

The Prodigal Son | David Baumgartner

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Date: 21 June 2020

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. It's so good to see everybody here today.

I wanted to say Happy Father's Day from my family to yours. Boy, this is church. We love the Bible. Am I good here?

I want to ask you this question. Who's the greatest dad in the Bible? Human dad, okay? Who's the greatest one? Abraham? Father Abraham.

Oh, man. If you read his life account, there's a lot of things in there, a lot of problems. I set you up. I really did. I wasn't expecting a really good answer to that because I think it's actually very difficult. It may be even impossible to determine who was the best human dad in the Bible. There's a lot of dads. If you look at the sections in the genealogies, this guy begat this guy, begat this guy, begat this guy.

[1 : 10] There's a lot of different dads in the Bible. And I think it's really very interesting. Like Abraham was mentioned. I think I heard Moses that was said. With all of the heroes that we read in the Bible, you would think this is a fairly easy question, wouldn't you?

Yeah. I'll tell you, it's not. And I believe here's why the Bible exposes all of the failures of these human fathers. It does show their good things, but it also shows all their warts, their bad breath, everything that you would want to read about.

How about Adam? He's the first dad, right? First human dad. How about Noah, a preacher of righteousness? You read on and on. Moses, King David.

Yeah, nobody says him because you all know, you're all clued in about that. How about Solomon himself, the wisest man? Nah, I'll tell you what.

I did a little research here, and you can write these two names down. As far as I can tell who were the best human fathers, as far as we can tell. Job, because he prayed for his sons and daughters.

[2 : 21] And there's Joseph. How about Jesus' stepfather? I can't see a single thing about him that I would be critical of. And besides, who am I to be critical of him?

Here's two names that you may not want to forget. The two worst dads in the Bible. These are both out of 2 Kings, chapter 16, a guy by the name of Ahaz, and a guy by the name of Manasseh in chapter 21.

What did they do? They sacrificed their children to idols. Now, I don't think that qualifies as a really good dad, does it? No, it sure doesn't.

Anyway, this morning, if you would please turn with me to Luke, chapter 15. We're going to be looking at a very well-known parable. It's the parable. It's called of the prodigal son.

And we've actually covered this text before here at Bethel. But I think it's worth another look this morning. Some people may ask, what's this parable about? And many people would say, well, obviously, it's about the young son.

[3 : 30] The story here is about him. Other people may say, no. Actually, if you read on, this parable is actually about the older brother.

And that's because if you look at the context, what do you find? Jesus is talking to some self-righteous religious leaders, which actually describes the older brother in this parable.

But this morning, I want to focus on something else. I want to focus on the father in this parable. There's many joys in parenthood. I think many of you would agree with that.

But I'll tell you what, there's also many challenges. And Jesus gives this parable here. And he begins with this very difficult parent situation.

Please read with me in your Bibles. We'll only go from verse 11 to 24. This is Jesus speaking. And he says, a certain man had two sons.

[4 : 30] And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me. And he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the young son gathered

everything together and went on a journey into a distant country.

And there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now, when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country. And he began to be in need.

And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating. And no one was giving anything to him. And when he came to his senses, he said, How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread?

But I'm dying here with hunger. I will get up. I will go to my father and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.

[5 : 40] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired men. And he got up. And he came to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion on him. And he ran. He embraced him.

And he kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to the slaves, Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him.

And put a ring on his hand. And sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf. Kill it. And we shall eat and be married. For this son of mine was dead.

He has come to life again. He was lost. And he has been found. And they began to be married. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that we can come here today and to look at your word.

[6 : 46] We're grateful for your word, Lord. Because in it we see truth. Truth that you have revealed to us. And Lord, we don't see a lot of bells and whistles on people.

No, we see the ugliness of sin. But yet, Lord, we see you. A good father. A great father. One in whom loved us enough to make a way that we could become sons and daughters of you.

So, Lord, we thank you for this account. May it come to life for us this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen. So, here we begin in verses 11 and 12.

We start with these two sons. The younger one says to his father, Father, give me my share of my estate. Now, according to Deuteronomy chapter 21, a third of the estate would go to this son.

And the other two thirds would actually go to the eldest son. But this request from this younger son actually presents a really big problem. The first thing is that you would call it a practical problem.

[8 : 00] And that's because he wants it now. And so, what that would mean is that the entire estate would have to be liquidated. And all the assets would be sold off.

And that would include land and cattle and so on, property. The second thing, though, is rather a personal problem. And it's like saying to your dad, Dad, I can't wait for you to die.

Yeah, this must have broken the father's heart, I would imagine. And so, in verse 13, we see that this younger son gathers all of his inheritance.

He sets off for the wild blue yonder. Yeah. Why is he doing this? Well, we're really not told. Most likely, it's so that he could do as he pleases.

To be his own boss. To basically not have to answer to anybody. You know, maybe somebody told him, Hey, go out there and sow your oats.

[9 : 03] Life will be good. Have you ever heard that? Yeah. So, in verse 13, it says, The young man squandered his money in reckless, or maybe your Bible say, loose living.

But, of course, he has friends, and they're pretty helpful. They help him spend his money. And so, he's in this predicament here. Because hard times hit.

My Bible says here, Severe famine came to the land. Boy, doesn't it just remind you, things happen in life? If you've walked this earth for a few years, you know that things happen.

Pandemics happen. Unemployment happens because of pandemics. You know, you go on and on and on. But the main point is that this guy's money ran out.

And verse 16, it says, He longed to fill his stomach. That's how, in the Greek here, it's actually a very simple way of saying, The kid was hungry all the time.

[10 : 06] So, verse 15, He goes and finds a job where there's food. He gets to take care of the pigs. Now, I've got to tell you, The rhetorical effect, When Jesus added that little note here to this Jewish audience, That would have been striking.

Because, according to Leviticus 11, Pigs are unclean animals. You're not even allowed to touch them. And so, here's the situation. And I think one of the most difficult issues that a father and a

mother can face us when we raise our children a certain way, But for some reason, they choose to just walk away from it.

Yeah, that's pretty tough. As parents, maybe some of you, maybe you've wondered, Where did I go wrong? Where did we go wrong? Well, since it's Father's Day, Time to pick on the dads?

No, I'm just kidding. What can we see from this parable here? And let's remember, This is a parable. We don't draw doctrine from it. But there are some principles that we can see this morning. And so, I'd like to focus on the father here. Because in the scripture, God is oftentimes compared to a human father. If you look with me on your handout, Psalm 103 says, As a father has compassion on his children, So the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

[11 : 40] For he knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust. This tells me here that this privilege of fatherhood is not something that should be taken lightly.

No. So, how can I be a wise, godly father? Well, this morning I see four things here that a wise father does. The first one is this.

A wise father keeps the communication lines open. I want you to notice here, In the beginning of this account, This son must have felt enough freedom To actually come to his father And make his request known.

And friends, that's a good thing. That's not automatic. I lived in Denver for about 18 years. And I worked with several people, obviously.

Eventually, I would come to a point Where I'd ask people about their families. I remember I was struck by the number of people, Especially men, Who had terrible relationships with their families back home.

[12 : 53] Some of them, Some of the guys hadn't spoken to their fathers for years. And I think it just tells me that as a dad, You can be really successful in business or whatever, And yet be an utter failure at home.

There's no communication. No back and forth. No sharing. Maybe you see that in some stories or some movies. Nobody knows what anybody's doing.

But I'll tell you what. The Bible teaches that as fathers, We have a great deal of influence And power in our own families. Whether we like it or not.

We can influence for the good. We can bless our children with openness. We can show interest to them. Or we can curse them.

And give them wounds that they'll carry around the rest of their lives. Notice here that what Paul warns in Colossians chapter 3. He's speaking to fathers.

[13 : 55] And he says, Fathers, do not embitter your children. Or they, or what? Or they will become discouraged. You know how you and I dads, We dads and moms too can discourage our children.

Here's three ways. First, excessive criticism. Especially when it gets really personal. Children can be beaten down. They can become like a horse with a broken spirit.

Second way is inconsistency. Making promises that you never keep. I heard this story about this young man. He's standing before a judge one day to be sentenced.

And the judge actually knew this boy's father. Who was famous for writing books on the law. And the judge said to this young man in a stern voice.

Young man, do you remember your father? The one whom you cursed? The one in whom you've disgraced? He said, yeah. Yes, your honor.

[14 : 57] I do remember him perfectly. Whenever I wanted to be with him, he'd say, Can't you see I'm busy? Get lost. I'll see you later.

And so, well, my father finished his books. And I got lost. So here I am. I don't know if that would work with the judge today. But there you have it.

Here's another way. The third way. Excessive absenteeism. Little Henry asked his dad, Dad, how much money do you make an hour? And his dad said, Look, Sonny, don't bother me.

I'm busy. I'm tired. And Daddy, please tell me, the boy insisted. How much money do you make an hour? Well, after several attempts, the father gave up and said, Okay, I make about 20 bucks an hour.

And his son said, Okay, Dad, here's \$20. Can I buy an hour of your time? It's pretty sad, isn't it? Let me ask you this.

[16 : 03] What's worse than COVID-19? Absentee fatherhood. I had some graphs I was going to show you, but I decided not to here.

You guys know all this. 33% of American children live without their biological father. 70% of those who are in correctional facilities did not live with both parents.

Every metric, I'm going to cut it to the quick here. Every metric that you see is affected by absentee fatherhood. And it's affected in the downside, the negative.

63% of teen suicides. 85% psychiatric admissions. 70% high school dropouts. And if you add to that, juvenile delinquency, confusion about gender identity, and more and more and more, all of these things are related to growing up without a dad.

And here's the thing, and this is where it really hurts. Just because dad is physically there, it doesn't mean that he's actually really there. Yeah. You guys have heard this before.

[17 : 23] This study that was done to measure the amount of time fathers spend with their children. Anybody remember that? Yeah. It was amazing. They asked, if you haven't heard this, they asked a group of fathers, how much time do you spend with your children a day?

So they all got together about 15 to 20 minutes a day. Yeah. Sounds pretty good. They actually measured the time with microphones in the house and so on.

They monitored them over time. You know what it was? 37 seconds a day. I don't know what you can impart to your child in 37 seconds.

Probably not good. The main point here is that as fathers, it's up to us to do everything we can to keep the lines of communication open.

You know, and you might ask how you do that. Well, first of all, being there, for one. Being approachable. Being interruptible.

[18 : 23] And I tell you what, you know, a lot of people are now, they have their offices in their home and their kids are tugging on their pant legs. Daddy, daddy. You know what? You got that one time to do it.

Being able, being interested and eager to listen. Being able to distinguish youthful blunders from willful defiance.

That's a big one. We'll talk about that here in a minute here. A wise father keeps lines of communication open. Here's the first, another one. A wise father instills godly teaching.

Notice in the text here, verse 17. Notice the wording. It says that the son came to himself. Isn't that interesting?

Now, that suggests that up to this point, this son had not been himself. And that's true. For some reason, he was enticed.

[19 : 25] He became under the influence, as we would say. Under the influence, that is, of sin. And there is an insanity to sin.

There's a kind of insanity. And that's why it's described in Proverbs as folly. But eventually, notice, this young man did come around.

He returned to his previous ways of thinking. Which indicates to me at one time, he must have been exposed to some godly teaching. And it stayed with him.

Praise God for that. Notice verse 18. It says that he admitted. He even called himself a sinner. And that he had sinned against heaven, as well as his father.

But don't miss this. It's the memory of his father's goodness that led him to repentance. He saw, he remembered these images of his father.

[20 : 25] He remembered his father's generosity. Now, where would he have learned this? being with his dad. He would have probably learned it at home.

And this brings up the importance of godly teaching. Paul says in his letter to the church of Ephesus in chapter 6, bringing them, bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

Notice what Paul says here. Two things. Instruction. In other words, being able to learn right from wrong, good from evil. what's moral? What isn't moral?

In Psalm 78, this is a psalm by Asaph, and it's regarding the sayings or the teachings of old. Look with me what he says. What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us, we will not hide them from our children.

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord and his power and the wonders he has done. Friends, is this happening today?

[21 : 31] Are families, are children being told about what happened with their parents or their grandparents? No. It's not. It's an epidemic today.

Revisionist history. All of these things, you know, just being thrown out the window. All of these statues that are being torn down. Now, I'm not going to die on the hill of defending every statue, but there is a point to trying to erase history, do away with everything good even, throw the baby out with the bath water.

So, it's not happening today, but in the church, we should make it happen. And parents are natural teachers. Throughout the day, aren't there teachable moments with your children?

Yeah, there are. While we have them to do all that we can to teach them godly principles, they're not going to get it in high school.

They're definitely not going to get it in college. In fact, anything that is instilled in godliness will be actually trying to be snatched away from them.

[22 : 40] But that's what godly parents do, is to teach your children while you have them. Not only does Paul talk about instruction, notice, discipline. What is that?

It's correction that's always done in love. There's three verses here I have. Look at three in Proverbs, chapter three.

Son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe his reproof. For whom the Lord loves, he reproves, even as a father, the son in whom he delights.

Wow, that'll enlighten someone about what discipline is. It's done out of love. Proverbs 13, 24 says that he who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

Careful to discipline. You gotta do it the right way or else it may become worse than what you intended. This verse in Hebrews 12, it relates, we relate this to the Lord.

[23 : 49] We have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the father of our spirits and live? Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good.

And here's why, that we may share in his holiness. You know, this is a truth here for you, friends. God oftentimes uses our mistakes to get our attention.

Would you agree with that? And sometimes it takes a great mistake, a great loss, a great tragedy to actually get us to see just how far we have blown it.

But I'll tell you what, better late than ever, than never. Better late than never. This actually has a spiritual application and that's because eventually everybody has to come to the point of seeing his or her need for what?

For who? A savior. Without Jesus Christ, we will enter eternity separated from him. Wow.

[25 : 09] If you go back to that verse in Hebrews 12, I wanted to point this out. Notice he identifies the father as the one who disciplines us. Did you catch that? That's because the Bible teaches that the father is the spiritual head of the home.

And as I said earlier, unfortunately in many homes that leadership is absent. And so single moms may have to pick up the slack here.

And it's what happens. It's pretty tough. Especially with boys. And the impact of a godly father, it's huge.

You may remember this. There's a book written, Why Men Hate Going to Church. How do you like that for a title for a book? It's written by David Murrow. He says, When a mother comes to faith in Christ, the rest of the family follows 17% of the time.

How about when dad comes to faith in Christ? The family, the rest of the family follows 93% of the time. That's amazing. So, a wise father keeps the lines of communication open.

[26 : 23] A wise father also instills godly teaching. Thirdly, a wise father knows when to let go. Notice here. This son here, he makes his request known.

He takes off for the wild blue yonder. Did you notice that the father didn't go chasing after the son? He didn't go pleading and begging. No, he released his son.

Some people may want to ask, well, what else was he supposed to do? It's a good question. I think that in the sum of it here, raising children is a slow process of letting go.

Would you agree with that? Frank, would you agree with that? Letting go? Yeah. Which I think is maybe one of the hardest things to do as a parent, especially today when there's a wolf right around every corner of their life.

And there's a great temptation as parents is first of all, don't let them go. Or secondly, when our children do hit bottom, then we intervene.

[27 : 33] You know, we'll bail them out. We'll rescue our children with every little problem that comes our way. Sometimes that's needed. But I'll tell you what, there are times when our children have to learn from what you call the school of hard knocks.

Yeah, hard knocks. like this youngest son in the parable. And when that happens, you have to let them learn it that way. Notice here, the father had to wait until his son's will was broken.

And it's those times when the only thing maybe that parents can do when their children are away, remember, God loves them more than you do.

he does. They're in God's hands and so we can pray for them. In fact, we're all in God's hands. Wouldn't you say that? We are.

In 1 Peter 5, he says, cast all your anxiety on him because the Lord, he cares for you. So we pray for our children.

[28 : 41] Fourthly, a wise father shows unconditional love. Look with me, verse 20. The son got up, it says, and he came to his father and while he was still far off, his father saw him and when he saw him, it says, he felt compassion for his father.

I see three things here in that verse regarding how unconditional love was expressed. First of all, notice, this father never lost interest of his son.

While his son was far off, it says, this implies to me that the father was watching, the father was waiting for his son to return.

That's one of the aspects that we read about to define love, isn't it? Hope. Always hoping. In 1 Corinthians, hope, I'm sorry, this is referring, talking about love.

Love bears all things, believes all things. It hopes all things. It endures all things. Secondly, notice in verse 20, he ran to his son.

[29 : 50] Here you have this middle-aged man. He's the owner of a significant estate. He's got servants. He's got property at his, all this at his beck and call and we read him running.

Now, there's a certain decorum that comes with old age. It's called like a dignity. I'm trying to learn that, by the way, in these years. It's, it's getting kind of new to me here.

But one of those decorums with older men is that they don't run. And I think I'm doing pretty well with that. So, but no, the main point here is that this father ran and he threw all of that decorum out the window to give himself over to the utter joy of seeing his son come home.

Wow. That's the way God is. It is. That's the way God is when we come to him. There might be another reason why this father ran.

And that's because in this culture, you see, this son disgraced his family. And so by Jewish law, the villagers, the people that may see this son hanging around the streets coming home, they might kill him.

[31 : 09] It might stone him to death. And they, and they're following the laws there. And if so, this dad was protecting his son. What a picture of Jesus Christ, isn't it?

That, that he would desire to take the punishment that we deserve. Well, that the point here is that the father never lost interest in his son. Secondly, I see that the father received his son.

instead of lecturing him, instead of giving him that dreaded, I told you so, speech, that maybe that I would have given him, he extends forgiveness.

Notice verse 24, the father's description of his son. He was dead, but now he's alive. He was lost, but now he's found.

That sounds spiritual to me. It does. This describes the spiritual experience of every lost sinner who comes to the father through faith in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 14] I'd like to ask you this morning, think about that one person in your life that you would love to see come home. Home from sin, home from rebellion, home from alienation, home from unbelief, home from hard-heartedness, and imagine what it will be like, what it would be like for that person to just come home and say, I was wrong, Dad.

I was wrong, Mom. I need to get right with God. With God, all things are possible. Notice here that the father embraces his son.

Even though I'm sure he didn't have time to take a shower, he probably still smelled like pigs, his father showed great affection to him, and thirdly, the father comforted him and blessed his son.

This son here, he's about to confess his sins to his dad, but before his confession got to his lips, verse 22 tells us the father says to the slaves, hey, quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand. Give him sandals on his feet. What a welcome from this father. These things here, these are signs of honor and authority.

[33 : 40] Consider with me the best robe. That was probably the dad's robe, and it would be an expensive robe. How about shoes? Shoes would show that this son is not a servant.

No, he's part of the family, even though this son thought of himself as a servant, but no, and then lastly, he gets a ring, proof of his sonship.

You realize that in this parable, the youngest son is commonly referred to what? The prodigal son, right? Have you heard that before?

You realize that word is not even in the text? What does that mean? It actually means wastefully, excessively, extravagant.

And I think that we would agree this younger son's lifestyle during those months or weeks or whatever it was was wastefully extravagant. But friends, here's the key.

[34 : 39] This father was even more extravagant with his grace, his mercy, his acceptance of this son back from a distant country.

That's the way it is with our Heavenly Father. When you and I come home, he rejoices because lost things are found. Which is really the context of this parable.

This is actually the third of three parables in this chapter, Luke 15. And all of them deal with lost things. And that's because God the Father loves to see lost things found.

When that which is lost is found, notice it just calls for great celebration, great joy in heaven.

Somebody may ask, well, how much joy?

Friends, lots of joy. Right before this parable, look with me in verse 10. I tell you, there's rejoicing in heaven in the presence of God when one sinner repents.

[35 : 44] That applied then, friends, that it still applies today. What a great God we have. If I could invite the musicians to come up here.

Dads, we have a tough job. Isn't that right? Sometimes we can be pretty clueless. I remember hearing this. There was a new father.

They're still in the hospital there with their newborn. And he was so excited about the birth of his son. And he was, this guy, this dad, was so determined that he was going to do everything right. He's going to do things by the book. And so he turns to the nurse and he says, ma'am, tell me, what time do we wake the little guy up in the morning? If you're a dad, you know how folly that is.

There is no time. In this parable, we see a model father. And there's some principles that we can see. God places children in our care. For how long?

[36 : 47] Yeah, for some of you dads, it's a short time. So, while we have them, we can teach them about life, making wise decisions, teaching them the value of hard work, self-discipline, honor.

But I'll tell you what, friends, the most important thing is teaching them about the Lord Jesus.

Introducing them to him or her to Christ. Have your children learned to love God?

Have your children learned to love God from your example? Yeah, that's a good question. Dads, our children are watching us, how you treat your wife, yeah, how you treat your neighbors, your coworkers, how you talk about your boss.

And how about this, when your children mess up, will they mess up? When they do mess up, is there loving discipline? I think it's really easy to celebrate our children's accomplishments.

Wouldn't you agree with that? Yeah, how about when they fail? And are they assured that you are in their corner? It's an important thing.

[38 : 00] Do you pray for them? We pray for our children all the time, and it's good to know that there's a Father in Heaven to whom we can come. Some of you here today didn't have fathers that lived honorable lives.

I would say to you, let God be your Father. Let God be your Father. He wants to. This last Psalm here in Psalm 68 says, Sing to the Lord.

Sing praise to His name. Extol Him who rides on the clouds. Who is it? His name is the Lord, and rejoice before Him. He's a father to the fatherless.

A defender of widows is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, and He leads forth the prisoners with singing.

Anybody here lonely? He's provided you with a family. Anybody here who feels like a prisoner? You can come forth with singing, because of the Lord's goodness.

[39 : 06] But the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day that you made, because in it we can rejoice and be glad.

We can be glad for so many things. We live in a wonderful country, but we're especially glad for those who know you, and those who can say beyond a shadow of a doubt that we're in your family. You are our Father. Thank you for that. Thank you for sending your son Jesus to make it all possible. That through him and through his death, he paid the price for all of humanity's sin, and by faith, that's all it is.

Just by faith, Lord, we receive that as for us, and that reconciles us to you, because our sins are dealt with. And so, Lord, you're so gracious and compassionate in doing that.

You're full of mercy and abounding in love, and yet, Lord, you love justice. And when we think of Jesus, we can think of justice. Thank you, Lord, for each person here.

[40 : 19] For those of us who have had godly fathers, we thank you, Lord. For those of us who haven't, Lord, we can, and if they're still alive, we can still, we can pray for them.

We can pray, Lord, because you don't give up. No one's hopeless to you, Lord. Lord, if they've passed on, Lord, we can, we can still, we can be dads to the fatherless here.

We can look to you, Lord, ultimately, as the ultimate father. Thank you for this, and we ask for your blessing, and may all of us prosper and, and just look to you, Lord, as the one who makes, who's made it all possible.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.