

Good morning everyone. Its wonderful to look out at you all because it's been 6 years since I last preached as one of the Pastors here.

My story starts back in 2011. At the beginning of that year I holidayed in Australia with family and friends, returning to work in late January. After only a few weeks back at work I noticed I was tired, not sleeping well at night and was having trouble concentrating and setting priorities. I put this down to "going through the menopause" but as the weeks passed things got worse. Now I was experiencing a distinct lack of joy: things that had previously brought me delight, pleasure and relief no longer did so. I felt drained, stressed and frequently tearful but the most alarming occurrence was a lack of compassion. When I heard about a difficulty someone in the Church was going through my reaction was "oh no, another burden for me to deal with. I have nothing left to give." This caused me great concern because I had always operated from a heart of love, care and compassion. I battled internally with all these things, not willing to share what was happening with anyone because well...

### **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, can't I?"**

I told myself "you just need to trust God more, pray about it and ask for God's strength."

Finally a physical symptom appeared. I had severe pain on the soles of my feet, so bad that I dreaded getting up in the morning. This symptom took me to the GP. She diagnosed something called plantar fasciitis and said the only treatment was rest and possibly to get some orthotic inserts for my shoes. Fortunately being a wise GP she then asked some searching questions about my life: my general health, my family and my work. As I opened up and described the other symptoms I saw deep concern in her eyes.

Her response was to carry out a Depression Scale Test. It turned out I was in a dangerous place of exhaustion: physically, mentally and emotionally so she had three recommendations. The first was to start on anti depressant medication, the second to take a mild night sedative and the third to take a month off work.

### ***I had hit The Wall***

I was surprised at this treatment plan and to be honest felt it was possibly an over reaction, but I agreed to give it a try trusting in her wisdom.

In the month I took off work I followed the plan, I rested, even went away for a week on my own. I spent a lot of time alone with God seeking his healing and guidance. God spoke to me really clearly through the Bible His Word, through pictures of my current state and through specific words of wisdom and guidance in the way forward. To cut a long story short God revealed to me that my marriage was in severe trouble due to my busy life, my neglect of my husband, Nick and the stress Nick was feeling at seeing me slowly getting very unwell. I needed to act promptly. God also revealed that He was calling me out of Mt Albert Baptist and my role as Pastor- not primarily because I was exhausted but because my marriage came first and God had a new season for me and a new season for MAB.

So I resigned with grief at leaving a people I loved and a role I treasured, but also with hope because I firmly believed God was leading me and the Church into something new.

Now I want to pause from the story to bring you what I hope will be a helpful illustration of what was really happening. Those of you who listened to Greg Liston's sermon in November called "Confessions of an Emotional Cripple" will remember he showed you some Russian nesting dolls.

So here's the dolls again

This outside doll is the Judy you all see. When leaving MAB this Judy showed a mixture of grief at leaving and also hope and joy at what was to come. This Judy even sang songs of hope at the various events held to farewell her.

This next Judy is the one my work colleagues and me Spiritual Director see. They know more of the background story, of what I had been going through and actually they all confirm that they believe God is calling me out.

The next Judy is the one my family see. They see an exhausted wife and Mother who needs rest and lots of support.

***But wait there's more***

There's this **inner Judy**. She's feeling guilty and ashamed at failing in her role as wife and Pastor. She feels she has disappointed people and disappointed God. She's clothed with shame and she's confused and full of questions of God.

The questions include:

*Why didn't you prevent this situation or fix it Lord?*

*Why didn't you warn me earlier about my marriage?*

*Where to now?*

*Who am I and how can I serve you?*

*Who can help me through this?*

I'll leave those questions unanswered for now and return to the story:

After a year of not working, but doing some voluntary work, I had stopped the sleeping pills, and the antidepressants and was feeling a lot better. I was appointed as a one of two Strengthening Families Co-Ordinator at Iosis Family Solutions. In this role I worked with agencies and families to set up a coordinated plan of action, of support to improve the families well-being. The other Strengthening Families Co-Ordinator had already been working in the role for some time, so was familiar and skilled with the work. We were known as the "Strengthening Families Team" but as I grew more settled in the role I realized we were not a team as I understood "team." I believed teams should encourage each other, they should take note of times of success and where appropriate, they should share aspects of the role that were challenging or stressful. I believed this partly because I witnessed other teams in the organization supporting each other in exactly this way. My colleague, however, liked to work alone, was fiercely independent and didn't want to share challenges or stressors. I felt rather lonely and a bit sad at this situation but continued just being me- encouraging others on the staff when I saw the opportunity.

Over time it appeared that no matter how much I achieved in the role it was never enough. My colleague would frequently comment that we needed to get more referrals, run more meetings and would ask what I was doing to meet these goals. In one supervision meeting with our Team Leader she commented that she felt she was still carrying me in the role. During this time my Elderly Father had moved in to live with us. Now he was not the easiest person to care for. It took a lot of emotional energy trying to encourage him to eat and keep moving so as not to lose his ability to walk. Also, our youngest son left home. We were now "empty nesters."

All of these factors depleted what I call my "**emotional tank**."

After a year at Iosis I found myself in a similar state to how I began this story:

I was tired and not sleeping well-being

I was stressed

I was not enjoying life

I was emotional and feeling I wasn't coping with life

After talking to my very concerned and frustrated husband I went back to the GP and restarted antidepressant medication.

### ***Once again I had hit The Wall***

I was full of questions of myself and of God:

What's going on? Why am I here again? What can I do to get well and stop this happening? I spent time alone with God once again seeking His wisdom and a way forward. Through a series of books and other resources, God revealed to me what was really going on.... you see there's actually **another inner Judy**, one I didn't even know existed. Some people might call this the *subconscious*.

God began to show me that this inner Judy had experienced various situations growing up that were still influencing my life. God brought these situations to mind, it was like watching a movie.

The first situation occurred when I was born. I arrived 6 weeks early and my Mother and I were both very sick. In an incubator for weeks I was separated from my Mother and her touch.

The next situation was as a 1 year old child when my Mother had another baby. She now had 4 daughters under 5 years of age. Seems a bit crazy, I know!! It's a busy household and my Nana, who lived with us, spends a lot of time helping with the new baby (of course, that's where she was most needed). I am no longer the baby of the family and the "apple of my Nana's eye," I am just daughter Number 3.

The final picture was of my Father who now lived with 6 females (poor man). His coping mechanism was to retreat into his "man cave," not a cave with tools or computers, but with his books. He's in the house but absent in terms of his attention and affirmation. Attention and affirmation this little inner Judy needs and craves.

Actually, these situations were not new to me. I was aware of them as facts but had never paused to consider the emotional consequence.

The consequence was this. As a little child, with my limited understanding of the world, I had taken on this belief:

***“I am inadequate, not worthy of value, attention or love. No one notices me. I can’t trust people to meet my needs of love and attention.”***

So I had this revelation of Truth, actually it was revelation of wrong thinking, revelation of a lie. If you were here in Church for our Emotionally Healthy Spirituality series last year you will realize this was a ***King Lie***.

This ***King Lie*** made me very sensitive to criticism, to relational disharmony, to failure and to people’s opinion of me.

But God, in His grace and mercy, did not just leave me with this revelation. He lead me to a place of healing and restoration. He did this primarily through a Course called ***“Freedom in Christ”*** running at the church I was attending. This was God’s gift to me at The Wall!!

Through the Course I had time to explore what was happening down deep in that little inner Judy. What I really believed at that level. Things the outer Judy may have thought she believed, may even have declared out loud in prayer or when speaking to others. The inner Judy operated from a very different perspective, a different belief, a King Lie and the inner Judy effected every one of the outer Judys. I began to explore my position in Christ, new truths for God says in

*2 Cor 5:17 “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a different person. The old life has gone, a new life has begun.” New Living Translation*

The Course taught one practice that I found very helpful. Now I refer to it as my Spiritual Antibiotics ( to be taken when unwell, once a day for a certain period of time.) These Spiritual Antibiotics consisted of declaring out loud statements of acceptance, security and significance in Christ, every day for 40 days. These statements are up on the screen. I won’t read them all but just a few from each section. I spoke them all, out loud for 40 days.

### ***I am Accepted...***

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| John 1:12  | I am God's Child                       |
| John 15:15 | I am Christ's friend                   |
| Rom 5:1    | I have been justified                  |
| 1 Cor 6:17 | I am united with the Lord (one spirit) |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1 Cor 6:19-20 | I am bought with a price, I belong to God |
| 1 Cor 12:27   | I am a member of Christ's body            |
| Eph 1:1       | I am a saint                              |
| Eph 1:5       | I have been adopted as God's child        |
| Eph 2:8       | I have access to God thru the Holy Spirit |
| Col 1:14      | I have been redeemed and forgiven         |
| Col 2:10      | I am complete in Christ                   |

### ***I am Secure...***

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Rom 8: 1-2    | I am free forever from condemnation   |
| Rom 8:28      | I am assured all things work together for good                              |
| Rom 8: 31-34  | I am free from any charge against me  |
| Rom 8: 35-39  | I cannot be separated from the love of God                                  |
| 2 Cor 1:21-22 | I am established, anointed and sealed by God                                |
| Col 3:3       | I am hidden with Christ in God  |
| Phil1:6       | I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected     |
| Phil 3:20     | I am a citizen of heaven  |
| 2 Tim 1:7     | I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind |
| Heb 4:16      | I can find grace and mercy in time of need                                  |

### ***I am Significant...***

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Matt 5:13-14  | I am the salt and light of the earth                    |
| John 15:1-5   | I am the branch of the true vine, a channel of His life |
| John 15: 16   | I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit          |
| Acts 1:8      | I am a personal witness of Christ's                     |
| 1 Cor 3:16    | I am God's temple                                       |
| 2 Cor 5:17-21 | I am a minister of reconciliation for God               |
| 2 Cor 6:1     | I am God's co-worker                                    |
| Eph 2:6       | I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm           |
| Eph 2:10      | I am God's workmanship                                  |
| Eph 3:12      | I may approach God with freedom and confidence          |

***My identity comes from what Jesus has done for me***

***My identity comes from what Jesus says about me***

***My belief in myself (in who I am in Christ) determines my behaviour***

Another King Lie I identified while during the Course was this:

***“Father God is just like my natural Father. He is absent, passive, disinterested and impatient with me. I have to earn His love and attention by what I do,”***

As I explored Scripture I found some more “Spiritual Antibiotics” to bring new Truth.

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Ps 139: 1-18         | My Father God is intimate and involved                                       |
| Ps 103: 8-14         | My Father God is kind and compassionate                                      |
| Rom 15:7 Zeph 3:17   | My Father God is accepting and filled with joy and love                      |
| Isa 40:11 Hosea 11:3 | My Father God is warm and affectionate                                       |
| Heb 13: 5 Jer 31:20  | My Father God is always with me and eager to be with me                      |
| Heb 4:15,16          | My Father God is full of grace and mercy and gives me freedom to fail        |
| Rom 8:28 Heb 12:5    | My Father God is committed to my growth and proud of me as His growing child |

So I spoke these truths about Father God out loud for 40 days as well. Now, there is nothing special about doing it for 40 days but the practice does need repetition and perseverance. I believe that what I was doing was renewing my mind, especially my subconscious mind. The Apostle Paul talks about this in **Romans 12:2**

***“Don’t copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” NLT***

The freedom came in not only declaring Scriptural truth ( I had done these many times before over the years), but also in acknowledging the emotional damage I experienced as a young child. It came in forgiving my parents and Nana, in letting go and in moving on. It came in realizing I can acknowledge the damage caused while still honouring my parents and their memory.

Now I have my own “confession of an Emotional Cripple” and that is, that this lie based thinking, these King Lies were influencing my thinking all my life, including while I was a Pastor at MAB. I may have worn a mask but inside the little voice was frequently saying  
“you can’t do this. Don’t even try something new.”  
and when conflict or relational disharmony arose the voice would say  
“ it’s your fault, what have you done to cause this situation.”  
and finally when volunteers wouldn’t turn up for their rostered role on a Sunday the voice would say  
“you can’t even organize volunteers. You’re useless and unimportant.”

Back then I didn’t recognise the deep messages just the effect they had on my behaviour. It’s one reason I got exhausted because I struggled to say “no” to any

request, and if no one was available to serve I’d step in to do it. It seems crazy in retrospect but in the busy role of Pastor I never took time to explore below the surface.

So this Course I did is all well and good, but how did I know I had changed. How did I know I had been transformed in my thinking? I knew because I was squeezed!! I was squeezed emotionally.

So let’s return to the final part of my story back at Iosis Family Solutions. After I finished the Freedom in Christ Course my work colleague went overseas for 6 weeks. During this time I managed the referrals and ran meetings for both of us, a much bigger work load. On her 4<sup>th</sup> week of her holiday my Father died, after a steady deterioration in his health. On his final night my sisters and I stayed all night with him, a very precious time. He died in the early morning and later that day I went to work and ran a large Strengthening Families meeting because it involved representatives of 12 agencies and no one else at Iosis was trained to take over. The next day I wrote the monthly reports. When I look back I’m not proud of my choice, it was probably a bit crazy to carry that load while organizing my Father’s funeral but I saw it as important at the time.

When my colleague returned to work I shared how I had covered for both of us running meetings and also what had happened with my Father. I expected a “thank you” at least or at best an acknowledgement of how well I had managed “ balancing all these plates.” Instead there was silence before she said “well what referrals are still outstanding? What do we still need to do?”

I was amazed, and rather hurt. Trust me that little inner Judy experienced a squeezing of the emotional bruise left by the King lies. I started to think “I’m not good enough, can never do enough. I have no value or worth.”

Very quickly, and much to my surprise and relief, God’s Truth resonated in my mind and Spirit.

*I am loved and accepted. I am good enough  
I am safe and secure. This situation is not a threat to me.  
I am significant in God’s eyes. He sees all I do and is proud of me.*

With the new Truth within me the challenge passed by and I was at peace.

I want to finish today with **5 key learnings from my experience at The Wall**

1) **Journeying through The Wall takes time** and sometimes be like peeling an onion as the underneath layers are slowly revealed. God doesn't rush this journey and neither should we

2) **Learn habits of self-care**, which are different for every person. Mine include a daily walk when I worship, I pray and I contemplate life. In times of challenge or conflict I use me "spiritual antibiotics." I have them as a bookmark in my Bible. Finally I regularly encourage and affirm myself, as its possible no one else will. I'm responsible for my own well being.

3) **Live life in community**. We are not designed to walk alone. This includes family and friends, and I am part of a very healthy Lifegroup. Healthy because we are vulnerable with each other talking about our challenges, struggles and failures, as well as our successes and needs.

4) **Take note of emotional responses/feelings** as they are often pointing to things lying below the surface. I'm an avid writer of a spiritual journal. Here I record and process what's happening in my world, seeking God's wisdom and guidance. One delight was reading back over my journals from 2011, partly so my memory of events was accurate, but also to remind myself of the power of God and His fingerprints through the journey.

Finally

5) **Practice healthy boundaries**. This means checking what God is calling me too, and not accept everything I am asked to do. I am not gifted or skilled to do everything, but even if I have the gifting I need to pause and see if God is asking this of me. So, when Steve asked me to preach I said "I'll have to get back to you on that. I need to seek the Lord's wisdom and guidance first"

In a moment I'm going to pray for us and after that the band will play an instrumental song. Take time to process what God might be saying to you this morning through my story.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal if there are lies operating way beneath the surface that need to be brought into the light of truth. For Jesus said

**"The truth will set you free."**