

4 - AFTER IT'S OVER

Various Scripture

(Play Video - Overwhelmed Series Trailer)

It's easy to feel overwhelmed, isn't it? I thought with Mother's Day coming up in a few weeks, this would be the perfect time to see what God's Word has to say about winning the war over worry.

Actually, I was waging the war against worry last week myself. I was preaching a revival for the Church in West Unity, Ohio. As we were preparing to leave, our clothes dryer almost catches on fire, our dog sitter has a family emergency so she cannot watch Bo and then our van has trouble on the trip to Ohio! We had to roll into my in-laws house at 2am and then I borrowed my father-in-laws car to drive the rest of the trip to Ohio. Then, I kid you not, as I'm preaching Sunday morning, the lights begin flickering in the church building! It was crazy! Unbelievable!

I am so happy to be back with you today at Restoration. It has been an overwhelming week. But there really is no place like home! I'm thrilled you are here today and I hope you'll come back and join us next week as we kick off the Overwhelmed series.

Today we are in the final week of our series called "**Before & After.**" We have been talking about the before and afters of marriage. What happens before we say, "I do?" What happens after we say, "I do?"

Drew Thurman did a powerful job last week bringing light to the realities and myths of Before It's Over. Today we transition to close out this series by discussing what happens AFTER IT'S OVER.

I don't know that I've ever heard a sermon on this topic After Its Over. Maybe it's too sensitive or seems taboo to talk about what happens after a marriage is over... But the reality we face is every marriage between two people on this earth will end one day.

There's a famous stress test called the Holmes Stress Scale. It measures how much stress you can handle in life. If you get over 300 points on the test scale, it says you're headed for some kind of mental or physical or emotional breakdown. The top 3 items on the test, are 1 - the death of a spouse (which is 100 points), 2 - the divorce from a spouse and 3 - separation from your spouse.

After a marriage is over makes a huge impact on your life. And not only your life, but the lives of your family and everyone around you!

And while I initially thought I would focus on divorce and what God's Word has to say about that, I finally decided that wasn't the direction I needed to go with this message. Since every marriage will eventually end, my focus became a very simple, but key principle, that you need to remember.

And let me warn you... it's deep. Are you ready?

Your life isn't over After It's Over.

Wow. Let me give you a moment to catch your breath. I know I'm dropping some knowledge on you right now. Maybe I should repeat this...

Today I'm coming from a unique perspective of having lived through life after a marriage is over by divorce. 7 years ago my first marriage ended. I've lived through the person I married looking at me and saying they weren't in love with me anymore. That's a wound that goes deep into your heart.

But I'm also coming from the perspective of watching my dad adjust to life after marriage these last two years since my mom unexpectedly passed away. Mom and dad were married 39 years and would have continued strong had it not been for her passing.

And while I never intend to sound flippant or want to make light of anyone's pain or sorrow, through these experiences I've learned that if you are still on this planet, God has a purpose for your life. Your life is not over after it's over.

The question is what will we do once it's over?

What do you do when your heart is broken?

How do you go on living after it's over?

Even if you never get married, this is an important question to deal with because you will need to answer it one day. You cannot live an extended period of time in this world without experiencing heartbreak. You will have a relationship will come to an end. You will find yourself disappointed. You will be hurt and experience a broken heart.

When your heart is broken, what do you do next?

I want to share some practical advice from God's Word today on how we move forward after it's over. I want us to see how we can honor God and continue to live a fulfilling life because your life is not over after it's over.

The first thing we need to do when our heart is broken is...

GET HELP

I know you might expect a preacher to say the first thing you need to do is pray when your heart is broken... and I say of course you need to pray! Our help ultimately comes from God.

But when you're in a crisis like the death of a spouse or your marriage is coming to an end in divorce, you don't always know what to pray because your system is in shock. This is why you need to have some mature, Christian friends who can gather around you and help you. And you need to let them help you!

I did not do this when my divorce happened. I had some people around me who told me what I wanted to hear and influenced me to make decisions that I regret to this day. So when I tell you the first thing you need to do is get help from Christian friends who love you and want the best for you, I really do mean it.

Now, this may be the hardest step you ever take. When we are in pain, we can be embarrassed by our pain. You don't want to show people how much you're hurting, you don't want to let people know what your emotions are. So you try to be strong and let people know you're ok and that you're going to be fine.

But that is the worst thing you can do because getting help really is the first and most important step because it will determine the rest of your steps.

While I did not handle getting help well, I have seen my dad do this in his life. From the first moments after mom passed away, there were friends there with him, there were friends he has talked to on the phone with, and there are strong Christian people who continue to meet with him and help him to this day! They constantly pray for him and encourage him.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, [“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: 10 If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”](#)

Every pro athlete has a personal trainer. The trainer will make each athlete do what is best for them, even if it's not easy. Even if it hurts. The trainer makes you do what is best for you.

That's who you need with you in a crisis. Someone who will say, “I know this is hard, but you can do it. You've got one more in you. Keep putting one foot in front of the other. I'm going to walk with you through this.”

When our heart is broken we want to withdraw. We put our guard up and don't want to let anyone get close to us. But that's the wrong thing to do!

When your heart is broken, you need to get help. Find that mature, Godly person who will tell you what you need to hear and help you get better.

This is why it's so important to be in the church. To belong to a small group bible study. You may be fine right now and you may have your kids involved in so many different activities that take place on Sunday, but you need to develop these relationships before the crisis happens. Before you find yourself heartbroken. Begin building those relationships now with people who will help you be closer to God. Get help.

That's the first thing we're going to do when our heart is broken. Now the second...

ACCEPT REALITY.

Denial is a typical response to loss and in those moments when the person you stood before God and said, “Till death do us part...” is no longer there... There is a process of grieving, so please don't misunderstand me when I say we need to accept reality and see me as some heartless person. Yes, we need to grieve and mourn.

When Abraham lost his wife Sarah, the Bible says he went to grieve and mourn for her. God gave the Israelites 40 days of mourning after the passing of Moses. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. We need to grieve and mourn appropriately.

However, there comes a point when you simply need to recognize, even day after day after day...ok...this is what has happened. I need to accept reality.

I cannot change what has happened. Worrying about the past will not change anything except make your future more miserable. Crying won't change the past. Complaining or having a pity party won't change the past. Bitterness won't change the past...

You have to let go and accept reality. Yes, it's painful when your heart is broken, but no amount of grief is going to change what has happened. You must accept reality and move towards healing your broken heart.

A good example of this is how King David in the Old Testament reacted to the death of his baby child. King David committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba. Bathsheba finds out she is pregnant with David's child. Then David arranges to have Bathsheba's husband murdered. But when their child was born, that child was sick. You can imagine the mixed emotions David felt about that child, knowing that he had committed both adultery and murder and this child was the result. Plus the child was very sick.

The Bible tells us, "16 David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground. 17 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. 18 On the seventh day the child died. David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, 'While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate.' 19 David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. 'Is the child dead?' he asked. 'Yes,' they replied, 'he is dead.' 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 worshipped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. 21 His attendants 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!' 22 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.' 23 But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.'" (2 Samuel 12:16-23)

When your heart is broken, what do you do with your grief? Do you quit? Do you withdraw? David accepted what couldn't be changed. When his heart was broken, after pleading with God for a week to save his child, the first thing he did was get up and go to church. He went and worshipped the Lord. Then he ate after he had been fasting for a week. David accepted what couldn't be changed. He looked forward at what he had left, not what he had lost.

After all, David still had a nation to lead. David had responsibilities to take care of. So he accepted reality.

I do think it is important to focus for a moment on David's response to God... the third step we must take when our heart is broken is...

CRY OUT TO GOD.

Isn't that what David did? David was pouring his soul out to His Heavenly Father.

But what happens in our life is we can't pray to God because we're too busy blaming God for our problems!

As I was going through my divorce and talked with people about what was happening, a common theme that kept coming up was letting people know I wasn't mad at God. I knew God did not cause my divorce. I also knew God was upset over my divorce too! But God wasn't the reason for my divorce. My divorce happened because of two imperfect people. It wasn't God's fault.

And people would ask, "But, couldn't God stop it? Couldn't God see this coming?"

Sure God could. But why doesn't He stop it? And my answer is - He could stop it! But that would mean taking away our freedom to choose. God could take away our freedom to make choices, but part of having free will is we have the freedom to make decisions, even dumb decisions. Everyone in this world has that freedom.

God gives us free will because that's the only way real love can operate. Love is a gift we choose to give.

So instead of blaming God when our heart is broken, go to Him for comfort.

The Bible says in Psalm 34:18, "[The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.](#)"

When your heart is broken, especially in those early days, don't ask God for answers... just ask Him for comfort.

Your heart may be broken right now, but I want you to know God really does care. God really does want us to cry out to Him.

[1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."](#)

Hebrews 4:15-16, "[15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.](#)"

He understands. He's aware and He cares. He can help you with those feelings of hurt, with those feelings of rejection, with those feelings and frustrations, with that bitterness and anger and resentment. With that feeling of unworthiness that, "I've been used and thrown away and nobody loves me!"

When you're feeling that way, please cry out to God. You can talk to God all the time. He's always available. So please... Get help. Accept reality. Cry out to God.

Here's the fourth thing we need to do...

LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD.

This will take a lot of humility, but instead of relying on what we think we should do next, or even what our friends say we should do next, we are going to listen to what God says we should do next. We are going to evaluate what we do based upon what God's Word says.

Listen to Psalm 119:107, "[I have suffered much; preserve my life, Lord, according to your word.](#)"

Notice, when he had suffered, he didn't ask God to give him a drink or some pills, he knew he needed God's Word.

I know the bible can be mocked as some ancient, out of date book filled with fairy tales, but I dare you to give this book a try. You see, this book is filled with people who have gone through what you're going through. And as strange as it may seem, this book can bring you comfort. It can preserve your life when everything is falling apart.

This book is a trainer... it tells you what you need to hear and what you need to do, even when you don't want it to. This book is good for you.

You know how I know this book is going to help preserve your life when you're suffering? By telling you to do this next step after you have a broken heart...

ASK FOR AND OFFER FORGIVENESS

The bible has a lot to say about forgiveness, especially when our heart has been broken.

However, when we are hurting the last thing we want to think about is forgiveness. Forgiveness is an "F" word to us when our heart is broken. We can talk about anything but I don't want you to talk to me about forgiveness!

When your heart is broken we go through a wide range of emotions. In some moments we can put all the blame on our spouse... but then at other times we will put all the blame on ourselves.

Looking back I know the reality is we all have reasons in a relationship to feel guilty and hurt. If you're going to move towards healing, you have to get rid of these two things in your life. The guilt and hurt you feel. And the only way to deal with guilt and hurt is to forgive.

First, let's deal with your part - **the guilt you feel**.

David wrote in Psalm 38:4, "[My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.](#)"

Have you ever been there? We can identify with David, can't we?

The only way to deal with our guilt is to confess it to God. This is what I did wrong. Don't justify it, don't excuse it. Take responsibility for it and confess it to God.

Then I need to go to the other person and ask for forgiveness, as well as offer forgiveness.

Colossians 3:12-13 says, "[12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.](#)"

You need to get rid of the bitterness because that is what is eating you up. It's hurting you. Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. The longer you hold onto your hurt, you're only hurting yourself with your hurt. So you've got to get rid of bitterness.

How do you get rid of bitterness? How do you get rid of anger? How do you get rid of resentment?

There's only one way. Forgiveness.

You don't forgive because they deserve it. You forgive because of your own sake so you're not holding onto the pain. You let yourself off the hook.

If you went through a divorce, you may have to forgive more than your spouse. You may have to forgive some cruel in-laws.

You may have to forgive some self righteous friends who gave you cliché answers, who didn't have a clue about what was really going on.

You may have to forgive people who you thought would stand by you and they vanished.

You may have to forgive the person who stole your mate if that was the case.

But whatever you do, you need to let go of it. You are only hurting yourself with your anger.

Some of you are in pain right now and you've been in pain for weeks or months or maybe even years. You're not going to get well. It's never going to stop hurting until you ask for forgiveness from God, accept His forgiveness, and offer forgiveness to those who've hurt you.

And then to wrap up this morning... after you have gotten help, accepted reality, cried out to God, listened to His Word, accepted and offered forgiveness...

KEEP GROWING AND SEEKING GOD

I love Psalm 27 when you're facing a tough time or dealing with loss and hurt. Listen to verse 13 of Psalm 27...

[13 I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.](#)

Even when your world has fallen apart, God still loves you. God still has a purpose for you. God sees your pain. God sees your hurt. But God still has a purpose for you in this world.

Philippians 1 says...

[4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.](#)

If you are still here today, God is not through with you. God's purpose for your life is greater than any person or problem in your life.

Your life isn't over after its over.

But you have to keep growing. You have to keep seeking God. You focus on becoming the person God created you to be.

If you find yourself single or going through a divorce, I would encourage you to ask this question:

What can I do for God now that was difficult or impossible to do while I was married?

Paul was very honest in 1 Corinthians 7 about the reality you can serve God in greater ways being single, rather than being married. Today, we've almost made it the opposite in the church. We make it seem like there's something wrong with you if you aren't married. But God's Word has something different to say.

Whether you find yourself single by choice or by circumstance, you have an incredible opportunity to serve the Lord. What can you do now that was impossible or difficult to do when you were married?

This is a very important question because it will help determine where you need to go now.

CONCLUSION

People always say 'time will heal,' and chances are, people have said it to you. Maybe you've said that to someone else. They sure did to me. And while time does help you heal I would add to that a qualifier...

First, it's God who heals. But secondly, it's what you do after it's over is what will bring healing. Are you moving toward Christ or away from Him? Are you Getting help, accepting reality, crying out to God, listening to His Word, asking and offering forgiveness? Are you focused on growing and seeking after God?

Everyone in life will have a broken heart at some point... You may not be in pain this morning. And if that's your situation, then I say Congratulations. You should be thankful and I hope this message will be filed away in your memory because you will be here one day.

But let me also suggest if you're not in pain right now, please be sensitive to those around you who are. Realize there is someone sitting perhaps in the same row as you this morning who is hurting and dealing with a broken heart. Would you ask God to give you wisdom and give you direction so you can care for these dear people this morning. Be sensitive to their needs... invite them over for dinner or take them out to lunch. Get to know somebody Let's build these deep relationships so what when we are in crisis, we will know who to turn to for help. After all, God has designed us to carry each others burdens.

And this morning if your heart is broken, I hope you know that you are loved. You are valued... and God still has a purpose for you.

God has a way of taking our pain and working things out for good. And the reason I know this is true, is not because God has worked things out for good in my life, because He has...

But I ultimately know this is true because of the cross of Jesus Christ.

God used this hurt and this pain to bring life to everyone who believes. So when you have a broken heart, look to the cross and see when God's heart was broken... then be reminded that even though there was pain and separation, it wasn't the end. God took a horrible situation and brought victory out of it. He can do the same for you.

Let's take time now to remember and reflect during communion....

(Video after prayer)