

Published based on [3 Ways to Find a Smile in Your Struggle -- funeral sermon](#)

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I shared this message yesterday (May 20, 2009) with a family who gathered at the memorial service of their loved one (a 50 year old lady) who died of a long term illness in which she (and her family) struggled over a period of years.

Luke 4:¹⁶ So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “ *The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,^[j]
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;*

¹⁹ *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*^[k]

²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

When Jesus began his public ministry, he chose Isaiah 61 as the text for his first message which was delivered to his home town folks. This is recorded for us in Luke 4. At the core of what he read and said is this: "My mission, why I am here, is to help people who are struggling and hurting." This is what we see him doing as he lived out the next three years of his ministry. He ministered to the broken, bruised, and the bound.

Each of us gathered here today can have the assurance that this is still the heart of Jesus toward you. This was the ministry of the Holy Spirit through Jesus life when he walked the earth. It is still the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers today. The Spirit of the Lord is present here today to bring hope, comfort and healing to the brokenhearted.

This makes all the difference in our lives. Let me explain:

Your Story

Each of our lives is a story. We are here today to celebrate and remember the story of _____ life. He/she was given life on the ___ day of ___ in 19___. As we all our lives there a chapters written that contain:

1. Smiles --these are the times when all is well. Mountain top seasons. Everything in order. Life is good kind of seasons. These are the chapters where life is easy. You simply coast and enjoy the breeze in your face.

_____ had lots of smile chapters in their life. Let me share a few----

We all love smile chapters, but then there are chapters that are filled with:

2. Struggles -- these are the hard times. Times of challenge and adversity. These chapters have a lot of question marks at the ends of the sentences. Why? When? Where? What for?

If smiles are when we coast, then struggles are thos uphill climbs when you have to reach down deep and it takes all you got to take another step, to keep going.

Interestingly, its the hill climbing that builds our muscle. The chapters in our story that are defined by struggle are the chapters that we experience the most growth in our lives. It is where the lean muscle of faith is built. In the pain of struggle, we discover the true values of life. What's really important! What really matters!

_____, like the rest of us had some of these chapters in his/her life as well. Like recently during

this season that led to their homegoing. Like -----

I believe and have been reminded in my own life, that one of the secrets to living in victory and in peace, is found in learning how to experience a:

3. Smile in Your Struggle -- We are able to find a smile in our struggle, then we are experiencing the healing Jesus brings to our broken hearts and our broken lives. How do you do this? How do you find peace in the storm? How do you find gratitude in the struggle? Let me share very briefly with you --

3 Ways to Find a Smile in Your Struggle

1. Remembrance -- there is a ministry in remembrance. In times of struggle, remember the good times. Reach back and reflect on the blessings that have marked the entirety of your life. God made the human mind with a powerful capacity of recall and choice. Choose to recall the good. We see this often in the Old Testament, when God's people in a time of struggle would begin to reflect on God's past deliverances. Do you know the Holy Spirit will even bring such times to your remembrance, just to encourage you and provide a smile for you in your time of struggle. I have seen such smiles on your faces the past couple of days as you have reflected on the good times you enjoyed with _____.

2. Rejoicing -- Paul reminded us when he was in prison to rejoice evermore. Choose to walk the path of joy. This is to eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive. It is realizing the solid bedrock truths that death itself can never change. Like "God works all things together for good." Like "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." Like "If God be for you, who can be against you." Like "The Lord himself will descend with a shout, with the voice....." Choosing to rejoice in the face of trial, releases the power of the faith that is in your heart and establishes that "God is still God" in your heart and brings a smile to you in the midst of your struggle.

3. Releasing -- By this I mean those times when you know you have done all you can do---and all that is left is to thrust it into the hands of a loving God. There is a peace that comes that surpasses human understanding when you do this. It is in the hands of God. Jesus said, "It is finished" and committed his spirit into the hands of God. This is the place where we can always release our burdens. When we finally do so, a smile returns to our heart and eventually will find its way to our face.

We thank God for the story of _____ life, and we ask God to give us His grace so there our lives, like _____, will tell the story of Jesus great love.

Remember, Rejoice, and Release it all into the hands of the one who said, I have come to heal the brokenhearted!

Prayer

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