



**Life**NIGHT  
Whole People In A Broken World  
*An Interactive Bible Study Series for Summer 2002*

<b>R</b>	Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor. (Matthew 5:3, GN)
	<b>Principle #1:</b> Realize I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable.

- The Bible clearly states that all have sinned. It is my nature to sin and it is your nature too. None of us is untainted! Because of sin, we've all hurt ourselves, we've all hurt other people, and others have hurt us too. This means that each of us needs REPENTANCE and RECOVERY in order to live our lives the way God intended.
- When Israel returned from captivity in the Old Testament, their first project was to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. That part of their story is found in the book of Ezra. He records this rebuilding project, which took 20 years, and symbolized their restored relationship with the Lord. But seventy years after the completion of the Temple, the walls of Jerusalem still lay in ruins. That's where the book of Nehemiah comes in!
- Here is a people who have been able to reestablish REPENTANCE (temple), but unable to reestablish RECOVERY (walls). And as such, they are a type of those in the church who are saved, but still broken. They have been fouled up by accident, dented by disobedience, smashed by sin, ruined by rebellion, or injured through ignorance.
- They may well have been forgiven for the foolish seeds of sin sown "B.C." – before Christ – but the harvest of "sowing to the flesh" doesn't disappear overnight. There is still some "rubble" around.
- **YES!** Salvation does solve the problem of our relationship with God. **NO!** It doesn't dissolve all the problems in our lives. New life in Christ opens the doorway to the SOLUTION, but only by walking through that door and pursuing that way will those problems finally reach RESOLUTION.
- You've undoubtedly heard the expression "time heals all wounds." Unfortunately, it isn't true! Time often makes things much worse! Wounds that are left untended fester and spread infection throughout the entire body. And time only extends the pain if the problem isn't dealt with! WE NEED RECOVERY, or we just repeat the cycle.

- One day a father was trying to take an afternoon nap and his little boy kept bugging him saying, "Daddy, I'm bored." So his father, trying to make up a game, found a picture of a world globe in the newspaper. He ripped it up in about fifty pieces and said, "Son, this is a puzzle. I want you to put it all back together." He laid down to finish his nap, thinking he would get at least an hour or two of sleep. But in about 15 minutes, the little boy woke him up saying, "Daddy, I've got it finished. It's all put together." "You're kidding!" He knew his son didn't know all the positions of the nations, so the dad asked, "How did you do that?" The son replied, "Dad, there was a picture of a person on the back of that page and when I got my person put together the world looked just fine."
- Isn't it amazing how much better the world looks when your person is put together in the right way? We're going to talk in this series about how to handle the hurts, habits, and hang-ups that mess us up.
- **Isaiah 57:18 (GN)** I have seen how they acted, but I will heal them. I will lead them and help them, and I will comfort those who mourn.
- This promise contains four parts of the RECOVERY that God wants to accomplish in your life:
  - If you've been hurt, God wants to HEAL you.
  - If you're confused, God wants to LEAD you.
  - If you feel you can't change, God wants to HELP you.
  - If you feel no one understands, God wants to COMFORT you.
- The fact is that life is tough. We live in an imperfect world. We're hurt by other people and we hurt ourselves and we hurt other people. This series is for everybody. Everyone in this room needs recovery, unless you've lived a perfect life. But if you haven't lived a perfect life, if you've ever been hurt, if you've ever had a hang-up or a habit that you'd like to get rid of, you need RECOVERY.
- The good news is this: regardless of the problem you need recovery from, whether it's emotional, financial, relational, spiritual, sexual or anything else, the steps to recovery are always the same.
- Many people are familiar with the classic 12-step recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous (there are over 500,000 groups, 20 million North Americans every week, and it has helped many people), but did you know that the Bible is the ultimate guide to the principles of recovery? When Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount, He began by stating EIGHT WAYS TO BE HAPPY (the Beatitudes).

- From a conventional viewpoint, most of these statements don't make sense; in fact, they sound like contradictions. But when you fully understand what Jesus is saying, you'll realize that these eight principles are GOD'S ROAD TO RECOVERY, wholeness, spiritual growth and Christian maturity.
- In the next eight weeks, we want to study these eight principles through an acrostic of the word RECOVERY. Let's begin ...

<b>R</b>	Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor. (Matthew 5:3, GN)
	<b>Principle #1:</b> Realize I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong things and that my life is unmanageable.

- The "R" in "recovery" stands for "REALIZE." The first step in my journey to wholeness is to realize that I'm not God and admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do wrong things. I must admit that my life - with me in control - is simply unmanageable.
- Do you ever stay up late when you know you need sleep?
- Do you ever eat more calories than your body needs?
- Do you ever feel you ought to exercise but you don't?
- Do you ever know the right thing to do, but you don't do it?
- Do you ever know something is wrong, but you do it anyway?
- Have you ever known you should be unselfish, but you acted in a selfish way instead?
- Have you ever tried to control some person or situation by your words, actions or moods, and found that it only made things worse?
- Does this sound vaguely familiar to you? If your answer is "yes" to any of those questions, then welcome to the human race! We're all in need of recovery from something!
- **Romans 7:15-17 (LB)** I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to--what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking. But I can't help myself because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things.
- The first step to recovery is to understand the **CAUSE** of the problem. We also need to understand the **CONSEQUENCES** of the problem, and finally we need to discover the **CURE** for the problem.
- **THE CAUSE OF MY PROBLEM IS MY SINFUL NATURE!**

- The Bible has a word for this tendency toward self-defeating behavior – SIN! My sinful nature gets me in all kinds of problems. I do things that aren't good for me and I don't do things that are good for me. I respond the wrong way when I'm hurt and it just increases the hurt, rather than lessening it. I try to fix problems and often when I finish they are worse than when I started.
- **Proverbs 14:12 (NAB)** Sometimes a way seems right to a man, but the end of it leads to death.
- Behind all of my problems is this sinful attitude: I WANT TO BE GOD! I want to decide what's right and what's wrong. I want to call the shots and make my own rules. I want to put myself at the center of the universe, be my own boss and live my own way. If it feels good, then I want to do it! I don't want anyone else telling me what to do with my life or how I should act. That's called playing God.
- What I'm really saying is, "I want to control." And the more insecure you are, the more you're driven to control. You want to control yourself, control other people, and control your environment. And you are driven to do this ... that's called playing God, and it is mankind's oldest problem! CONTROL IS THE REAL ISSUE!

#### • HOW DO WE PLAY GOD?

1. **We try to control our image.**  
We want to control what other people think of us; we don't want them to know what we are really like. So we wear masks and deny our feelings, hoping to impress them. Why am I afraid to tell you who I am? Because if I'm honest and you don't like me, ME is all I've got!
2. **We try to control other people.**  
Parents try to control kids, kids try to control parents, wives try to control husbands, husbands try to control wives. Friends try to control their friends. Are there office politics in your office? Do countries try to control other countries? Yes! We use lots of tools to attempt to manipulate each other! We use guilt, fear, praise, the silent treatment, anger, moods, etc.
3. **We try to control our problems.**  
We're really quite good at this – we use phrases like: "I can handle it," "It's really not a problem," "I'm fine," "I don't need any help," "I can quit any time," "I'll work it out on my own." That's just somebody trying to play God! But the more you try to fix the problem yourself, the worse it gets!

#### 4. **We try to control our pain.**

Have you ever thought how much time you spend running from pain? Trying to avoid it, deny it, escape it, reduce it, postpone it. People try to postpone pain in many different ways. We try to postpone our pain by eating or not eating, by getting drunk or smoking or doing drugs or by getting in and out of relationships. Or you develop some kind of compulsive habit to try to control your pain. Or you become abusive, angry, critical, judgmental or depressed to hide your pain. There are many ways we try to control our pain!

#### WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF PLAYING GOD?

##### 1. **FEAR.**

When I try to control everything I get afraid, afraid that somebody's going to find out who I really am, that I'm a fake, that I really don't have it all together, that I'm not perfect. So I don't want to let anybody get real close to me because they'll find out I'm scared inside. And so we fake it and fill our lives with fear, afraid that somebody's going to reject us or not like us because they don't really know what we're like. We think, "they only like an image of me – if they really knew what I was like, they wouldn't like me."

**Genesis 3:10, NCV** The man answered, "I heard you walking in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

##### 2. **FRUSTRATION.**

Have you ever seen the carnival game played with the mallet? You slam one thing down and another pops up. That's life! We whack down one compulsion and another one pops up. We whack down one problem and another one pops up. We whack down one conflict and another one pops up. It's so frustrating because you can't get them all knocked down at the same time. The frustration you feel is the symptom of a deeper problem that you have not dealt with – you're not God, and when you try to control things, it doesn't work!

**Romans 7:21, LB** It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.

**Psalms 32:3, LB** There was a time when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was. But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration.

##### 3. **FATIGUE.**

It's tiring playing God – denial takes an incredible amount of energy! We try to hide our pain by keeping busy because we don't like the way we feel when we slow down! So we run from pain by constantly being on the go with work, hobbies, sports, or even church! Ask yourself: "What is it that I'm really running from?"

**Psalm 32:4-5, LB** All day and all night your hand was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day until I finally admitted all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them.

#### 4. **FAILURE.**

When you try to play God, that's one job description you're guaranteed to fail at. You need to be honest and open about your weaknesses, faults and failures. In fact, our church needs to be a safe place where real people can talk about real problems, real hurts, real hang-ups, real habits, and not be blown away by our judgmental attitude! We are a family of fellow strugglers – there's not a person in this room that has it all together. We're all weak in different areas and we need each other.

**Proverbs 28:13, GN** You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you.

- Basically, there are two things every human being needs to learn: (1) There is a God. (2) You are not Him!
- Because I am not God, trying to control myself, other people and situations completely wears me out! God did not create me to be General Manager of the Universe – that position is already filled!
- **Psalm 6:6 (LB)** I am worn out with pain; every night my pillow is wet with tears.
- Throughout life, we all learn various coping systems that seem to work for a time when we need to get attention or block out pain. But as the years progress, these same ideas confuse and cloud our view of the truth, our perception of ourselves, and our expectations of those around us. The longer we hold on to them, the more unrealistic and distorted they become, eventually growing into DENIAL!
- **Jeremiah 6:14 (LB)** You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!
- **2 Peter 2:19 (GN)** They promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of destructive habits—for we are slaves of anything that has conquered us.
- Unfortunately, it is human nature that we never change until our pain becomes greater than the fear of change. We don't change when we see the light – we change when we feel the heat (and things start falling apart)! God whispers to us in our pleasure, but He shouts to us in our pain. Pain is God's megaphone. It's a warning light on the dashboard of life – let it motivate you to get help and face the issues!

#### **WHAT IS THE CURE FOR MY PROBLEM?**

- The very first step to recovery is to REALIZE that I'm not God, and that I am powerless to control myself, let alone anything else. I HAVE TO ADMIT I HAVE A PROBLEM BEFORE I CAN GET HELP!
- **2 Corinthians 1:9, LB** We felt we were doomed to die and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God.
- The Bible teaches that in admitting my weakness I will find strength. This is exactly the opposite of what our culture teaches us!
- **2 Corinthians 12:9, GN** My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak.
- Admitting I'm not God means I recognize three important facts of life. **Maturity comes when you recognize these three facts:**
  1. **I admit I am powerless to change my past.**

It hurt and I still remember it, but all the resentment in the world isn't going to change the past.
  2. **I admit I am powerless to control other people.**

I am responsible for my actions, not those of other people. All of my gimmicks won't control their lives.
  3. **I admit I am powerless to cope with my harmful behaviors.**

Good intentions and will power are not enough. I need a source of power beyond myself. I need God, because He made me to need Him!
- **James 4:6, NRSV** God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- What is grace? **GRACE IS THE POWER TO CHANGE!** Grace is the power God gives me to make the changes in my life that I want to make – and, more importantly, that He wants me to make! And there's only one way to get grace! God only gives it to the humble!
- What needs changing in your life? What hurt or hang-up or habit have you been trying to ignore? It's hard for most of us to admit that we have a problem because it's humbling. It's saying, "I don't have it all together as much as I'd like everybody to think that I do."
- When you tell that to somebody, they're not going to be surprised ... because they know it, God knows it, and you know it! You just need to be honest and admit it ... then God can go to work on your behalf!