

Shock: When Our World Collapses 1st in a series of 7

Welcome to Timberline Church and thanks for joining us. We are starting a brand new series this morning entitled, 'How to get through what we're going through'. This series was originally written by Rick and Kay Warren after the death of their son Matthew. Matthew spent years battling mental illness and on April 5, 2013, he made the decision to end this struggle... by taking his own life. As you can imagine this tragedy not only devastated his family, but rocked an entire nation, because his father is known internationally as the author of the best seller, 'The Purpose Driven Life'.

I have never gone through a tragic loss like Rick and Kay Warren, but some of you here at TL have. And so I have invited several of you to tell your story in order for us to unpack the challenge of 'How to get through what we're going through.' This morning I would like to introduce you to Rita & Aimee Venuto and Amy Gordon.

All three of these ladies have been attending TL for some time, have been baptized and are followers of Jesus.

Several years ago they experienced a loss... a tragic loss beyond comprehension... and it was through this loss that they found TL and became reconnected with God..

Interview: Rita & Aimee Venuto and Amy Gordon

Questions:

- Aimee - Tell us what happened.
- Put up the picture of Robert
- Amy - What was your first reaction when you heard the news of your finance's death and how did your world collapse around you?
- Rita - Was there any specific thing that happened or something that someone said that helped you feel like living again?
- Rita - How did your 'loss' connect you to TL?
- What did you learn from all of this?

Prayer for them on their Journey:

Slide #1 Petra – Audio Clip - Get the sword

In 1987, Petra released their 10th album entitled 'This means war'. Petra had this keen sense of reality that we are in the midst of a battle. Our enemy the devil never sleeps, he never gives up and he never backs off. His main intent is to kill, maim and destroy and we need to be on guard.

This is a replica of the broad sword used by William Wallace, the Guardian of Scotland. Wallace was a Scottish Landowner who was propelled into leadership during the wars of Scottish Independence in the late 13th century. Wallace was fighting a terrifying evil known as Edward Longshanks, the King of England... nicknamed the Hammer of the Scots.

Folks we are in the midst of a battle and this sword is going to stay front and center during this series... to remind us to stay alert, because Satan's intent is to destroy. Satan's intent was to destroy Rita, Aimee and Amy through Robert's death; because that is what he does best... he destroys! But instead, God gave them restoration, eternal life and the TL family... isn't that wonderful! But it's been a battle and I love these stories!

Slide #2 Welcome to the first message in a series entitled, 'How to get through what we're going through!' Satan makes us go through what we are going through because he hates us and we must never underestimate his ability to damage us.

Some of the most influential events that happen in our lives... we don't see coming and they just hit us right out of the blue.

There are a lot of tragedies that we can't go around, we can't go over and we can't go past them... we just have to go through them... and this is why we are bringing this message this morning entitled...

Slide #3 Shock: When our world collapses!

We all go through losses in life.... even though they may not be as dramatic as what Amy, Rita and Aimee faced... the fact is...we lose things every day and we need to deal with it. When we go through a crisis, a catastrophe, a disaster, turbulent waters or something devastating that we hadn't planned on, we will most likely go through seven phases... shock, sorrow, struggle and then hopefully we will get to the last four, surrender, sanctification, self confidence and steadfastness.

Slide #4 Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.

This is why we will feature the sword in this series... because there is a war going on and any one of us can be caught out of the blue by sudden tragedy. Things just happen. We don't plan them, we don't know they're coming... they just happen.

The first reaction to any tragedy is going to be shock. Let me show you several examples.

Slide #5 Jeremiah 5:30-31 A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?

Slide #6 Ezekiel 3:15 I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Abib near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days-- overwhelmed.

Slide #7 Psalm 143:3-4 The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead. So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed.

These guys were experiencing the first stage of getting through whatever we go through... shock!

Every one of us are in one of the following conditions:

Slide #8 One of these three Conditions:

- 1) We know someone who is in a crisis right now.
- 2) We are in a crisis right now.
- 3) We are getting ready to have a crisis.

Why...because stuff happens... to all of us... some time. We may be headed into a crisis that we are not prepared for. A financial crisis... we get laid off. A health crisis... we get the dreaded call from the doctor the tests came back positive. A death crisis... a loved one dies. Or a relationship crisis... someone just walked out of our life. These kinds of things just happen, because we have an enemy that desires to devour us!

So this morning my message is in three parts and I want to speak to all three groups. In Part 1, we want to look at... how can we help a friend in shock? What can we do? I don't know about you... but I find it difficult to know what to do when someone is in shock... but I have learned one thing... we can always go to the Bible!

Remember Habit #1 from 'Five Healthy Habits', 'Living out the Word of God'? The Bible commands those of us that are followers of Jesus Christ, to help people in pain, to help those who are in shock, to help people who are going through difficult times... and throughout its' pages we find some answers.

Slide #9 Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

How do we do this? How do we bear someone else's burden, how do we bear someone else's shock?

Rick Warren said that when he looked back over the months following his son's suicide there were three things that his small group did that were helpful. Yesterday I shared this message with Amy, Rita and Aimee...and their heads were nodding in agreement. Let's go to our notes.

Slide #10 What do we do when a friend is in shock?

1. Show up.

We need to fight for our friend! The battle belongs to the Lord! We fight for them by showing up. We don't stand on the sidelines. We don't wait for an invitation. We show up!

Sometimes it's hard to know what to say when someone loses a job or they discover they have a brain tumor or breast cancer, or someone files for divorce. In these situations I feel a loss for words... and those of you that know me know that I'm not usually at loss for words.

But here is what I'm learning and this is what these ladies have said to me.... we don't need to say anything. Rick Warren says... and I quote... Show up and Shut up! This is the ministry of PRESENCE!

We talked about Job several weeks ago. Remember how he lost everything... his health, his wealth, all of his kids... all because Satan is a thief and a robber. But something interesting happened in his shock... his friends showed up!

Slide #11 Job 2:11 When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

This is true friendship. When they heard their friend was in shock and in trouble and that he'd lost it all... they set out... they didn't wait for an invitation... they didn't wait to be invited... the messaging began to fly between the three of them and they took off for Job's house.

When we are in deep, deep pain we don't need words; we need the presence of our friends. We need people to stand with us, to cry with us, to be quiet with us and shut up. Isn't that a relief.

Slide #12 What do we do when a friend is in shock?

2. Share their pain.

We need to fight for our friend by sharing in their pain. The Battle belongs to the Lord!

Slide #13 Job 2:12-13 When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

- I'm not suggesting that we tear our clothes and sprinkle dust on our heads and sit on the ground... that was a custom of their day... but in that culture it meant... we feel your pain... we are sharing in your grief. They didn't say a word for 7 days! Listen carefully!

Slide #14 The greater the grief... the fewer words needed.

Isn't that freeing! The greater the grief... the fewer words needed.

If someone has a bad hair day... talk with them about it, if someone dropped their I-phone in the toilet... talk with them about it. If someone's dog has fleas... talk with them about it... in fact tell them about your own dog flea stories. But if someone loses a loved one... we just need to be quiet... it's the ministry of presence.

Slide #15 Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

The KJV says, 'weep with them that weep'. We need to find ways to identify with their pain.

So we show up, we share their pain and then there is one more thing we need to do...

Slide #16 What do we do when a friend is in shock?

3. Take the initiative.

We need to fight for our friend. The battle belongs to the Lord! When we have a friend who's in shock, we need to fight for them by taking the initiative.

Slide #17 Proverbs 3:27-28 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"-- when you now have it with you.

Do good, means just what it says... do good! In crisis it could mean an offer to babysit, bring a meal or mow the lawn... whatever it takes!

I have seen this practiced so many times when there is a death in the family. People just show up and take off work and bring food and organize meals and take phone calls and run errands... it's a wonderful thing to see in the midst of tragedy! I have seen families that don't even like each other pull together when in shock!

Probably the dumbest thing we can say in the midst of great loss is this... 'Call me if you need anything'. That is so lame! We are making them take the initiative!

And my guess is... we have all said it... because we don't know what else to say... I know I have said it. The reason it is so bad... is that it lays the initiative on them. Their mind is already spiraling out of control and now we give them another thing to do and think about.

Probably the next dumbest thing to say is 'how can I help?' Even though it appears to be helpful, the person is in shock, they haven't the slightest idea how we can help them! When someone is in shock

they are numb. They are paralyzed. They can't read or focus on think anything. Everything is moving in slow motion... so we shouldn't be forcing them to think about how we can help them!

Instead give them some options like; may I bring dinner over, I'm going in town can I get anything for you or, can I fill your car up with fuel? This is a practical response to someone in crises.

Some of us here this morning may not have a friend in crisis... but maybe we are in crisis. Let's move on to Part 2. Maybe you have gotten some terrible news this past week or this past month or this past year and you are just trying to hold it all together!

Slide #18 What can we do when we are in shock?

1. Cry out to God.

Cry out to God. This is where it needs to start!

Slide #19 Psalm 50:15 Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

Sometimes this is all we can do! I find it interesting that we actually honor God when we cry out to him. It all comes back to depending on God. God welcomes us when we acknowledge our need! He feels honored!

Slide #20 Lamentations 2:19 Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord.

Why at night... because when we are in shock... we can't sleep. Some of you know exactly what I mean! Cry out to God. God, I'm hurting. God, I'm sad. God I'm sick! We can pour out every emotion we have to God... and he feels honored when we do it!

Slide #21 What can we do when we are in shock?

2. Let others help us.

Slide #22 Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

The Bible is saying that relationships are best when we are in pain. It's interesting who shows up and who doesn't show up...when the chips are down. It doesn't mean we need to judge those who don't show up... they may have their own pain.... but just realize that real friends walk in when everyone else walks out.

We need to allow others to help us in the shock stage because our natural reaction when we are in deep pain is to withdraw. When we lose our job, or get a terrifying diagnosis or have a miscarriage... we don't want anyone to know about it and our natural human reaction is to withdraw into isolation. And this is the exact opposite of what we need.

In shock, we need fellowship! We need people! We don't necessarily need people to talk to us... we just need people to show up!

Let's move on to Part 3.

Ever since 9/11 and all the insane school shootings... America has been on alert. We have taken seriously the importance of preparedness. We have invented kits and alerts and lectures and trainings and seminars and homeland security... all in the name of being prepared. If we can develop ways to be prepared for 9/11 type disasters... isn't there a way to prepare ourselves for emotional disasters? And the answer is Yes!

Many years ago I use to wear a watch. Does anyone here this morning have a watch on? Someone told me the other day they wear a watch when they dress up... even though it doesn't work... they wear one just for dress. Each watch, depending on its' value has its' specs etched on the back. Stainless steel back, water resistant, water proof, Japanese movement, Swiss movement... but almost all of them, even the cheap ones use to say something on the back... what was it? Shock Resistant! Kind of like a cell phone... you could drop them! I don't know about you... but I want to be Shock Resistant. Even though some people never recover... I want to be able to handle the shocks of life! Let's go to our notes.

Slide #23 How do we improve our Shock Resistance?

1. Cultivate strong relationships.

God never intended for us to go through life, on our own, by ourselves. God created a spiritual family. This spiritual family is called the church. And our spiritual family is going to outlast our physical family. Physical families, sorry to say, don't last. People grow up, they move off, they get married, they get divorced, and people die. Physical families don't last. But the family of God is going to last forever!

So we need to cultivate strong relationships. This is one of the best ways for us to build a safety net for the crises that are inevitable... before they happen. This is why we promote Connection Groups at TL.

Slide #24 Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Get connected today! We never know what might come down the pike next week. One of the saddest memories I have... was the funeral of woman, whom I will not name... and there were less than 10 people at her funeral. Several years later her husband died and present were... his daughter, 3 grandchildren, one in-law, a case worker, the funeral director and me!

If you are not connected... I beg you to join a small group and cultivate stronger relationships! Or let me give you another option... be a mentor to others or invite someone to mentor you.

One of the things that we ask of people that are being baptized is that they are mentored by someone. Mentoring is simply the process of learning from another person... someone that has experienced the road ahead of us. It is a fantastic way to get connected and cultivate strong relationships.

A couple of months ago a high school student came to me to be mentored... and we have had a great time cultivating a relationship. Richard Showalter was my mentor for years. We would meet monthly and talk and share and pray for each other.

He is living in China now so I don't get to see him as often, but when he comes to the states... we get together. If you have never had a mentor... and you are not in a connection group... and you want to go deeper in your relationship with God, I encourage you to pray about... and take some initiative!

Slide #25 How do we improve our Shock Resistance?

2. Grow spiritual roots.

We need to grow spiritual roots so that when the heat's on we don't end up like a tumbleweed and dry up and blow away.

Slide #26 Jeremiah 17:7-8 But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

We've got to have roots so we can have the fruits. It is essential that we put down spiritual roots... this is why we talked about 'Five Healthy Habits'!

Slide #26 Prayer and Reflection: (I-pod Sunday Special)

Invite the Prayer Team Up:

Benediction:

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.

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