

Lesson 3

HOPE

Principle 2: Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover.

“Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

Step 2: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

“For it is God who is works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)

Introduction

In Principle 2 we earnestly believe that God exists, that we matter to Him, and that He has the power to help us recover. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “Anyone who comes to [God] must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Psalm 62:5 says, “Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.”

In the first principle, we admitted we were *powerless*. It is through this admission of our powerlessness that we are able to *believe* and *receive* God’s power to help us recover. We do need to be careful, though, not to just cover the bottomless pit of our hurts, hang-ups, and habits with layers of denial or just try some quick-fix. Instead, we need to keep those hurts exposed to the light so that through God’s power they can truly heal.

It’s in the second principle that we come to believe God exists, that we are important to Him, and that we are able to find the one true Higher Power, Jesus Christ! We come to understand that God wants to fill our lives with His love, His joy, and His presence.

One of my very favorite parables is in Luke 15, the story of the Prodigal Son. Though the story is about a father’s love for his lost son, it is really a picture of God the Father’s love for you. God’s love is looking for you, no matter how lost

you feel. God's searching love can find you, no matter how many times you may have fallen into sin. God's hands of mercy are reaching out to pick you up and to love and forgive you.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's where you will find hope, and that's why I call Principle 2 the "hope" principle.

Hope

Let's look at what the word HOPE means in Principle 2:

Higher Power

Openness to change

Power to change

Expect to change

H stands for HIGHER power. Our Higher Power is the one and only true Higher Power and He has a name: Jesus Christ!

In the past you may have believed in Jesus' existence and you may have even attended church. But what you will find in Principle 2 is a personal relationship with Christ. You will see that Jesus desires a hands-on, day-to-day, moment-to-moment relationship with us. For He can do for us what we have never been able to do for ourselves. Romans 11:36 (TLB) says, "Everything comes from God alone. Everything lives by his power."

Many people today believe their doubts and doubt their beliefs! Have you ever seen an idea? Have you ever seen love? Have you ever seen faith? Of course not. You may have seen *acts* of faith and love, but the real things—the lasting things—in the world are the invisible spiritual realities.

This leads us to the first four words of the second step: "We came to believe ..." Saying that we "came to believe" in anything describes a process. Belief is a result of consideration, doubt, reasoning, and concluding.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9 (PH), Jesus tells us, "My grace is enough for you: for where there is weakness, my power is shown the more completely."

The next letter in hope is *O*, which stands for OPENNESS to change.

What is the process that leads to solid belief, which leads you to change your life? Let's look at the first four words in Step 2 again: "We came to believe ..."

- "We came ..." We took the first step when we attended our first recovery meeting!
- "We came to ..." We stopped denying our hurts, hang-ups, and habits!
- "We came to believe ..." We started to believe and receive God's power to help us recover.

Hope is openness to change. Sometimes we are afraid to change, even if our past was painful. We resist change because of our fear of the unknown, or, in our despair, we think we don't deserve anything better.

Here's the good news: Hope opens doors where despair closes them! Hope discovers what can be done instead of grumbling about what can't be done.

Throughout your life you will continue to encounter hurts and trials that you are powerless to change, but with God's help you can be open to allow those circumstances and situations to change you—to make you better—not bitter.

Ephesians 4:23 (TLB) gives us a challenge to that end: "Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better.... You must be a new and different person."

How will you do that? The letter *P* tells us about POWER to change.

In the past, we may have wanted to change and were unable to do so; we could not free ourselves from our hurts, hang-ups, or habits. In Principle 2, we understand that God's power can change us and our situation. Philippians 4:13 (TLB) confirms it: "For I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power."

Power to change comes from God's grace. You see, hope draws its power from a deep trust in God, like that of the psalmist, who wrote, "Lead me; teach me; for you are the God who gives me salvation. I have no hope except in you" (Psalm 25:5 TLB).

In Principle 2, we begin to understand that God's power can change us and our situation. And once we tap into that power, right actions—Christ-like actions—will follow naturally as by-products of working the principles and following the one and only Higher Power, Jesus Christ.

The last letter in hope is *E*: EXPECT to change.

Remember you are only at the second principle. Don't quit before the miracle happens! With God's help, the changes that you have longed for are just *steps* away. Philippians 1:6 (TLB) expresses my heart: "I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns."

You know, you can't do anything unless you get started, so how much faith do you need to get started?

Matthew 17:20 tells us, "For if you have faith even as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing would be impossible for you."

It's reassuring to know that you do not need large amounts of faith to begin the recovery process. You need only a small amount, "as small as a mustard seed," to effect change, to begin to move your mountains of hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

Wrap-Up

Eternal life does not begin with death; it begins with faith! Hebrews 11:1 tells us what faith is: “Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Faith—even faith the size of a mustard seed so small you can hardly see it—is the avenue to salvation. You can’t find salvation through intellectual understanding, gifts of money, good works, or attending church. No! The way to find salvation, is described in Romans 10:9: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Yes, all you need is just a little faith. If you will put the faith you have in Jesus, your life will be changed! You will find hope in the only Higher Power, Jesus Christ. His Spirit will come with supernatural power into your heart. It can happen to you! It happened to me!

Tonight I encourage you to take this step of hope. It will give you the courage to reach out and hold Christ’s hand and face the present with confidence and the future with realistic expectancy.

Simply put, my life without Christ is a hopeless end; with Him it is an endless hope.