

Testimonies to the Begin a New Life Program

Testimonies to the overall program

“Thank you for the *Begin a New Life* seminar. It was the most amazing spiritual experience I’ve ever had.” (C. B.)

“A big thanks for offering this path. It’s the best thing I’ve ever done.” (B. P.)

“This process is the best gift I’ve been given in a long time.” (D. R.)

“I’ve gotten more out of this process in the first two months of using it than I’ve gotten out of thousands of hours of counseling.” (G. S.)

“Thank you for the *Begin a New Life* workshop. I feel like I came away with new, high-quality tools for working on my own personal project called *life*, plus an instruction book with all the necessary game-winning plays.” (P. C.)

“I have looked all of my life for things that could help me, and none of them has worked completely or gotten me to the real heart of things. They’ve worked to some extent and gotten me closer to “there”—but not entirely. *This* process works! *This* gets me there.” (E. I.)

“In March of 2007 I attended a *Begin a New Life* workshop. When it came time to work through Step 1 of the process (*Self Examination*) we were invited each to find a private place in the building for doing that work. I found a cozy spot next to a window that looked out into nature.

Before I started putting words to paper I felt an emotional shift happen inside me. There was this odd but not uncomfortable feeling that was reminiscent of when I was eight or nine years old. I was still me, but with a pervasive sense of how I used to feel at that age. It was as though I had gone back in time and become that little girl again.

My thoughts were clear as I wrote, and by the time I finished my work and read through what I’d allowed myself to write, I felt as if I’d opened my heart and soul. This experience of self examination took me to a place within myself that I had not dared look at before. And now, having looked at one key issue in my life square on, I was filled with such a flood of feelings that I barely knew how to handle them.

After I finished Step 1, I came back to the main room to find the workshop presenter. I wanted to ask him if he had any idea of where this process could take a person emotionally, and if he had planned on having *psychologists* standing by for those of us who might need help with what had just been unlocked!

As it turned out, the remaining three steps of the process addressed what I had discovered and agonized over in the first step. There aren't words to describe the power and grace that this process has brought to my life, and especially to my relationship with God. I hope that people will be able to trust this process and see what it can bring to their life too." (B. P.)

Impact of the program on people's lives

"Thank you for the *BNL* workshop. The new life that I've started is so much better than I could have imagined." (C. B.)

"Since I've been home from the seminar, the difficult issue that I've been wrestling with has completely stopped. I am amazed! Using the worksheets got to the bottom of what was behind my behavior. Thanks so much for sharing this with the world." (L. S.)

"Thanks for all the work that's been done to make this process so accessible and usable. I have actually seen the results that you were speaking of, and I'm blown away. As a result of the workshop, I have made one initial effort to change myself, and it now seems like everyone around me is behaving differently too. How does that work? I've already seen a positive change at home and at work! Keep up the good work!" (S. P.)

"I'm writing to tell you how the *BNL* workshop has already, *literally* changed my life.

This may sound silly, but I have had a long-standing problem with/ addiction to *solitaire*. It was consuming my life and distracting me from many important things that needed to be done. It was making my life truly miserable; but I couldn't break the habit. At the time of the workshop there was a lot going on in my life, and it wasn't convenient for me to attend; but I knew in my heart that it was where I needed to be. A good friend had told me about the workshop and how practical and life changing it was. That was what put me over the edge and convinced me to go.

During the workshop, the work that was done to prepare us for taking an honest look at ourselves was wonderful. The systematic approach that the process takes is excellent. To have an honest and balanced way to face ourselves with the Lord's help is...miraculous. When it came time to face the work, it was much less threatening than if I had been alone. There is so much compassion in this process, and by the end I was filled with comfort and hope.

It's now two weeks later, and I haven't played a single game of *solitaire*! And as if that isn't enough, I have felt inspired to tend to my daily duties—honestly and faithfully—in a way that I haven't for a long time. What more could I ask? Thanks so much for developing this program. Blessings on this process!" (D. H.)

"Last week there was something that came out of the blue—something that I've struggled with since then, looking for ways to present it to the Lord to see if what I want/desire could be "alright". This morning I took out a set of *BNL* worksheets and went through the Steps. I experienced such grief and sadness at first, but then such feelings of freedom, and I realized that I could not act on my initial wishes. Anyway, I just want to express my gratitude for making this light and this path available and accessible to me." (B. P.)

“The day after the *BNL* workshop, I spent part of the morning reviewing the work I’d done the day before. In the quiet of my home, the impact, breadth, and depth of that work, together with a lingering sense of humility before the Lord, moved me. I felt sadness at some of the destructive thinking and intending that were there in front of my eyes—on paper, in my own hand. I wept a bit—not in despair, but in grief born of self-awareness, seeing so much more clearly what I do not want in my life. I know I will struggle to overcome what has taken up residence in my mind and heart for too long unchecked, but I will go forward with renewed conviction—I have a plan, a process to follow. I hope for steady progress using the guidelines of this program.

So it is with a full heart that I write to say thanks for this process. *This* is the kind of experience, strength, and hope I’ve been seeking. I look forward to what will come, as I willingly do the work that is revealed to me. Best wishes always.” (J. C.)

“I want you to know how much I appreciate the resources on the *BNL* website—from the worksheets to the immensely useful sourcebook. I recently used these resources counseling a man who was looking for a way to overcome his destructive temper. We worked through the resources, and he was deeply touched by the Lord to make a change. Since completing the program he has truly begun a new life. He has grown in his relationship with his wife, is more interested in his spiritual growth, and has become a committed member of the church that I pastor. Thank so much for the work that’s been put into this easy-to-use program. It allows the Lord to work miracles in people’s lives. May the Lord bless this work as it goes forward!” (M. A.)

*“Through the years of practicing the *Begin a New Life* process, I have seen it change my relationships for the better, especially my relationship with my husband.

Frequently, what has sent me to the worksheets is a niggling sense that something is amiss in my marriage—something that I’ve said, done, or am contemplating isn’t quite right. In the process of going through the Steps, my eyes are opened to see that what I’ve been thinking is important, what I believe matters most, or what I want or think I need, is against one of the Ten Commandments. It always seems to start with a wrestling match in my mind, as I am *so sure* that where I’m going will make me happy. But there is that niggling feeling (conscience? the Lord?) that bids me look further.

Each time I fill out the worksheets, I discover a different way of thinking and a changed outlook on the issue I’m dealing with. Each time, I feel my heart open and soften toward my husband, creating a deeper level of love and tenderness toward him. Along with that change, there is also a sense that the Lord is present—not in a vague way, but as a very real presence in my life, guiding me to a feeling of peace and resolve.

I often think of the *BNL* process as a sleeping policeman. That is what the Jamaicans call their speed bumps. Much like those speed bumps, the *BNL* process helps me pause and be more thoughtful in my words and actions. It helps me in all of my relationships, but most important, it frees me to be a more loving wife." (B. P.)

"I believe this process is the salvation of marriage." (E. I.)

"*Begin a New Life* might appeal to a person who is looking for peace in their life. This is what going through the Steps does for me." (B. P.)

"Dear Mark [program developer],

I want to tell you how the recent workshop has impacted my life.

Since my introduction to *BNL*—a mini workshop nearly two years ago—I have resisted the 'writing down' part of the process. But after reading the testimonies of others, I wanted to give it a try.

I have two issues that I've been working on using the process, plus one more that I've suspected needs addressing; but because of the apparent complexity of intentions involved, I've simply pushed it into the "too complicated" category. So my inclination, when faced with articulating things on paper during the recent workshop, was to grab a more straightforward issue to practice on. But I managed to resist that inclination and just go for it.

To my amazement, putting down my thoughts on paper was beautifully clarifying. The way forward is now quite clear and unavoidable. With the Lord's help I know that it's possible. My point is that without the process of writing, this wouldn't have happened.

Two years ago, I came away from the mini workshop with the impression that I should be sitting down and writing every day. I understand now that you weren't recommending that. But as writing becomes easier, and the benefits more obvious, it might actually happen.

With all my heart, I thank you.

Love,

Mom"

Step 1: Self-examination

People who give testimony to the *BNL* process typically do so to the process as a whole. Sometimes, however, they do so to one or another *step* of the process. Interestingly, the step that receives the most attention is Step 1—*Self-Examination*. Here are some unsolicited testimonies to that step:

“The entire *BNL* process is good, but Step 1 is *solid gold*.” (R. S.)

“I’ve heard that someone once said, *Step 1 is liquid gold*. ...It really is!” (D. R.)

“This process makes me look at *me* in a way that nothing else has.” (P. H.)

“This process helps me see the under-the-surface rudders that have been driving my boat.” (E. I.)

“Someday when you write about this subject, be sure to tell people how hard it can be to get started, and the things that make that to be true. Getting started on this process feels like a death sentence, but really it’s a *life* sentence.” (E. I.)

“This is so easy. When I take a really honest look at myself, everything expands, and I see things I’ve never seen before. It’s like many little bits of light coming together to form one big light.” (P. H.)

“Doing this work is putting first things first in my life. The process allows me to look deeply inside myself for changes that need to be made. It increases my awareness of what in my life is *not* working. It helps me become conscious of things I have thought or done automatically my whole life. It gives me a sense of partnership with God—I feel like He’s holding my hand throughout this process, like we’re going through it together. It offers me freedom from ways of thinking and acting that have held me captive and enslaved me. It gives me hope and inspires me.” (E. I.)

“As I did some self-examination to see what issues were the biggest in my life, I found that what seemed most important to me was having serious discussions with my daughters about dating and relationships. The problem was that I was always approaching my daughters in a teasing, joking way—avoiding the difficult parts of any discussion. Step 1 of the process has given me a good approach for seeing false thoughts, rationalizations, and controlling intentions that have been interfering with this important activity. It has helped me see, feel, and ultimately, deal with fears of rejection and loss of control. By unmasking the underlying motives, the situation comes into focus as more than just a bad habit. It is the visible tip of an iceberg that is blocking my passage to a better life.” (M. J.)

Step 3: Pray for help and power

“Two years ago I was going through the process and an image came to mind. It was a circle of light. I wanted to remain strong in the change that I’d been working on, and I felt that the only way it could happen was by asking for the Lord’s help. Although I normally feel His presence when going through the Steps, *this* time I wanted Him right there next to me—like a small child needing the reassurance of a parent’s closeness beside her. It was then that I saw the circle of light in my mind.

The light was about twenty feet in diameter, with the Lord standing in the middle. A soft but bright light radiated down from above in the shape of a cone, with the widest span at the base. I saw myself stepping into this circle of light and standing just in front of the Lord. There were no words exchanged. Instead, there was a feeling of peace, and an inherent knowledge that His power would keep me strong. Since then, I have conjured up that image many times—both when doing the worksheets and when I find myself in certain challenging situations, particularly when I’m caught off guard and am starting to veer in a negative direction. At times like that I feel His power helping me to get back on track.” (B. P.)

Ongoing support group

“I just wanted to thank you for last night's session. I can't tell you how much I'm getting out of them.” (J. M.)

“I want to tell you how much I'm appreciating this group experience. One of the main things I'm experiencing is a change in my relationship with God. The only way I can think of it is that I feel so loved—almost courted—by God. The most intricate questions of my soul are being brought forward, and God is there—in very personal ways—to provide answers. He does so through people, in what I read, and in a hundred other ways. It blows my mind how intimate and personal the intervention is. Thanks so much for giving this to us.” (E. I.)

“A while ago my mom said to me, ‘Don't stop going to that *Begin a New Life* group. You're a different person when you go to the group.’ Later, my counselor said the same thing.” (G. S.)

Going forward: The program's potential for reaching and serving people

"I think this seminar should be given on college campuses." (Seminar participant, San Diego)

"I believe this program has tremendous ecumenical potential." (Seminar participant, San Diego)