

MOVING BEYOND THE PAST

Lesson 3: The Prodigal Son-God's Forgiveness

Introduction: There is no sin so great that it cannot be forgiven. There is no wound too deep it cannot be healed. There is no life so broken that it cannot be restored and made into something beautiful by the healing touch of the Master's hand. In Christ, there is always a sure hope of fresh, new beginnings, with the past totally forgiven as though it had never happened. The story of the prodigal son reveals the all-encompassing love of the father, his abiding concern for this wayward son, and his great joy at the son's restoration. This is the story of the love of the Father towards the sinner.

We are going to look at the story of the prodigal son in the perspective of needing inner healing. In the perspective of us making wrong choices and sinning because of wounding events that have occurred in our life.

Understand that nothing in the prodigal son story says there was a problem with the father or the home the son came from. Much different at times in our own personal lives.

- I. *"...Father, give me my share of the estate"* (Luke 15:12)
 - A. The prodigal's problems began with his demanding his father to give him his rightful inheritance early. He was no longer content with the knowledge that someday he would have his father's estate-he wanted it NOW. He made the decision to demand his inheritance and to leave the love and security of his father's house and to venture out into the world on his own.
 - B. We oftentimes do the same thing. We consciously choose our own path in life, independent of the Father's will for us. Many times we do this because we don't fully trust God because of past events that have taken place in our life. We blame God for our troubles. We at times operate out of wounding, not out of wisdom and seek our own path.
- II. *"After he had spent everything...he began to be in need"* (Luke 15:14)
 - A. For a while, the prodigal son enjoyed himself in the fullest. Whatever he wanted was at his disposal, but he soon wasted his entire wealth on wild living.
 - B. Things became so bad for him that he even dreamed of eating what the pigs ate. He had left home a rich, cocky, young man. Now he was reduced to a starving, penniless hired hand with nothing to his name.
 - C. The pleasures of sin may last for a season, but if we continue to sin, ultimately it will catch up with us. Like the prodigal, we will find ourselves in dire need.

- D. We may do things our own way and at times they work for a while. But invariably if we are trying to find peace, healing, and joy outside of the will of God, there are always consequences. We will sacrifice everything trying to run from the pain of the past.
- III. *“I will set out and go back to my father...”* (Luke 15:18)
- A. Just as the prodigal had made the decision to leave his father, he now purposed to return to his father. It was a conscious choice, just as his original decision to leave had been.
- B. We always have the choice to return to our Father when we have walked away from Him. But like the prodigal, we must determine to return and take the necessary steps toward restoration.
- C. If we ever want to live a victorious life we must make the decision to stop seeing God as our enemy and instead see He is the answer to our healing from past wounds. We must see the Father for who He is. The son could see who his father was. But we will find out the son still had a distorted perspective in regards to his father, so do we at times.
- IV. *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you”* (Luke 15:18)
- A. The prodigal accepted total responsibility for the distance between his father and himself. He did not try to blame others for his problem or to sugarcoat the seriousness of the situation. Notice his choice of words: “I have SINNED,” not “I have made a little mistake.”
- B. He fully admitted where he had failed and knew that he was not even worthy to call himself a son anymore. He was a broken man, and knew it.
- C. Before we can be restored to God and others, we must admit our sin and accept responsibility for the “mess” we find ourselves in. True repentance is evidenced by a change in actions and is a prerequisite for genuine healing and restoration. True repentance is not remorseful feelings.
- D. The truth is that many times we have wounds and scars because of what others have done to us. They are to blame, not us. The problem is that many times we make very poor choices of how we deal with the wounds. We become bitter, hard-hearted, resentful, hateful, make inner vows and bitter root judgments, choose to go to sin to deal with our wounds and scars.

If we want to receive inner healing to live an overcoming life, we must confess that we have coped with our wounds in an unhealthy manner. We must admit that

we have sinned against ourselves, others, and God. We must come to a place of a sorrow for our sin that leads to repentance.

We must understand that our heavenly Father wants us to come back to Him not as worthless slave but as a forgiven child.

- V. *“His father saw him and was filled with compassion for him...”* (Luke 15:20)
- A. When the prodigal began the journey of reconciliation, his loving father rushed out to meet him. He was overcome with joy that the son who had been lost to him was now restored to him. The past was forgotten and forgiven in the tender embrace of the father.
 - B. Not only did the father totally forgive his son, but he also completely restored him to his former status in the family.
 - a. He put a robe upon him clothing him in new garments free of the stench of his sinful life. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are covered by the blood of Christ. We are cleansed of all unrighteousness.)
 - b. He gave him a ring, signifying the covenant that existed between them as father and son. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are one in Christ and have full access to the Father.)
 - c. He put shoes upon his son’s feet, representing his rightful place as a son. In Bible times, servants went barefoot but sons wore shoes. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.)
 - d. And finally, he killed his fattened calf, demonstrating his great joy and delight at the return of his prodigal son. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are reminded that Jesus died on the cross for us so that we can live a victorious life over all wounds that have occurred our life.)
 - C. It should be obvious that if along life’s journey we have made very bad choices to cope with emotional wounds and pain, to the point of sinning against ourselves, others, and God, that we have a Loving Heavenly Father that wants to bring healing to us and restore us to Him.
 - D. Everything the father did for his son. God will do for you as you move toward Him in sincerity of heart. Acknowledge your desperate need of Him. Confess the areas of rebellion, independence, stubbornness, and blatant willful sin, and put

your trust in the loving arms of the Father. He will not only forgive you, He will bring miraculous healing in your life.