sec. w/o hope.

3) You need **COURAGE** to rebuild your life. **PS, 3:3** lit *"he lifts up my head"*

4) You need **WISDOM** to rebuild your life. **PS. 16:7**

None of us know what the future holds.. God does! Guidance.

5) You need **STRENGTH** to rebuild your life. **ISA. 12:2**

Note: These are all gifts! *"gives me"*

I want you to hear the story of a couple that literally lost it all  
& how they rebuilt their lives, their home, & their church.

**TESTIMONY: TOM & CHAUDEL**

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  
 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 to get courage
- 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**

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! LUKE 21:19

Before I share the last point, listen to this **song**: "**YOU JUST STAND**"

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

Before I do: REPORT ON OUR ASIAN TSUNAMI RELIEF  
(share pictures & report from teams on how 1.4 million given was spent)

ILL: Tomorrow, Kay & I, our assessment team fly to the gulf states...

**How can you be a part of this PEACE Relief effort?**  
(see bulletin insert for details)

1. By Praying. 1 SAM. 12:23
2. By Sharing 1 JOHN 3:17
3. By Serving GAL. 6:2

Closing Video Clip from Steve Rutenbar, our "Pastor of Disaster!"

Closing song "I will stand with you"