

## **Finding Hope, Love, and Real Transformation**

People everywhere long deeply for unconditional love. Hope gives us the strength and determination to keep seeking that love. We also desperately want real transformation that forever frees us from past guilt, shame, fear and failure, and makes our broken relationships whole. We're not always capable of putting words to these longings, but they reside at the core of every human being.

### **Our Problem**

The problem is, we live in a broken world, made up of broken people. All of us. We can see it in the evils of human trafficking, and all the way down to our personal relationships as well.

People try many things to find wholeness and meaning, hoping that lasting relationships, purposeful work, religiosity in one of its varied forms (most end with "-ism," and includes atheism), volunteerism, hobbies, sports, holiday celebrations and a host of materialistic pursuits) will provide what they seek. When these efforts fail to deliver—as they all inevitably do—we often seek to mask the pain with addictions to food, alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping or another more socially-acceptable obsession. Most eventually discover these masks to be lies, however, that only lead to further brokenness.

As it turns out, God has been pursuing us all along—but we've been ignoring him. We have our excuses: We were deeply disappointed by the failings of someone who claimed to speak for God, or, worse still, we have been abused by someone who turned out to be a wolf in clerical robes. The true nature of God and his affection for us has often been obscured by our broken religious systems run by broken men and women.

Our brokenness led to fear and shame. We thought God would reject us, so in anger we put up walls of pride and arrogance. We sought to control our own destinies. We became rebels.

### **God's Solution**

But God's offer of love and acceptance has not changed. To remind us, he sent his son Jesus to die on a cross. And then to remove all doubt, he raised him from the dead for hundreds to see.

Now all that stands between your deep longing for love, hope and transformation is you. It's so simple a child can understand it, which is precisely why many of us refuse to run into God's open arms—we're too proud. We're addicted to the illusion that we're in control of our lives, and we're afraid to step out in faith, believing that God will catch us.

Throughout the Bible the message is clear: If we humble ourselves and choose to trust him to handle all our brokenness—including the many things we ourselves have broken (the Bible uses the word *sin*)—he promises to restore the relationship with him that he's always intended.

And guess what? God's incredible, unconditional, lavish love is ours to enjoy—forever! Hope floods our soul. Real transformation begins as, with the power and strength he now provides for us, we can mend broken relationships, and break free from the guilt, shame, fear and failure that have crippled us for so long.



When we accept his offer and begin to follow him in steps of obedience, we're released from "the spirit of slavery" that causes us to "fall back into fear." Instead, he gives us "the spirit of adoption as sons [and daughters], by whom we cry Abba [or *Papa*], Father!"—a father that far surpasses even the best of earthly fathers. And he deposits his Spirit within to guide and transform our lives. The Spirit also pours more and more of God's love into us, and through us into the world. That's what the "kingdom of God" is all about.

Do you want to learn more about restoring your relationship with God? He's waiting. If you have questions or would like someone to pray with you, email us at [GoodNews@extremelove.com](mailto:GoodNews@extremelove.com). We'll do our best to respond within 24 hours.