

REBUILDING LIFE WHEN WE LOSE EVERYTHING

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There are many natural disasters where victims lost all they own. This also happens in just living. Disaster recovery involves three stages. It takes days for rescue, finding & saving those still alive. Weeks are spent resuming, getting services running again. Years are spent rebuilding. In **Nehemiah 2:17-18**, the prophet said, "Jerusalem lieth waste, ... gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build ... that we be no more a reproach." Like many, they found it harder to rebuild than start from scratch. Rebuilding requires first dealing with the damage, just like in life.

No one lives without loss. All have storms of stress, failure, grief, and torrents of tragedy. If we haven't already faced major loss, our turn is coming. When it does, we usually futilely ask "Why?" A better question is "What?" What should we do when it happens, or now that it has happened? There are seven specific steps in rebuilding lives.

Release our grief! Loss always produces strong emotions of grief, fear, depression, or anger. We must deal with those emotions. Don't resist and refuse to feel anything, rehearse them with second guessing, reduce them as being no big deal, or repress them. Feelings not dealt with now will be eventually. Swallowing feelings makes stomachs complain. **Psalm 18:4-6** gives us permission to release grief from loss to God through prayer. Life is not always happy, so, God allows us to grieve. "Blessed are those who mourn" Tell God exactly how we feel. He can handle it! **Psalm 62:8** describes God as a refuge, always a plus in a storm. God wants to shelter us. Don't turn *from* Him, turn to Him!

Resist bitterness! We choose to be better or bitter. We rarely do both and can usually choose. There is no required correlation between circumstances and real happiness. Paul said, "I think myself happy." Many go thru major losses and stay positive. Others complain the rest of their lives. **Hebrews 12:15** says bitterness can defile us. It never changes anything, but it does prolong the hurt. So how do we resist bitterness? One prayer says to accept what we cannot change. Much of life is beyond our control; some things must just be accepted. Nothing will change the past now. Focus on what's left, not what's lost and find something to be thankful for. Gratitude destroys depression. The truth is, there are people who'd love to have our problems "I complained because I had no shoes, till "

Reevaluate our lives! Disasters change perspectives and clarify values. We realize what matters. Life is not accumulations, because they can all be taken away. Worth is not house, yard, or neighborhood, because one flood can remove them. Churches are not buildings and stained glass once tornadoes redefine them as members plus God. When disaster strikes, we don't ask afterwards about belongings, but "Who is my family?" "Where is God?" "What is life all about?" "What on earth am I here for?" "What is the purpose of life?" **Luke 12:15** makes this clear. Don't confuse what we live on with what we live for, net worth with self-worth, or possessions with purpose. **1 Tim 6:7** says "we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The only way to have real security is to build our lives on that which can't be taken away. God cannot be lost. He said, "I will never leave you" Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep for what he cannot lose!"

Accept help! God never designed life to pass without assistance from others. We were created for community and fellowship. "It is not good for man to be alone." To rebuild requires allowing others in. **Romans 12:5** says we are part of one body. Don't let our pain isolate us. We need support and perspective from others. Finding and joining a church puts family relationships in place before the crisis comes and helps afterwards as well. We need God's presence, God's promises, and God's people! Given the size of some congregations, it also helps to belong to a small group within a church, like Youth, Ladies, Men's, Cornerstones, Prayer Groups, etc.

Refuse discouragement! Choose to keep moving toward a solution. Focus ahead, rather than on the past. Reach out to others! God set a system in place allowing us to get better by helping others! When we become a blessing, He blesses us. What we sow, we reap. We help by praying for, sharing with, and serving others. This is spoken of in **1 Samuel 12:23**, **1 John 3:17**, and **Galatians 6:2**. These are not just suggestions, but commandments.

Rely on the Lord! We *cannot* rebuild a healthy life without God. Five inner qualities are essential to rebuilding our lives. All are the results of depending on Christ. We need *peace* and we can either panic or pray, worry or worship. **Isaiah 26:3** speaks of a divine source of peace. We need the *hope* described in **Psalms 62:5**. We need *courage*, found in God in **Psalms 3:3**. David leaves no question in **Psalms 16:7** where *wisdom* can be found. When David could not see the path, he trusted in the one holding his “reins.” Submission usually makes sense. Since none of us know what the future holds, but God does, it is a good idea to have Him direct us. We also need a source of *strength* found in **Isaiah 12:2**. What we need is referred to as “gifts” He “gives” us. Maybe these are in compensation for how we handle losses.

The key to Crisis control is Christ in control. When typhoons hit Pacific islands, islanders lash themselves to unmovable palm trees till the storm passes. When everything is being uprooted in our life, get attached to an unmovable God. How do we get those elements of peace, hope, courage, wisdom, and strength? Lean on Jesus for peace, look to Jesus for hope, learn from Jesus to get courage, listen to Jesus for wisdom, and live in Jesus for strength.

What do we need to recover from? A break up or divorce? Death of a loved one? Broken dreams? Financial disaster? Health problems? Career crisis? Bad decision? **Job 22:23** instructs us to return. Come back to God Almighty. The One who made them can rebuild our lives. One step at a time!