

Surrender: How to Experience Peace
4th in a series of 7

Welcome to Timberline Church and thanks for joining us this morning. Wasn't that a beautiful day yesterday! Can you say amen! This is week four of, 'How to get through what we're going through'.

Interview: This morning we are going to hear from John and Linda Day. John is self employed by 'Day Enterprises' and he trucks furniture out of Lancaster County. Linda is in her 11th year of teaching French at Solanco High School and plans to retire the end of 2015.

On February 7, 2013, while seated at the table, at home, Linda suddenly felt a lump and decided she better check it out. The first doctor she saw didn't think it wasn't anything serious but started the ball rolling for a series of tests which resulted in a frustrating month of procedures, appointments and waiting for results and then one day she was finally told... its breast cancer!

Linda:

- How did you react when you got the news and how long did it take for it to accept the fact that you really had cancer and this wasn't going to just go away?
- You told me yesterday that the most disturbing aspect of this prognosis was fear. Fear of what?
- What was the low point of this experience?
- What carried you through? How did you find peace in the middle of all of this?

John:

- Several years ago you and Linda both went through a time of renewal... how did this impact your journey and your view of heaven?
- John, what was the upside of this for you?

Linda:

- Are you considered Cancer Free?
- What would you say to others that want to come alongside of those in crisis?
- Some don't make it... you did... you survived... how do you respond to that?
- You wrote this to me in an e-mail. "One thing I have found that even during times of struggling there's always some good to be seen or experienced. Here is a picture of me completely bald and after my surgery holding my newest granddaughter." Bring that slide up. Here is Linda with her granddaughter, a picture of her daughter and her husband with the same granddaughter and a picture of the rest of the family. Tell us about it.
- This whole journey began as TL was in the middle of a week of fasting...how did that impact you?

Prayer for them on their Journey:

Slide #4 Fall World War Z – Sword comes in

United Nations employee Gerry Lane understands what it means to be in battle as he traverses the world in a race against time... to stop the Zombie pandemic... that is toppling armies and governments, and threatening to destroy humanity itself.

Folks we are in a battle as well... much different than Gerry Lane... but we are in a battle! This past week I was reading in my QT and I came across these verses out of...

Slide #5

2 Timothy 2:25-26 In the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

It reminded me that the devil almost always works underneath the radar... he is subtle... he traps us! In order to take us captive, because he wants us to do his will!

Satan's intent was to subtly destroy Linda and John through fear and uncertainty. But instead, God has given Linda hope and the strength to complete the journey... but it's a battle!

Slide #6 How to get through what we're going through!

Satan makes us go through what we are going through because he hates us and therefore TL is filled with stories of struggles and loss.

Week one we talked about SCHOCK and Amie and Rita Venuto and Amy Gordon shared about the fatal accident of their loved one Robert. Week two we took a look at SORROW and we heard from the Fisher family as they related the story of their son Justin who died of a drug overdose.

Last week the sermon title was 'STRUGGLE: when life doesn't make sense' and the Ebys shared about Wendy's struggle with brain surgery... and we wrapped up the message by saying that the only way we are going to win a fight with God and get out of the pit is by... 'Surrender'. This morning the title of the message is...

Slide #7 Surrender: How to experience peace!

Have you ever been stuck in a pit... I mean really stuck and you couldn't get out of?

Slide #8 This is Lisa and my very first truck... a 1985 Four Wheel Drive Datsun Pickup. How many of you know what Deuteronomy 24:5 says? It's written in the back window of my truck. Click it so we can read it.

"If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married."

So I asked for year off when I got married... to bring happiness to Lisa... but the elders wouldn't go for it... but they finally agreed to give me three months... and so we moved to Arkansas so I could stay home more and bring happiness to the wife I married.

One day we went 4 wheeling in the swamps with our trusty Datsun Pickup and we got stuck? I mean we got stuck! The front of my truck was down to the axels in Arkansas goo and it wasn't about to budge.

We all get stuck in the pits sometime... it may be... financial pits, emotional pits or relational pits. In fact sometimes life is just the pits period!

When we are stuck in the pits... we have three choices. We can let it destroy us, we can let it define us, or we can let it develop us. So how can we 'Surrender' and let the goo develop us?

This morning we want to go back to another OT story and let me set the stage for you. King David was out walking on the roof of his palace one evening and he just happened to look down below and saw a very beautiful woman taking a bath. Now any real man with a heart that is still pumping... is going to notice this.

So he wasted no time inquiring who she was and found out she was Bathsheba, whose husband Uriah was away... serving in the military. He invited her in, slept with her and she became pregnant. When David found out... he immediately brought her husband home in hopes he would sleep with his wife and everyone would think Uriah was the father.

But Uriah was an honorable man and refused to go into his house because all of his comrades were sleeping out in the open field. As a result, David devised a scheme to have Uriah killed in battle and then he married the weeping widow and he thought... he truly thought...he got away with it.

Sometime later the prophet Nathan showed up and told David a story about a rich man who had many sheep and cattle and a poor man next door who had nothing except one small lamb that the entire family doted on. And one day the rich man had company... so he forced his poor neighbor to give up the family pet so he and his guest could have a MLT's (Mutton Lettuce and Tomato Sandwiches). And just like Nathan thought... David fell for it...and here was his response.

Slide #9

2 Samuel 12:5-6 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

And Nathan simply said... you are the man! And this is what God says to you. I gave you the kingdom, I delivered you from your enemies, I gave you a house to live in, I gave you wives to love and take care of, in fact I gave you the entire nation of Israel and if you would have wanted more... I would have given it. So why did you despise me by doing this stupid evil thing!

As a result of your wickedness:

- 1) You will always be at war.
- 2) Your son will someday lay with your wives in broad daylight.
- 3) Your son born to Bathsheba will die!

Let's go to the Word of God.

Slide #10

2 Samuel 12:15-23 After Nathan had gone home, the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground.

Slide #11 The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

Slide #12 On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, we spoke to David but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate."

Slide #13 David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead."

Slide #14 Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

Slide #15 His servants asked him, "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!"

Slide #16 He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

For seven days David pleaded with God to spare his son, he fasted, he lay on the ground, he cried, he refused to eat, he didn't wash or change his cloths... and the baby died! What do we do when God doesn't answer our prayer?

Rick Warren said he prayed every day of his son's life that God would heal Matthew of his mental illness and not only did it not happen... but Mathew devastated everyone by taking his own life!

Will pain and loss destroy us, define us or develop us. I know that David's loss was a result of his sin, much different than what Linda and John experienced... but the grief process is still similar. How can we experience peace through it all? Let's go to our notes.

Slide #17 We experience peace by:

1. Accepting what cannot be changed.

The first step of surrender on the path to peace is to accept what cannot be changed.

Slide #18

2 Samuel 12:22-23 While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again?

When we receive bad news usually our first response is... I don't believe it! It's impossible! It just can't be! In fact Linda's daughter said her mother didn't really accept it as cancer until after her surgery months later! That's not uncommon! But when reality hits and we can't deny it anymore... this is where 'Surrender' comes in. 'Surrender' is accepting what cannot be changed.

Slide #19 Acceptance doesn't mean we stop caring. Acceptance doesn't mean it doesn't hurt anymore. Acceptance doesn't mean we think that what happened is good. Acceptance simply means I can't change it.

David said... my son has died; I can't bring him back and I can't change the facts!

What do you need to accept in your life that can't be changed?

I had a cousin who lost a girlfriend and he never got over it. In fact he eventually started to stalk her... trying to convince himself that he still had a chance to win her heart and he got stuck in the goo of broken heart 101 and to my knowledge... he never climbed out!

A friend of mine once dreamed of having a family of cute cuddly baby girls that she could dress up and do girly things with... and instead she had four boys that played in the mud, wrecked their toys and missed the toilet when they peed... and for years...she just couldn't accept it!

The past is seasonal... it is over... it is history... just like the post in the café... it's gone... like yesterday... it's gone and the first step towards experiencing peace is accepting what cannot be changed!

Slide #20 We experience peace by:

2. Remembering it's not the end of the story.

When we experience devastating or catastrophic loss of some kind... it's normal to feel like this is the end. It is over. Nothing good can ever come from this. Everything is lost. King David gives us just a little peek into the eternal... this is what he said:

Slide #21

2 Samuel 12:23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

David understood and accepted that his son would never be with him again on this earth, but he was confident that he would someday be reunited with his son... and this baby's death was not the end of the story. This is one of those defining moments in scripture that give insight into the fact that infants who die at an early age... go to heaven.

One of the most challenging transitions in grief is moving towards the future rather than hanging around in the past. When a loved one dies and we think of the past... our loved one was in it. They were so much a part of our past that it is incredibly difficult to envision a future in which our loved one isn't there.

So if we are not careful we get stuck in the Arkansas goo of the present. We get stuck here in this land of 'in between' because we don't want to leave the past, because that's where the loved one was and we can't envision the future, because they will not be there. And we feel a little guilty about moving into the future without them... because it feels like we might be neglecting or forgetting them... and so we stay stuck in this very uncomfortable present.

I don't completely understand this... but those of you that lost loved ones do! Sarah Young wrote a book called 'Jesus Calling' and Wendy Eby and Linda Day both referred to it... and she writes:

"Secret things belong to the Lord. And future things are secret things."

Surrender of the past... positions us to see, by faith, a future of secret things... a future of healing, a future with our loved ones, a future free of tears and pain.

Slide #22 We experience peace by:

3. Taking care of ourselves.

Grief and loss have a way of removing the desire to take care of ourselves. It is not unusual for those in deep grief to neglect basic daily habits like, showering, brushing our teeth, eating, sleeping, exercising or picking up after ourselves. I remember a man telling me through tears that he was so depressed over his losses that his cat threw up all over his carpet... and he didn't even care! Because grief paralyzes us!

Slide #23 2 Samuel 12:20 Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes.

After his son died, King David took care of himself. He got up from the ground and cleaned up.

John Day told me that one of the ways he coped with Linda's illness was by being focused on their journey and when others at work whined to him he would say... so what... my wife has cancer... I don't care about your petty complaint! He was just taking care of himself!

Linda told me... I never lost a night of sleep... she took care of herself!

King David gives us an example of how we can gradually begin to respond... because he had accepted what he couldn't change. He couldn't bring his child back to him and he knew it wasn't the end of the story and each day he was just one day closer to being reunited with his son. David was willing to live in the tension of both mourning and living and to live meant... he needed to take care of himself physically.

Slide #24 We experience peace by:

4. Refocusing on God through worship.

Linda told me yesterday, I made it through by listening to worship songs and reading scripture.

Slide #25

2 Samuel 12:20 Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped.

Because King David knew that worship could expand his spiritual insight and understanding... he headed straight for God's house in his grief. He knew that in worship he could catch a glimpse of how God is moving and working in his loss

Slide #26 Psalm 73:16-17 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God;

The writer of this Psalm was struggling with loss and he discovered that until he worshiped he was overwhelmed with trying to figure it all out!

I have a friend who lost her son 8 years ago in a motorcycle accident. And for a number of years she couldn't sing. She was just numb and heartbroken. But eventually music came back into her life. This is understandable for a season... but long term we have to figure out how to worship again. Someone once said...

Slide #27 God is not a spy looking to surprise you. He is not an enemy lurking in the shadows to hurt you. God is your Father who loves you and he wants to help you if you will but trust in his goodness.

Slide #28 We experience peace by:

5. Doing something productive.

In spite of our grief, our shock, our sorrow, our sadness and our struggle... surrender requires us to do something productive. This is what happened to King David.

Slide #29 2 Samuel 12:20 Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

He did something productive: He got up, he washed, he put on lotion, he changed his clothes, he worshiped God, he went to his own house and he ate! He did productive things... and his appetite returned!

Don't misunderstand me... there is a time to lie on the ground and mourn... but there is also a time to get up, get moving, and git 'er done!

Slide #30 Rick Warren writes, 'We don't need to stop mourning to start moving!'

It's just like forgiveness, we don't wait to forgive someone who has hurt us, until we feel like it. In the same way if we wait to move through our grief until we feel like it... we will just bog down deeper in the Arkansas goo! It takes faith to get moving and do something productive. Linda told me, I'm a doer, so I focused in on my family and kept moving on.

Slide #31 We experience peace by:

6. Keeping on loving even in our pain.

We need to keep on loving in our pain. We need to look at what we have left... not just what we have lost. That's what David did. He went back and he loved his wife.

Slide #32

2 Samuel 12:24 Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The Lord loved him;

Slide #33 This is what Linda did... she loved on her grandchildren... in spite of her pain and loss!

In order for us to experience peace we need to keep on loving even in our pain. Even though our natural reaction may be to do the turtle thing and pull back in our shell and build walls around us to make sure we never get hurt again.

There is a way to live 'without pain' and that can only happen by 'never loving'. Every time we declare our love for someone... we have just climbed out on a limb and begun sawing our way through the branch... because we will lose them sometime. They will eventually die, or reject us or move away or we will eventually die, reject them or move away! It's the human element and it is heart breaking... but we need to love anyway!

Slide #34 Let me share a thought with you. When someone rejects you... redirect it! Even though it may be heartbreaking... redirect it because there are many people who need our love. If we have our heart set on having children and we discover that we can't... redirect it... there are millions of orphans that need adopting.

That's what David did... he redirected the love that he had for the child that he lost... to Bathsheba and she got pregnant again and gave birth to Solomon... the wisest, smartest and most creative man that ever lived!

Slide # 35 Think about what would have happened if David would have done what Buttercup said in 'Princess Bride' after she lost Wesley... do you remember? 'I will never love again'. There would have never been Solomon!

Let me wrap this up: Jesus knew what it was like to love in the midst of pain. It was called the cross. He surrendered to the cross. Jesus knew what it was like to keep on loving even when he didn't feel like it. Jesus knew what it was like to keep on loving even when he was rejected. Jesus knew what it was like to keep on loving even when he lost it all!

Slide #36

I John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

This is the path to peace. It is the path of surrendering our pain, our hurt, our fears, our problems and in fact surrendering everything in our life that is messing us up.

Slide #37 Prayer and Reflection:

What do you need to surrender to God? Let us worship and bow down! That is surrender!

Invite the prayer team up:

Benediction:

Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.

The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.