

**BACK TO GOD**  
"Help"  
September 25, 2016

**Awakenings along the Spiritual Journey:**

1. Awakening to Longing
2. Awakening to Regret
3. Awakening to Help

"God, if you are real, make yourself real to me.  
Awaken in me the willingness to turn toward you for help."

*"...the younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living... He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."* Luke 15:13-16 (NIV)

- Awakening to Longing

*"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!'"* Luke 15:17a (NIV)

- Awakening to Regret

*"I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you..."* Luke 15:20a (NIV)

- Awakening to Help

*"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."*

Luke 15:20 (NIV)

KESAHAAH: "the cutting off"

**Leadership Tip!**

**Jesus.org** is a great example of a resource that life group leaders can use as you prepare. Don't be afraid to use on-line resources, but make sure you research their origin. Also, be sure to share the good resources you find.

**FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO GOD – *Awakening to Help*****STARTER QUESTION:**

Where have you seen God show up in your life?

What were some things you got out of the sermon this week?

**MAIN IDEA:**

When we admit we are powerless to fulfill our longings on our own, we discover there's help and that help has a name. His name is Jesus.

There are times in life when we get into a jam, we get stuck, and we can't get out on our own. Sometimes they are funny where there really isn't a lot of damage. But then there are times when the stakes are much higher and the damage is severe.

**Have you ever been in a situation where you needed help but pride got in the way of you asking for help?**

Last week we read Luke 15:17 that led up to the son's realization that he needed help.

**KEY SCRIPTURE:****Luke 15:17-19 (NIV)**

*"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'"*

After everything the son did, he was left with an emptiness that he describes as starvation! Once the son decided he needed help and he was willing to set aside his pride, he began his journey back to his father and family.

In today's verse we look at the story of the prodigal son and his return home to his father.

**Luke 15:20 (NIV)**

*“So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”*

In the first century in the Middle East, to see a father running would have been an undignified and humiliating thing. First of all, to run, the father would have to pull up the bottom of his robe exposing his naked legs. That in itself, was culturally shameful. But what's more, a grown, important and respected man didn't run anywhere. People came to them, not the other way around.

**Describe your feelings and thoughts about the father's response.**

Day after day the father would scan the horizon hoping to catch a glimpse of his son. His friends were probably telling him, “Forget about that worthless, ungrateful brat.” They likely encouraged him to move on. But he wouldn't stop watching, longing, waiting for his son's return. And when he sees him on the horizon, he takes off running. He humiliates himself in front of his neighbors and runs to his boy.

**Is God waiting for you like the father in this story? Why?**

Once we realize we need help, really need help, we can start to step toward God and not away from Him.

The most important part in finding our way back to God for help is to meet the narrator of this story...Jesus. The whole reason Jesus told the story of the prodigal son was to help us find our way back to God, and the reason He knows so much about finding God is because He is God. Jesus paved our way back to God by becoming our Sacrifice on the cross.

Jesus is the God who is with us. He was sent by God and lived among us and was one of us—fully God and fully human.

C.S. Lewis once said...

*“The only way Hamlet could discover anything about Shakespeare would be if Shakespeare wrote himself into the play.”*

So God wrote himself into our story by coming in the person of Jesus. If we want to know what kind of God is waiting for us when we come back to Him, we find Him in the person of Jesus.

**Where is God trying to write Himself into the story of your life?**

**In what way are you starving for God?**

## **FINAL THOUGHTS:**

**How do you relate to the need for help in this parable?**

**Is there an area in your life where you realize you need help?**

When we seek help from God, we stop trying to fix things ourselves; we stop trying to prove ourselves; we stop trying to find fulfillment by ourselves. We finally come to realize “I can’t do this on my own.”

In this week’s message, we were asked to step out in courage and say, “I need help. I am ready to return to the Father. I’m ready to come home.”

**Where are you on taking that step?**

The parable of the prodigal son was told to a group of people who believed that people get the consequences they deserve from their actions. They looked at the longing of a wayward son as suffering that he deserved. That idea has not diminished over time. Many people still think this way about their own longing; it is suffering that they deserve. But nothing can be further from the truth. The reason Jesus told this parable is to set the record straight. Our Father is always waiting for His kids to return to Him. God says what you deserve is forgiveness and fulfillment. Not because of what we have done, but because what Jesus did for us.

**How can our group pray for you?**

**Make this your prayer this week:**

**“God, if you are real, make yourself real to me. Awaken in me the willingness to find my way back to you for help.”**

**CLOSE IN PRAYER**