



LifeNIGHT

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

R	Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor. (Matthew 5:3, GN)
	Principle #1: 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.
E	Happy are those who mourn. (Matthew 5:4, GN)
	Principle #2: Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover.

- I'll never forget the 1973 flood in Fredericton. My brother and I had bunk beds downstairs, and I jumped out of the top bunk on a Sunday morning to find a few inches of water covering the entire basement floor. Needless to say, Mom and Dad didn't get to church that day.
- My dad is a lot like me, a very determined (some would say stubborn) kind of guy, and he was not too happy about how the flooding upset the routine around our house over the next few days. We were in a low lying area on the city's northside, and the entire neighborhood was affected as the water just kept getting higher and higher. In fact, while all of us kids were at school one day, the water level finally got to the place that the house became cut off by the fast-rising flood waters. The Daily Gleaner even sent a photographer out in a boat to our neighborhood. When he got there, he found my mom sitting on the roof as things were floating by. He climbed up on the roof with her and the first thing he saw was a couch float by. The entire neighborhood was a mess! He continued to snap pictures as Mom pointed out our lawn furniture floating in the current. A small car owned by one of the neighbors came floating by next! After they had been there awhile, he noticed something strange. He saw a hat float by, but after it got about 20 feet past the house, it started floating back upstream. Then it got about 20 feet on the other side of the house and reversed direction again. He watched it seven or eight times and finally said to my mom, "Mrs. Woodward, do you have any idea what's going on with that hat?" "Oh yes," Mom said, "That's my husband Raymond. He said he was going to mow the lawn come hell or high water."
- The problem we have today is that a lot of us are still focusing on mowing the lawn while the whole house is floating downstream!

R	Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor. (Matthew 5:3, GN)
	Principle #1: 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.

- **FROM LAST WEEK:** All of us need recovery because the world isn't perfect, and none of us is perfect. We've all been hurt, we all have hang-ups, and we all have habits we'd like to change. Everybody needs recovery. The good thing is that the steps out are the same regardless of what your problem is!
- The root cause of our pain is our desire is to control things, and the more insecure you are, the more you want to control things. You want to be God! But when we try to control everything we end up with fatigue, frustration, and failure.
- How do you break out of that? The first step is that you have to get past denial. **Denial is what keeps us from moving into recovery.** We excuse ourselves, and we accuse others. And all of this is just a defense mechanism that allows us to live in denial!

- Have you seen this lost-and-found ad in the newspaper? "Lost Dog. Three legs. Blind in one eye. Missing right ear. Tail broken. Recently castrated. Answers to the name of 'Lucky.'" That's what I call denial!



- What's the antidote to denial? What makes me finally face up to my problems? **God's antidote for denial is pain!** We rarely change when we see the light, but we do change when we feel the heat.
- God uses three **denial busters** to get your attention:
 1. **CRISIS.** Illness, stress, loss of job, etc.
 2. **CONFRONTATION.** Someone cares enough to say, "You're blowing it! You're about to lose your family, health, or job."

There's an old saying in Texas: "If one person calls you a horse's rear, ignore it. If two people call you a horse's rear, look in the mirror. If three people call you a horse's rear, buy a saddle."

If three people call you a workaholic — buy a saddle. If three people say you have a problem with anger — buy a saddle. If three people say you need to get some help — buy a saddle. Pain is like a fire alarm — you ignore it at your peril!

3. **CATASTROPHE.** Hopefully, God won't have to let the bottom fall out of everything before you will listen to Him. What sometimes happens is that the Lord steps back and lets us reap what we have sown, feeling the full impact of our own stupid decisions. "You want to be God — okay!"

- **FROM LAST WEEK:** The first step in recovery is to 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. **This is the reality step.**

E	Happy are those who mourn. (Matthew 5:4, GN)
	Principle #2: Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover.

- **The second step is the hope step.** The good news is that there is a power you can plug into to handle things you can't handle on your own. It's the power of Jesus Christ!
- **Hebrews 11:6, NCV** Without faith no one can please God. Anyone who comes to God must believe that he is real and that he rewards those who truly want to find him.

There are three parts to taking Step Two in this road to recovery:

1. **Acknowledge God's existence.**

Most of us have no problem with this; there just aren't that many atheists left anymore (less than 2% of North Americans). Why? Because we know more about the universe today than ever before! The more scientific discoveries we make about the universe, the less people are willing to say, "I believe it all just happened by accident." In fact, it takes more faith not to believe in a Creator than it does to believe in one. I could take a watch completely apart, put the pieces in a paper bag and shake it up, and if it came out as a watch the odds would be pretty incredible. Where there is a creation there must be a creator. Where there is design there must be a designer. Where there is an effect there must be a cause.

Romans 1:20, NAS For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Psalms 19:1, NIV The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Psalm 14:1, CEV Only a fool would say, "There is no God!" People like that are worthless; they are heartless and cruel and never do right.

The Bible says it's foolish not to believe in God. It's irrational and illogical not to acknowledge that He exists. It is an absolute fact that God still changes lives today! So, the real issue for most people is not "Is there a God?" but rather "What kind of God is He? What is He really like?"

Unfortunately, most of us get our ideas about God by thinking He's like our parents. That's tragic, because if your father was aloof and unloving then you tend to think that God is aloof and unloving. If your parent was somebody to be feared then you subconsciously think, "I need to be afraid of God." If your father was abusive, then you tend to think that God is abusive. If your parent was uncaring, then you transfer it over to God.

Instead of God making you in His image, you make God in your image!

Often you hear someone say, "My idea about God is ..." Who made you the authority? Just because you have a certain idea about God, does that mean it's right? No! It doesn't matter what you and I think, it only matters what God is really like!

2. Understand God's character.

We must not only acknowledge God's existence, we must also understand His character. What is He really like? Until I know what God is really like, I can't trust Him. I'm not going to trust something or someone that I don't know anything about. But fortunately, God wants us to know what He's like. So He came to earth 2000 years ago in the form of a human being. He came as Jesus Christ!

Colossians 1:15-17, LB ¹⁵Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and, in fact, ¹⁶Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we can't; the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities; all were made by Christ for his own use and glory. ¹⁷He was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together.

If you want to know what God is like, just look at Jesus!

A. God knows all about my situation.

God knows all about my habits, hurts, and hang-ups. He knows the good and bad. "Nobody knows what I'm going through" – WRONG, God does!

Psalm 56:8, GN You know how troubled I am; you have kept a record of my tears. Aren't they listed in your book?

Psalm 31:7, LB I am radiant with joy because of your mercy, for you have listened to my troubles and have seen the crisis in my soul.

Psalm 69:5, GN My sins, O God, are not hidden from you; you know how foolish I have been.

There is nothing off the record with God. He knows the good days, the bad days, the dumb stunts, the foolish decisions, and amazingly He still loves you! The fact is, God is not shocked by your sin. He knew it was coming, long before you did. He even knows why you did it, even when you don't know your own motivation. He's not shocked or surprised, because He knows you.

B. God cares about my situation.

Not only does God KNOW about your situation, He CARES about your situation. He knows that we are not superhuman, and that we fail, but He loves us UNCONDITIONALLY.

God's love is not based on your PERFORMANCE, but on His CHARACTER. He wants to be the loving Father that some of you never had.

Psalm 103:13-14, LB ¹³He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him. ¹⁴For he knows we are but dust.

Jeremiah 31:3, NRSV I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Romans 5:8, GN But God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!

C. God can change me and my situation.

Not only does God KNOW about your situation, not only does He CARE about your situation, but He can CHANGE you and your situation! Sometimes He changes you, sometimes He changes the situation, sometimes He changes both. He's just waiting on you!

Ephesians 1:19, LB I pray that you will begin to understand how incredibly great his power is to help those who believe him.

Do you ever find yourself paralyzed by procrastination? "I know I need to do this, but I just can't make the change." God says, "I've got the power!" If Jesus Christ can rise from the dead, He can raise a dead relationship, He can raise a person back to health, He can raise you above the clutches of an addiction, He can raise you above the past so those memories stop haunting you, if you just trust Him.

Luke 18:27, GN Jesus answered, "What is humanly impossible is possible for God."

Luke 18:27, MES "No chance at all," Jesus said, "if you think you can pull it off by yourself. Every chance in the world if you trust God to do it."

Here's the point: The longer you postpone asking God for help, the fewer days you have on this earth being all God meant for you to be. Some people focus all their life on the past. That's like driving a car looking in the rearview mirror all the time. A rearview mirror is helpful, because it gives you perspective, and looking at your past does give you perspective, but if you only look at your past you don't have a present! Whatever you focus on tends to repeat, so if you just keep living in the past, you tend to repeat it. ASK GOD FOR HELP!

3. Accept God's offer to help me.

It's obviously not enough just to believe in God, because that hasn't wiped away the hurt. It takes more than mere belief to plug into God's power. But it's worth the effort, because here is what He offers:

Philippians 2:13, PHI For it is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve his purpose.

Willpower on your own is not enough; good intentions are not enough. You need God to give you the will and the power to help you change. "But I don't even know if I want to change." Then say, "God, I'm willing to be made willing." Spirit-led living is the only way to live!

2 Timothy 1:7, GN For the Spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, his Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control.

I want power to break habits I can't break. I want to love people and let go of hurts so I don't build up walls in my relationships. I want self-control to master myself and my emotions. It all comes through God's Spirit!

There is a simple, yet profound principle in the modern universe: **Things work best when plugged in.** Plug in to God's power today!