God’s Process For Life Change  
“Moving From Despair To Hope” 
(Part 2)

Intro:

- Life change is impossible without hope. You can’t have hope without belief. What you choose to believe will either produce hope in your life or steal hope from you. It will either lead you to life change or increase the despair and bondage.
- **Kingdom of Heaven clip** (Explain context – Balian – Orlando Bloom)
- For some of you, your lives are being ransacked – under attack / you feel surrounded / hopeless / there’s no way out of the mess you’re in. It’s time to choose what you believe.
- When it comes to God’s process for Life Change, there are 3 profound beliefs that will move our lives from despair to hope…that will open our lives up to change.

I. **I Believe God Exists**

- Before the majority of you conclude this principal doesn’t apply to you…let’s see. C’mon, we’re all here because we believe in God. But, let’s see how the Bible defines / explains believing in God.

  *Heb. 11:6 “So you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that there is a God and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.” (NLT)*

  A. We don’t pursue something we don’t believe in

    “Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that there is a God…”

    1. We don’t move in God’s direction unless we believe that He is a viable option. Unless we really believe we can actually “come to Him”…approach Him / experience Him.

    2. This verse is not describing a mere intellectual agreement that there is a God out there somewhere. (Not intelligent design) This is describing a God who is approachable / personal / tangible / very real. This is who I believe in.

    3. To not pursue God is to not believe in Him. Therefore, it is possible to say we believe in God yet our lives demonstrate that we really don’t. What we have is an intellectual belief / not a personal faith.
4. Do we really have belief if we don’t ever pray / read His word / don’t ever allow the relationship to impact our daily lives? If there is no evidence of pursuing a relationship with God? Is that faith? Is this really believing?
   • Monster Quest TV program. – Pursuing Bigfoot – Their Belief = pursuit. They believe these things exist therefore they pursue them. When I’m elk hunting, I’m not looking for Bigfoot. I don’t believe!
   • Many people don’t pursue God because they really don’t believe in Him either. You only pursue what you believe.

5. Many people do not pursue God because they believe in a God that doesn’t exist. (explain) People believe myths about God. Not the God of the Bible but their own ideas about God. If you are believing myths about God, is that genuine faith?

6. Other people refuse to pursue God because they are rejecting a God that doesn’t exist. (explain) Some people are angry at God because they are convinced He is unfair / impersonal / angry / obsessed with punishment / He just doesn’t care about my life and the struggles I face. But is this really the God of the Bible? NO. You’re rejecting a myth.

7. Who do you really believe in? Life change begins by believing there is a God I can approach…a God I can pursue…a God I can know, and I choose to move in His direction! That is believing in God!

B. We don’t pursue something we don’t believe is worth the effort
   “...He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.”
   1. How many people really believe this? If I pursue God there is a reward for doing this. It’s worth seeking after God. That’s the promise! You may believe in God, but do you believe He’s worth the effort?
   2. I’ll be honest with you. I don’t pursue things where I don’t believe the effort is worth the result. Fishing – I call the fish count # (Alaska story) Hunting – I look at the success rate / School as a student / Story behind my blog / We’re wired this way!
   3. How many people really / honestly / sincerely believe that God will reward you if you seek after Him? Now, you’re thinking…reward me how? What kind of rewards are we talking about? Should I buy a Power ball ticket?
   5. Is this the type of God we believe in? We desperately need to, because all these things and more are the rewards for those who sincerely seek Him.
   6. Believing in a God I can approach and believing He will reward me for pursuing Him gives me hope. Genuine life change takes place as we begin to have hope. No matter where you’re at in life, or how defeated you may feel,
you can begin to place your hope in God today? Choosing to believe in Him and moving towards Him will change your life!

II. I Believe I Matter To Him

- I can’t tell you how many people I have talked to struggle with this.

Luke 15:11-31 – Story of the Prodigal Son - summarize

A. God loves you despite your behavior

Luke 15:20 “And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.” (NLT)

1. Some of you really do wonder what God thinks of you today. If you returned to Him what type of welcome would you receive? What does He really think about you after yet another failure? How could He think anything but contempt for you?

2. The answer: He is filled with love and compassion towards you! He loves you despite your behavior. He doesn’t love you because you’ve earned His love. He loves you despite all your imperfections / sin / failed attempts

3. Some people cut themselves off from God’s help because they are convinced God is so disappointed in them that He wouldn’t help them now no matter what they did. “What do you want?” - How hopeless!

4. You matter to God more than anything. The cross is the proof of this. God wants you to turn to Him more than anything in the world. He longs for this!

5. No matter what you’re failures have been, God wants you to embrace the hope that comes from knowing He still loves you as much as He ever has.

6. He doesn’t love you because of your behavior. He loves you in spite of it! Believing this will liberate you to change. Your life can never change until you finally believe the truth that God loves you regardless.

7. Knowing you’re unconditionally loved transforms you. This is what gives you hope to go home.

B. God welcomes you home as His child despite your behavior

- We know we’re not worthy of this honor (like the son’s response)

Luke 15:22-24 “Quick! Bring the finest rob in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf...for we must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found. So the party began. (NLT)

1. We matter so much to God that when we return to Him, He will never treat us like a servant / second class believer / He will always treat you like a privileged son / a daughter / as part of His own family.
2. Sons and daughters have access to their father / they have access to his resources / they have access to his protection / servants do not. God treats us like His children so that our lives can be transformed.

3. God wants to get rid of your rages and spiritual poverty and allow you to enjoy the bounty that comes from being a part of His family.

4. How can we have hope for life change if we struggle believing that we matter to Him? If we’re afraid to go home because of our failures wondering what type of response we’ll get? OR, thinking that we will always be beneath those who didn’t stray…that God will treat us different.

5. Our lives begin to change when we believe what the Scripture teaches plainly…that despite my behavior / my past / despite being in the pig pen of life…I matter to Him. So come on home and be part of the family! Some of you desperately need to embrace this today = Hope!

III. I Believe He Has The Power To Change My Life

II Cor. 4:7 “But this precious treasure – this light and power that now shines within us – is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own.” (NLT)

II Cor. 3:5 “It is not that we think we can do anything of lasting value by ourselves. Our only power and success come from God.” (NLT)

A. God’s power is real

1. God’s power has been so misrepresented in our culture that it is looked upon with such skepticism, we hardly believe in it anymore. Some religious leaders have used it to promote their own agendas / personalities / pad their own pockets.

2. They take advantage of vulnerable people. We all really long for something more…for a spiritual power that is real and transforming. We want our lives to change. Sometimes this longing makes us vulnerable to false promises.

3. Sometimes religion becomes a substitute for God’s power. II Tim. 3:5 “They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that can make them godly.” (NLT) They reject God’s power that would transform their lives. They have embraced a substitute for the real thing.

   • God started me down this road many years ago. I was exposed to a lot of religion, not much power. I started observing people looking for something authentic…something that matched Scripture. Disenchanted

4. Religion tries to change people from the outside in using external restraints (rules / legalism / fear / guilt / condemnation) God’s power transforms people from the inside out. It changes their thinking / their hearts / their motives / and empowers people in their daily lives.

5. I believe the greatest demonstration of God’s power is not some miraculous event (someone getting healed / God intervening in your circumstances / God’s miraculous provision – I believe in all these things!)
6. I believe the greatest demonstration of God’s power is a transformed life! People can explain away a lot of miracles. What they can’t explain away is a life changed by the power of God! A life that walks with consistency in God’s power everyday.

7. We have to stop denying the power that can make us godly. This power is real and it changes our real life. How can we have any hope if this power is not real? If this power is not real all we have is religion! How hopeless!

B. God’s power is available to me
1. The reality of God’s power in your life is the norm. It is not reserved for “super Christians” / only a select few / God’s favorites / It was intended for the average, run of the mill believer. That’s what makes it so amazing! (It’s in our weak bodies as a testimony to the world.)
2. So often I see people who give their lives to Jesus and then try to live the Christian life in their own power. They try to change things in their lives in their own strength. Then, they fail miserably – guilt / question God /
   - It’s kind of like buying a new car and then you just push it around without ever turning the engine on. Stupid, I know…but this is what a lot of Christians do. They are trying to empower their Christian life instead of allowing Christ to empower them.
3. Our relationship with God doesn’t work this way. God knows that we can’t change ourselves. That’s why He makes His power available to us to experience each and every day. It’s not about your effort!
4. You’re thinking, “Great, bring on the power!” “How do I experience this?” You first choose to believe that God has power to change your life and this power is available to you. It begins with a choice to believe.
5. It’s has to be more complicated then that! No it’s not. When we choose to believe what God says is true, it opens our lives up to His resources. When you eventually quit fighting what He says is true and simply trust Him. This is when our lives begin to change.

So, can we do this today? Can we move from despair to hope because we make a conscious choice to believe what God has said in His word?
   - Can we choose to believe in God? (A God I can pursue and a God who will reward me if I do?)
   - Can we choose to believe that we matter to Him despite our behavior? That God wants you to come to Him as His son / daughter
   - Can we choose to believe that God has power available to change your life? That this power is made available to you.