

Coming Back to the Lord

The Lord Jesus told short stories to paint vivid pictures of God the Father. In the book of Luke, Jesus told a story of a man who had two sons.

The youngest son asked his father for his inheritance before the father died. This was a great insult and sin against the head of the family. The father agreed to his request and divided the wealth between his two sons.

The younger son took his belongings and went to a distant land. There he continued in his sin, wasting his money on wild living. During a time of food shortage, after his money ran out, the son worked for a local farmer feeding the pigs.

Jesus said that after he came to his senses, the son rehearsed how he would return home and admit (confess) to his father that he did wrong.

Then Jesus described the loving response of the son's father. When the son was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. The father expressed his love and compassion when he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

While the son began to confess his sin, the father said to the servants, "Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. 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."

The Lord Restores

In the culture of that day, the father would never ever run. This was completely unheard of for Jesus' listeners. So, this picture of a father running to meet his wayward son emphasizes God's loving response when one of His children returns to Him.

The father in the story was watching for his son to return. Our God Almighty loves us and He watches for His children to come home to Him. Then filled with love and compassion, God embraces His precious child who returns. He leads in celebrating with music and a feast on this happy day.

Jesus described this celebration by saying there is great joy in the presence of God's angels when even one person repents of his sin and returns to the Father.

I've been in the far country, living my way, instead of following God's way. I've been there, believing the enemy's lies. I've lived in darkness and despair allowing the world to influence me and keep me from returning to the Lord.

In the story Jesus told, the father did not lecture, scold, or reprimand the son. He didn't even let his son finish his confession. The father lovingly restored his son to the family, celebrating his return.

God is Waiting for You

If you have been living apart from your loving Father God, He is waiting for you to return to Him. He wants you to recognize your need to be forgiven and confess your sin. Confess means that you agree with God that you have done wrong and that you want to turn away from your sin and follow His way of life.

The Apostle John wrote that if we confess our sin to God, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

If you have been a child of God, then all of your sin is forgiven, including your past, present and future sin. But God wants His child to confess his or her sin as part of seeking restoration of our relationship with Him. The result is that He cleanses us of all sin and unrighteousness.

Recognizing the power of God, King David confessed his sin and prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). This is my prayer when I need God's cleansing power.

Has there ever been a time in your life that you trusted Jesus as your Savior and Lord? If you became a child of God, you are still part of His family. But maybe you've been living your own way instead of God's way.

God is looking down the road for you to return. When you take that first step, He will run to you, welcoming you back, even celebrating your return. The son was still part of the family, but until he returned, with a humble heart, confessing his sin, the relationship with his father was strained.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote that the Lord's arm is not too weak to save His people, nor is His ear too deaf to hear them call. "It's your sins that cut you off from God. Because of your sins, He has turned away and will not listen anymore" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

God is holy, completely without sin and darkness. When we choose to live in rebellion, going our own way, these verses in Isaiah apply to us.

Here are some words that you may want to use to express what's on your heart:

Dear God,

I'm sorry for my sin. I know I've done wrong and brought grief to You by the way I have been living. Thank You that Jesus died so I can be forgiven. I confess my sin and ask for You to cleanse my heart and life of all sin and unrighteousness. Please help me to never return to that place of sin and rebellion. I want to please You in all my ways. Thank You for loving me and helping me return to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

If you prayed, agreeing with God that you want to return to Him, write your name and today's date here:

NAME _____

DATE _____

It's important that you tell someone else about your confession and desire to be renewed as a child of God. By doing this, you acknowledge this important decision.

Who will you tell about your decision to return to the Lord and live as His child once again? _____