

PRESENTATION BY THE PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA,
MPHOME CURCUIT PRAYER WOMEN'S LEAGUE ANNUAL
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TZANEEN LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, MOPANI DISTRICT

26 April 2026

TOPIC FOR PRESENTATION:

WHEN YOUR WORLD TURNS UPSIDE DOWN, HOW DO YOU DEAL
WITH THE CHANGE: LOKING AT ISSUES LIKE: LOSS OF THE LOVED
ONES, JOB INCOME, JOB, PARTNER, AND DIACOVERING THAT YOU
ARE SICK OF CANCER AND HIV

26 April 2026

Programme Director,
Leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa,
Mphome Circuit,
Members of the Prayer Women's League,
Fellow Congregants,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Avuxeni, Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Good Morning, Goeie More.

We gather here today to reflect on a profound and universal truth: at some point in life, the world as we know it may suddenly and painfully turn upside down. One moment, life feels stable and predictable; the next, it is shaken by loss, uncertainty and fear.

Whether it is the passing of a loved one, the loss of a job or income, the breakdown of a relationship or the life-altering news of an illness such as cancer or HIV, these moments do not simply disrupt our routines, they shake the very foundation of who we are.

Many people in such moments quietly say, “I no longer recognise my life.” Today, we confront that reality with honesty, compassion and hope and we seek to understand not only how we survive such moments, but how we begin to heal, rebuild and find meaning again.

2. Understanding the Emotional Impact of Change

Common reactions when life turns upside down:

- Shock and numbness
- Anxiety and fear
- Deep sadness or depression
- Loss of identity and direction

Key message:

- These reactions are normal human responses
- Feeling lost does not mean weakness

Psychological insight:

- The mind protects us through numbness
- Healing begins with acknowledging the pain.

3. The Psychology of Loss (Death, Job, Relationships)

Loss involves:

- The loss of the future we imagined
- A shift in identity

Examples:

- Loss of a partner → emotional anchor is gone
- Loss of a job → identity and stability are shaken

Healthy approach:

- Move from “getting over it” → to learning to live with it

Practical strategies:

- Acknowledge your pain
- Create a new routine

- Stay connected to others
- Seek professional or pastoral support

Key reminder:

- It is okay not to be okay—but do not suffer alone

4. Health Crisis: HIV and Cancer Diagnosis

Emotional impact:

- Fear of death
- Fear of stigma
- Loss of control

Psychological stages:

- Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance

HIV Diagnosis

Challenges:

- Internalised stigma
- Fear of rejection

Coping:

- Reframe thinking → from hopelessness to management
- Join support groups

- Understand that treatment allows a full life

Cancer Diagnosis

Challenges:

- Emotional and physical burden

Coping:

- Build resilience
- Stay involved in treatment decisions
- Focus on quality of life

5. The Role of Spirituality and the Church

Faith provides:

- Strength
- Comfort
- Community

Scriptural encouragement:

- Psalm 34:18 – God is close to the brokenhearted
- Isaiah 41:10 – Do not fear, for God is with you
- Romans 8:28 – All things work together for good
- Jeremiah 29:11 – God has plans to give hope and a future

Role of the Church:

- Provide counseling and prayer
- Create a safe and supportive environment
- Help restore hope and meaning

6. Case Studies: Real-Life Reflections

Case 1: Loss of Identity

- Loss of job and partner leads to emotional paralysis

Intervention:

- Therapy (CBT)
- Support groups

Lesson:

- Your worth is not defined by roles

Case 2: Living with HIV

- Feelings of rejection and hopelessness

Intervention:

- Counseling and peer support

Lesson:

- You are living with a condition, not defined by it

Case 3: Facing Cancer

- Spiritual struggle and fear

Intervention:

- Faith + counseling

Lesson:

- Peace and meaning can still be found

7. The Pillars of Recovery

Professional support:

- Psychologists and counselors

Community support:

- Stay connected—avoid isolation

Faith:

- Trust in God's presence and purpose

8. Self-Care Rituals for Daily Recovery

Daily habits:

- Prayer and meditation
- Scripture reading
- Physical activity
- Rest and nutrition

Emotional care:

- Journaling
- Talking to trusted people
- Allowing emotions without judgment

Key message:

- Healing happens through small daily steps

9. Finding Your “New Normal”

- Life may not return to what it was
- But a meaningful life can still be rebuilt
- Post-traumatic growth:

Greater strength

Deeper empathy

Renewed purpose

10. Call to Action

If you are struggling:

- Speak to someone today
- Seek counseling immediately
- Approach church leadership

If you know someone in pain:

- Reach out
- Offer support
- Walk with them

As a community:

- Break stigma
- Promote mental wellness
- Build compassion

As I conclude, let us remember that when our world turns upside down, it may feel as though everything we once knew has been lost, but even in that moment, we are not without hope. The ground beneath us may feel invisible, but it is still there, steady and waiting for us to find our footing again.

Life may not return to what it once was, but through faith, support and courage, it can become something new, something meaningful, something resilient and something deeply human.

Let us hold onto the truth that God walks with us through every valley, that we are never alone in our suffering and that healing is always possible.

May we leave here today not only comforted, but empowered to seek help, to support one another and to rise again, even when life has brought us to our lowest point. Your story is not over; there is still purpose ahead, there is still strength within you and above all, there is still hope.

I thank you.