

## Proverbs for the Marriage and Family, “What to Do When Your Child Walks Away”

11.5.23

You say, “Aren’t we going to be in Proverbs today?” Well, we are, but only for a moment. I saw the verse we’re going to show you (from Proverbs) as I was preparing for this sermon series and when I saw it, it hit me... “What about the family that’s been devastated by a child who’s walked away.” This message was not part of what I taught 11 years ago, but I think I should be, because many deal with a child who’s walked away from the faith. Let me show you the verse.

### **Proverbs 23:24**

***24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him.***

---

That’s a great verse IF you have a wise son. But what IF he/she walks away? Well, then it’s a whole different. Because then, you have the heart of a father that’s like the Prodigal son’s father, (that’s where we’re headed in Luke 15). In Luke 15 we find the account of the Prodigal (wasteful/wayward). And so, maybe this morning, you have a child...an adult child...could be in their 30’s or 40’s or more...maybe they made a profession of faith as a child/teen, but now they’ve walked away. What can you do? Is there any hope? The answer is: “Yes,” and we’re going to see that today.

---

Now before we look at this passage about the Prodigal, you need to know that this story (told by Jesus), comes after He tells about a man who finds a lost sheep and rejoiced, and a woman who finds a lost coin and rejoiced. Jesus is talking to the Pharisees and Scribes (the lawyers) and He’s seeking to make a point about that which is lost...but ultimately comes to repentance and they all rejoice...which the Pharisees and Scribes refused to do...no sinner, tax collector, prostitute, commoner gets in unless you’re like us!

---

To set the scene, Jesus had just healed a man on the Sabbath and they were furious, because He had healed on the Sabbath...and these guys couldn’t even rejoice that man had been healed of dropsy...edema...the swelling of the tissues in the body...most of often in the hands and feet...rendering you almost immobile. They didn’t care and we’ll see that in the story of the Prodigal son...which is the story of actually two (2) lost sons. Let’s see it...**you’ve turned to Luke 15.**

### **Luke 15:11-12**

***11 And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.***

---

Church, this is a shameful request by the younger son. In essence he was saying to his father, “I wish you were dead.” After all, how else can you possess your inheritance, unless the person dies who is giving the inheritance? Such a shameful request. So disrespectful, selfish...hateful. He wants his inheritance now. You know, if my kids wanted their inheritance now...I’d have to sell my house, because that’s all I’ve really got. But in that day...this man likely had herds of cattle, flocks of sheep...maybe goats...and land. And the son knew that...and thought, “This is how I can cash out now.” He wanted his freedom and obviously doesn’t care about his father, because he wished he were dead! Church, what have we learned in our study...



“Proverbs for the Marriage and Family.” We’ve learned that we’re to honor and respect our parents. You see, the Pharisees and scribes might have assumed that what Jesus was going to say next is: “The father grabbed the son by the cloak and threw him out of the house.” That would have been the honorable thing to do in that culture. But that’s not what happened. Jesus said: “...the father divided up the property.”

---

For the Scribes and Pharisees, this is ridiculous. No self-respecting father is going to honor this ridiculous and totally disrespectful son. But the father did, and the fact that the father gives the son his inheritance makes him (the father) dishonorable.

Now, we read there are two sons, and in that culture...the oldest son, gets a double portion, so in this scenario, he gets 2/3rds of the flocks, herds and property. The younger son gets 1/3. What a shame. The father chose to liquidate a 1/3 of all that he had to honor his son’s request. Verse 13...

**Luke 15:13**

**<sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.**

---

“What a loser,” we would say. Of course the punk wasted (prodigal) it all. He’s a fool! Who do you think all of his friends were in this “far country,” that means Gentile country. Jews didn’t fraternize with Gentiles. He did and he squandered it all in this far country with “Reckless living.” He’s wasted 1/3 of a very sizeable estate. How much do you think that was? How could we equate that today? \$250,000 to \$300,000? Who knows! But now he’s broke and his troubles are just beginning.

**Luke 15:14**

**<sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.**

---

A famine breaks out. No, I’m sorry... “A SEVERE FAMINE.” It’s really bad. He’s broke and there’s a severe famine. You know what he turned into: a homeless man, like this...



In **his day**, do you know what happens in a famine? You eat garbage, stray animals, roadkill, your sandals. You're desperate. He's gone from having 1/3 of his daddy's estate to a beggar. So, what does this Jewish young man end up doing? Jesus makes this story get even worse...

**Luke 15:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to<sup>[b]</sup> one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.**

---

Church, can Jewish boys have anything to do with pigs? No. That's not kosher for the Jew. They don't eat pigs...they don't even touch pigs...but, he longed to eat what they ate. Now, Luke doesn't say that he ate what the pigs ate...he just said that he longed for what they ate...and no one gave him anything. Even the pigs in this famine had nothing. So, he's starving to death.

Church family, in this story, Jesus has just created the most desperate person one could fathom. This is the sinner separated from God, (the Father). Listen, as sinners, we're poor, destitute and hopeless in our sin. Sin is rebellion against the goodness of the Father...it's a broken relationship with God. The sinner has disdain for God...refuses to repent and obey him. And yet, the sinner...initially, thinks they're free...but sinner ends in moral bankruptcy...they can't fill their lives with enough drugs, alcohol, sex, power, fame. It's never enough. Freedom for the sinner leaves him exhausted. For this young man...he had now come to the end of himself. He's a man left for dead. has invented the ultimate sinner for the Pharisees and Scribes to see.

---

Next comes one of the greatest phrases in all of the Bible...

**Luke 15:17**

**<sup>17</sup> "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!'"**

---

I read this week this quote: "Pain plants the flag of reality in the fortress of a rebel heart." This young man's pain drove him to come to his senses. In the Greek it means that HE CAME BACK TO HIS HEAD. I love that. He hadn't been thinking straight...He came back to his brain. You see, he had finally become contrite in his spirit, he's changing and I'm telling you...a repentant heart is a heart that owns their situation...it's a heart that no longer makes demands...they don't play the victim card...they don't make excuses...they blame no one but themselves.

What's even more indicative of his change of heart is the fact that he was even willing to be treated like one of his dad's servants. At least then, he would be able to eat something. He had to think: "I'm so hungry...I've got to go home. It's my only chance to survive." And then rehearsed a little speech...

**Luke 15:18-19**

**18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."**

---

Did you catch the phrase: "I've sinned against heaven..." In the Greek, it reads: "My sins have reached all the way to heaven." Have you ever heard someone say, "That stinks to HIGH HEAVEN?" That's where it comes from. The son recognized he was sinner! He had been humbled, and the Pharisees and Scribes must have been thinking: "Finally...some justice in all of this shameful behavior...this punk is going to have to work as a hired hand." Not so fast. Verse 20 is so powerful!

**Luke 15:20**

**20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.**

---

Oh no...we're right back where we started...this shameful father... He gave the punk what he wanted and now he's running...no self-respecting, Jewish man runs. He walks! Running is for servants. But in Jesus' story...this father runs. He takes his robe and tucks in his sash and exposes his legs and runs... WHILE HE WAS A LONG WAY OFF, THE FATHER SAW HIS SON. What does that mean? He had been looking for him. No, he hadn't gone out to find him...no text messages...no letters...no emails, no servants to spy on him, no nothing...he let his son feel the weight of being alone.

It's hard, isn't it, mom and dad. To leave them to their own devices. To cut them off...so that they can finally hit rock bottom. Some parents are keeping their adult kids right here...6" from the bottom and you're their crutch and you think you're being loving...but, you're just being used. Let them go. RELEASE YOUR CHILD. Allow them to leave the umbrella of your protection so they can feel the full weight of their decisions. It's tough love...but when you've done all you can do and all they want is your \$\$\$...release them. It'll be hard, but they have to feel alone before they can come home.

---

Yes, the father had been scanning the horizon every day...looking for that familiar gate. Praying, hoping...trying to believe "Will he come home?" And then he squinted...is it him? It looks like his silhouette...but he's so thin...can it be...IT IS HIM and he runs to him and kisses him (in the Greek it means: "over and over again"). You know he had to stink, but the father didn't care. It's his son!

Church family, can you see, how Jesus wanted the Pharisees to grasp how much the father loves the sinner...even though it makes the father look shameful in their made-up legalism. Jesus is crushing their arrogance with this story. This is pure grace...and the Pharisees had none...because they're legalists...they refuse grace!

---

For the father there was no berating the son. Only forgiveness. No condemnation...no hostility, no guilt. No, "I hope you learned your lesson. You ought to be ashamed of yourself." No, just kisses. He had received him back! And now verse 21, we get the son's little speech...but, not all of it...

**Luke 15:21**

**21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'**

---

But then the father interrupts...

**Luke 15:22-24**

<sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants,<sup>[d]</sup> 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

---

They began to celebrate! Church, BTW, do you know what **the robe** represented? The father's dignity. It was his robe, the BEST robe, not the son's. **The ring** represented the father's authority. **The shoes** represented sonship. How's that? Slaves don't wear shoes...sons do. The young man was barefooted and the father restored his dignity, his authority, and his sonship. It's all grace church... It's the thing that separates Christianity from all the other religions. You have to work to get to God in the other religions, but in Christianity...God comes to us and bestows His riches upon us!

---

It's all grace...and the Pharisees and the Scribes couldn't handle it...because it's then, in Jesus' story that they show up...they are the older brother...

**Luke 15:25-27**

<sup>25</sup> "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.'

---

What do you think the older son's reaction should be? Joy...right? To know that his brother is okay...safe and sound (shalom)...even the servants saw that! No...not this guy...

**Luke 15:28**

<sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,

---

He is the religious one, he is the one who thinks himself to be moral, but his heart is not with the father, either...even though he lived with him. And mom and dad...this is something you have to wrestle with...your children may be with you...even in this room right now...but their heart may be estranged from you and God. I said it last week: Can they articulate their faith? Is their name on their spiritual box? Remember...





they've got to own their own faith. Well, the father, "entreated him," that's: begged him, "Come on son...let's go celebrate...your brother is alive and well...he's returned home." No. The older son would have none of it...just like the Pharisees and Scribes... He's now going to recite how good he is...and how he's followed all the rules to a "T." And why the father should respect him for being SO GOOD! Oh, the arrogance... Verse 29.

---

**Luke 15:29-32**

<sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

---

There are two extremes in this story: the shameless sinner, (the younger son), and the extreme legalist, (the older son). Church, the legalist is the hardest to save, because they don't think they need saving. They believe they're good enough to get to heaven on their own good works. Ain't happening! The only way to God is through humility...repentance...seeing yourself as a spiritual pauper...you have to see yourself like this spiritually...



Are you here today and need to be saved? Maybe you're the younger son and you have wasted so much of your life...today is the day of salvation. Maybe you're the older son...and you look like you've got it all together...but, deep down, you know you're lost. Whatever the case, you've got to come as spiritual pauper...having nothing to offer, and then you can lose your life to gain it. You surrender and then you win...just like the younger son!

---

Now, if you look at your watch, you'll see there's some time left. I want to tell you what happened to me a week ago Tuesday. On the morning, October 24<sup>th</sup>, the Lord showed me something about myself and about our church. We're not praying enough. I had read a statistic the day before:

***Baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, are down 60% since 1972. In 1972 there were 445,725. In 2022 only 180,177.***

---

You know, our church is so blessed. We're growing in attendance because we're adding people from other churches. And in so many ways that's a shame. But we ask people to stay at their church if they can. Many say... "Our church is dying and there's nothing there for us." And so, they come

here. That's fine...that's okay. We're doing well financially, we're above budget. But are we seeing people saved? A few. But not like we need to be.

Church, I've got lazy and I've gotten fat and complacent...I had no burden for the lost. I was like the Pharisees...not caring like I should. The Lord broke me and said, "Kevin, the church is strong in so many ways...but, I came to seek and save that which is lost. You are to be my witnesses. Get busy! Get off the bench and back in the game!"

---

I told Pastor Dale...and then, the staff...and then, on this past Wednesday night, the Deacons...and I'm telling you now: **We need an intentional time of prayer in this church for the lost. The Prodigals and the Legalists.** We need to turn this place into labor room of prayer. Crying out to God for souls in our families and our circle of influence who are hard and blinded and will only be saved by prayer and fasting!

This past Tuesday night as almost 1600 people filed through here at Trunk or Treat...so many of who don't have a church home and many who are likely lost... We've got to start praying! But we've got to be prepared to be effective in our praying. Watch the screens...

### **James 5:16-20**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. <sup>19</sup> My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, <sup>20</sup> let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

---

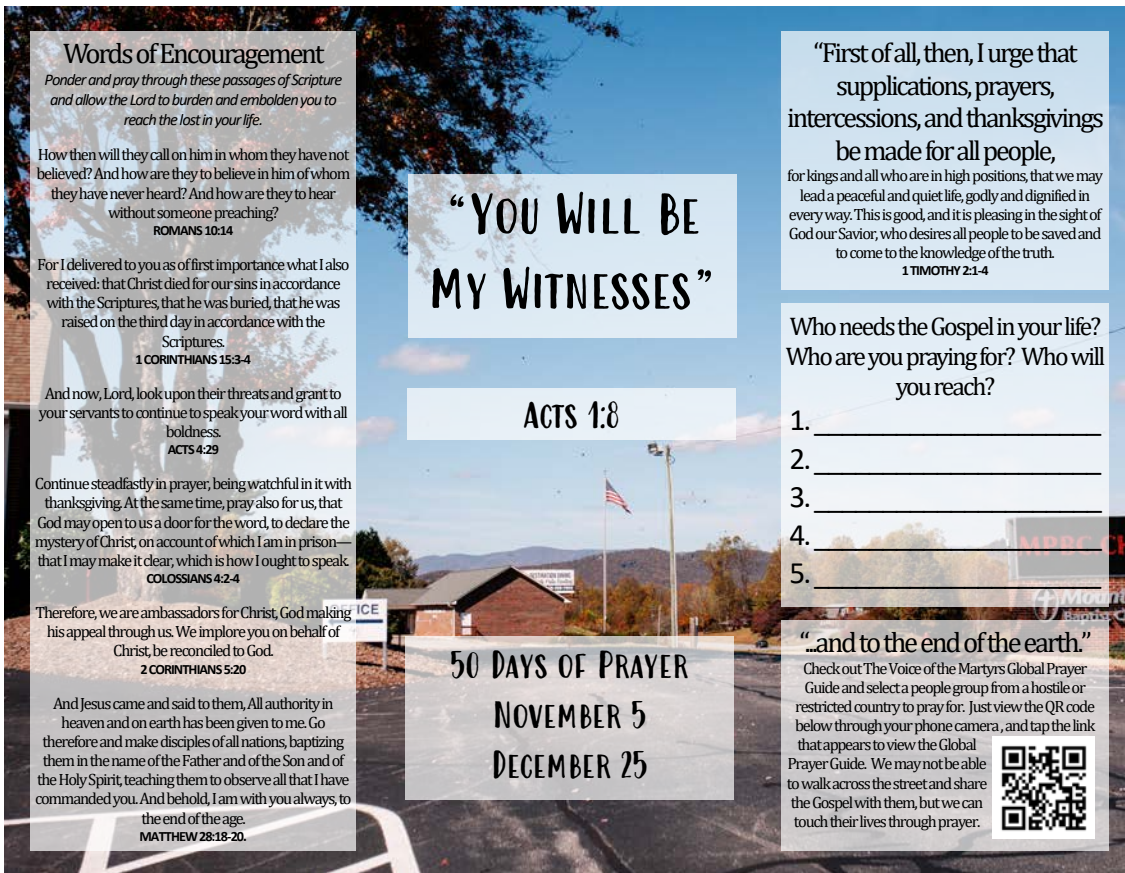
It's time we start praying and it's time we start witnessing...we've got a job to do...watch it...

### **Acts 1:8**

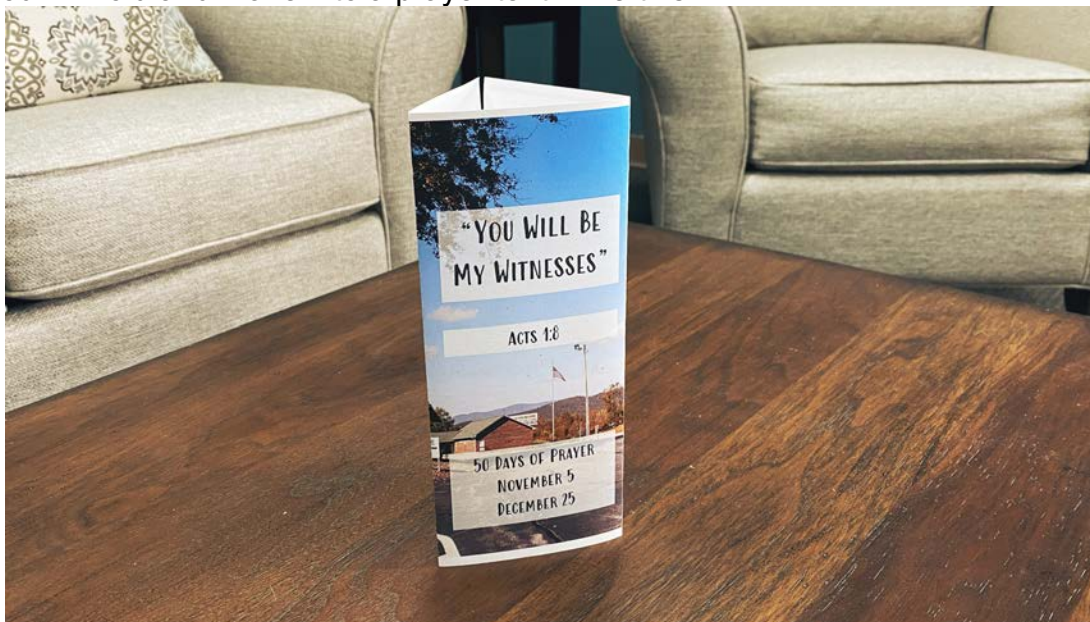
<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

---

So, church family today, we're calling ourselves to 50 Days of Prayer...from now till Christmas Day:



**You Will Be My Witnesses.** We're going to give you one of these as you leave. And you'll notice, that's a picture of us leaving the church...meaning: we've got a job to do! There's five lines on that card that you will fold and make into a prayer tent...like this:



Put this in a prominent place in your home and PRAY!!!

You'll also have the opportunity to take with you Invitation Cards to our Celebrate Christmas program in December. This will be a great tool to use to give you an opportunity to talk about Jesus!





But here's the thing: Every service between now Christmas...Sun/Wed, we're going to come forward and get on our knees and pray! It's time to get WHITE HOT!

Church family, who needs to be saved? Who needs the Lord in your life? Is it a child? A family member? A neighbor or co-worker, a classmate. You say, "I've tried and I've tried and I've gotten nowhere." Well, we're going to try again. It's time to go to the well again...and drop the bucket. I know it might come up dry like it has before...but...if we pray...white hot, fervent prayers...God can move in the human heart...nothing is impossible with Him.

---

Tim is playing "Goodness of God." Aren't you thankful for your salvation? In the three parables of Luke 15 they rejoiced over finding the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son... THEY REJOICED! Oh...we're saved and that should make us **so thankful** for the Goodness of God that we're motivated to go share the good news. It's time to pray...please come forward...it's time to pray "white hot," fervent prayers!

---