Main Idea: This week we concluded our series called “Dysfunction” by hearing from Brain Welch and his daughter Jennea about their story. During their interview they shared how Brian’s struggles caused dysfunction in their relationship. This dysfunction occurred prior to him finding Christ, as well as after making Christ Lord of his life. We also saw how God was able to use Brian’s life, even the bad things, to help him and Jennea make a difference in helping others today. This week we learn how God can work good in all things when we repent and follow Him.

Opening discussion Question:

This weekend we learned that parents aren't perfect. How have you seen God use children to help teach their parents?

Read Romans 8:28

1. Brian and Jennea shared how rough their lives were before Christ. However, God has been able to use those past experiences to help others today. What does it mean when Paul says that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”?
   a. Paul contrasts a life lived in selfish pursuits (the flesh) and one lived in league with, or in accordance with, God (the Spirit). He impresses upon readers that our sovereign God is all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful.
   b. Those who love God can trust His goodness, His power, and His will to work out all things for their good.
   c. The promise that God works all things together for good does not mean that all things, taken by themselves, are good. Some things and events are decidedly bad. But God is able to work them together for good. He sees the big picture; He has a master plan.
   d. Evil is prevalent in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our long-range good. Note that God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfill his purpose.
   e. Note also that this promise is not for everybody. It can be claimed only by those who love God and are called by him, that is, those the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ. Such people have a new perspective, a new mind-set.
Read John 16:10-12 and 2 Timothy 3:10-12

2. Pastor J shared that following Jesus can be difficult at times. He said, “Closing the door to our old life and opening the door to our new life in Him is what a changed life is all about.” However, he noted, moving from one door to the next can be very difficult. Why is following Christ so difficult at times?
   a. We all want blessings, happiness, and fulfillment, and we associate a happy condition with a certain amount of ease. Jesus promises blessing and fulfillment to those who follow Him, but many people have been surprised that the way of Christ is not as easy as they had hoped. Sometimes, following Christ can be downright difficult.
   b. Followers of Christ also face resistance from the world. “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus did not promise His disciples that everything would be coming up roses for them; just the opposite—He promised that they would have trials in this world (John 16:33). “But take heart!” He told them, “I have overcome the world.”
   c. In many ways, it is after a person is saved that the struggle against sin really heats up in their life. All people are born with a nature that is bent toward sin, which is why children do not need to be taught how to misbehave — that comes naturally.
   d. When a person is converted, the sin nature does not disappear – and so the internal conflict begins in the life of every believer.
   e. The Christian life is never easy, but the difficulties do not negate the joy. We consider Jesus, who “for the joy set before him . . . endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). God has set us free from the slavery to sin.
   f. The victory is ours (2 Corinthians 2:14). Through the Holy Spirit, believers receive encouragement, strength to persevere, and reminders of their adoption into the family of God. We know that our “present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed” (Romans 8:18)

Read Romans 7:14-24 and 5:1-5

3. We must never underestimate the power of sin. How can we not grow weary following Christ?
   a. We must never attempt to fight it in our own strength. Satan is a crafty tempter, and we have an amazing ability to make excuses.
   b. Instead of trying to overcome sin with human willpower, we must take hold of the tremendous power of Christ that is available to us.
   c. This is God’s provision for victory over sin: He sends the Holy Spirit to live in us and give us power. And when we fall, he lovingly reaches out to help us up. (Romans 7:23-25) The “power within me” is the sin deep within us. This is our vulnerability to sin; it refers to everything within us that is more loyal to our old way of selfish living than to God.
d. There is great tension in daily Christian experience. The conflict is that we agree with God's commands but cannot do them. As a result, we are painfully aware of our sin. This inward struggle with sin was as real for Paul as it is for us.

e. Whenever Paul felt overwhelmed by the spiritual battle, he would return to the beginnings of his spiritual life, remembering how he had been freed from sin by Jesus Christ.

f. When we feel confused and overwhelmed by sin's appeal, let us claim the freedom Christ gave us. His power can lift us to victory.

g. The problems that we run into will develop our perseverance which in turn will strengthen our character, deepen our trust in God, and give us greater confidence about the future.

h. Thank God for those opportunities to grow, and deal with them in his strength.

Read Colossians 1:27 and Romans 8:14-16

4. What does it mean when the Bible says that Christ in us is the hope of glory?
   a. A “mystery” in the New Testament is simply something that was hidden in times past but has now been revealed by God. The former mystery, now understood, is that Christ in us is the hope of our future glory.
   b. The Holy Spirit presence in our hearts is the gift we received at salvation. Though we are in this world, we are not of it (John 17:16). God will continue to work in us until He is finished perfecting us (see Philippians 1:6).
   c. This forward-looking guarantee of perfection is what is meant by “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
   d. The secret is simply this: Christ in you! Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come.
   e. The hope of glory is the fulfillment of God’s promise to restore us and all creation. This hope is not a wishful thought, but the confident, expectant, joyful knowledge that we are being changed by God and will one day see Christ face to face, having been conformed to His image.
   f. Christ’s presence in us is the hope of glory, and this truth is full of “glorious riches.” Our once dead, darkened spirits are made alive. Christ is in our hearts, and we know that there is life beyond this earthly existence; a life that will be glorious beyond all imagination.

5. What does it mean to surrender to God?
   a. There are different levels of surrender, all of which affect our relationship with God. Initial surrender to the drawing of the Holy Spirit leads to salvation. When we let go of our own attempts to earn God's favor and rely upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, we
become a child of God.

b. But there are times of greater surrender during a Christian's life that bring deeper intimacy with God and greater power in service. The more areas of our lives we surrender to Him, the more room there is for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

c. The more we surrender to God, the more our old self-worshiping nature is replaced with one that resembles Christ.

d. The goal of the Christian life can be summed up by Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Such a life of surrender is pleasing to God, results in the greatest human fulfillment, and will reap ultimate rewards in heaven (Luke 6:22-23).

Next Steps: In spite of the inevitable struggles we face we are not alone. Jesus does not abandon us to our struggles either. If we remember that the ultimate victory has already been won, we can claim the peace of Christ in the most troublesome times.

1. **What past experiences in your life can you use to help others who are struggling?**
2. **Are you depending on your own strength in difficult situations or are you relying on the power of the Holy Spirit?**
3. **Have you completely surrendered your life to Christ or are you still holding on to things that have caused you to struggle?**

Take some time this week to pray on the above and identify changes that need to be made.

Reading Plan

- **Sunday** – Romans 8:24-28
- **Monday** – Colossians 1:24-29
- **Tuesday** – Romans 8:13-17
- **Wednesday** – John 16:10-17
- **Thursday** – 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- **Friday** – Romans 7:14-25 and 5:1-9
- **Saturday** – Galatians 2:17-21