

Pray for Healing and Restoration

Series: How to Pray for Your Pastor

Luke 15:11-32

Introduction

(e.g.) Don is in his late 50's and has been serving in a rural church in Indiana ...

- He said: "I've served my church for the past 27 years ... and I've grown that church from 150 people to 24 people ... and the treasurer called last week and told me that we will run out of money in August."

 - It looks like we'll have to shut our doors for good.
 - What do I have to show for my life after almost three decades of serving God?
 - His face was covered with anger, confusion, and resentment ...
 - But it was also clear that he had no more fight in him anymore ... he had given up in his heart already ...
 - And his biggest hurdle ... FEELING LIKE A FAILURE BEFORE GOD ... HIS FAMILY ... and HIS CHURCH ...

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO DON?

- You know ... our world is wired to celebrate the BIGGER, BETTER, BRIGHTER LIGHTS OF HOLLYWOOD SUCCESS STORIES ...
 - And we have bought into the world's standard of success to be our measuring rod too for the Church.

- The US has about 300,000 churches nationwide ... and the average attendance size is 75 people.
 - Almost 180,000 church in America have less than 100 people ...
 - So about 60% of all churches are “small” congregations ...

- But bc of media, we elevate the few large ones thinking that they are the norm.
 - There are 1,500 megachurches in the US ... meaning that’s less than one half of one percent of all the churches in the US.
 - So the pressures to BE LIKE THE BIG NAME PASTORS ... deals a crushing blow to the regular joe’s like you and me.
 - In fact ... podcasts have become both a blessing and a curse to many pastors.
 - It’s a blessing to hear from such quality speakers from all over the world!
 - And it’s a curse, because now congregations members also listen to them ... and COMPARE YOU to these quality speakers from all over the world :)

THAT HAS LED TO A DISILLUSIONED ... AND DISCOURAGED GROUP OF PEOPLE LEADING THE CHURCH TODAY.

- I think in light of all that we have heard ... concerning the pain ... the silence ... the burnout ... the betrayal ... and even thousands who leave pastoral ministry each month ...
 - ... I realized that we needed to pray for one more important thing before we end this series ... and that is to pray for healing and restoration for pastors ... and their families.

- I received feedback from a number of PK's after last week's sermon ... PK's who resonated with so much that was discussed.
- I was blessed to hear that a number of them felt the need to forgive their fathers after the sermon too ...
- And upon further reflection ... I felt the need to offer up one more gift of prayer for the pastors in our lives ... and that was to pray for healing ... and restoration.

So we will explore this topic today ... and we will pray through a familiar parable also about healing and restoration ... the parable of the prodigal son ... from Luke 15.

So turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 15:11 ff and let's begin our look at the conclusion of this series: How to Pray for Your Pastor.

[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. [13] 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. [14] And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. [15] So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. [16] And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

- This brief paragraph is filled with many parallels of our lives ... the lives of PK's ... and even the life of pastors.
 - This younger son wants to explore life outside of his father's house ... and in essence says: "Dad ... you're a rich guy ... I want to enjoy what's mine while I can ... and I can't WAIT till you die ... so can you just give me my share of the inheritance NOW?"
 - Pretty insulting actually ...
 - And if it was in Korean culture ... he'd get a pretty bad beating ... (YOU WANT TO GET WHAT'S COMING TO YOU??? I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT'S COMING TO YOU!!)"

- But graciously ... the father DOES give him what he asks for (and like our Father in heaven too ... God does not FORCE us to love Him ... He will give us the freedom to go the way that we want)

- As some have said: We are as close to God as we want to be right now ...

- ... and then it says he “squandered his property in reckless living”

- He lived it up ... he partied it up ... and he wasted it all!

- He's broke now ... and the land has a famine ...

- And he began to be in NEED (it says in verse 14) ... because sometimes ... God will let us lose all that we have ... so that we realize He's all that we need!

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

- Now, as a Jew ... this is both embarrassing and shameful.

- Pigs were considered UNCLEAN animals ... so the fact that he's not only working with them ... HE LONGS TO EAT WHAT THEY ARE EATING ... shows he's in the low of lows right now.

- “BUT NO ONE GAVE HIM ANYTHING”

- He is alone ... he is filled with regret ... and shame ...

- He has failed ... he has messed up ... and it seems like there's nowhere else to go ...

(AND THAT'S EXACTLY HOW A LOT OF PASTORS FEEL RIGHT NOW)

- And so THAT is why we want to lift up one more prayer for them today ...

So follow along with me in your outlines ...

And one more thing I'd like for us to pray about ... is to ...

Pray for a return

Luke 15:17 ESV "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! [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." [20] And he arose and came to his father.

-This is the turning point in the story ... when the son realizes that he has hit rock bottom ... and it's time to return home.

- This is also a picture of a heart beginning to repent.

-He SEES the condition of his life ... and the effects of sins ... and he wants to change.

-He ALSO sees the goodness of his father in a new light ...

- He is now changing how he THINKS ... what he desires ... and how he will act!

-And that is repentance ...

-Repentance is CHANGING HOW WE THINK ... TURNING AWAY from our sin ... and returning to HIM!

- RELYING on the MERCY, goodness, and grace of the Father!

-And what we want to do today ... is pray that the many prodigals would return to the Father as well.

- For the child who ran away ...

- For the child who lived like a slave ...

-Pray that they would RETURN to God, the Father in heaven, by KNOWING THE TRUE HEART OF THE FATHER.

-But I also realized that it's important to pray THIS for the pastors as well.

- For those who fell morally ... and for those who feel like a failure in ministry ...

-Pray that THEY would return to the Father ... by knowing God's heart for them too.

-It is HARD ... when you have been serving the Lord for all these years ... and you fail (or are pushed out of ministry) ... it is HARD when you feel like you've disappointed God!

-PRAY that they would return to the Lord by knowing that God's love for them is NOT based on their service to Him!

-That success in God's eyes are not based on attendance ... or offerings.

- ... That we would BELIEVE what we preach about the Gospel ... that only through the work of Christ do we gain acceptance into the embrace of the Father in heaven ... NOT bc of what we do!

-And for the many workaholics too ... PRAY FOR A RETURN such as Malachi 4:6 speaks of:

(In speaking of what will happen before the return of Jesus)

And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers

- We need to pray for a HEART change in this generation for families ... for parents ... and for children.
- (e.g.) The #1 regret that pastors had in the surveys done ... was not spending enough time with their family.
 - And one PK I talked with said the reason why she got into the drug scene ... and the reason why she started dressing in ways that her parents didn't like ... the reason why she spent time with people her parents didn't like was bc to her:
 - NEGATIVE ATTENTION WAS BETTER THAN NO ATTENTION!
 - She felt that was the only way she could get their attention ... and get them to talk with her.

- And that turned out to be the case for A LOT of people during their rebellious periods in life.

- It was a cry for someone to notice them.

BUT ALL OF US NEED TO BE AWARE OF THE EFFECTS OF BEING ABSENT IN THE LIFE OF YOUR CHILD (BE IT PHYSICALLY OR EMOTIONALLY)

- WHEN THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY GOD GAVE TO FATHERS AND MOTHERS IS NEGLECTED ... THERE ARE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES THAT CAN RESULT!

- You see, the absence of a parent ... but especially the absence of a FATHER ... in the life a child ... has a HUGE impact on how people grow up.

- According to studies ... children who are raised without the influence of a father have 2-3 times more behavioral and psychological problems than children who are raised by both parents.

- **70 percent of those incarcerated in youth detention** facilities were raised without a father.
- And boys who grow up without a Dad are twice as likely to end up in jail than those who grow up with fathers.

http://fatherhood.about.com/od/fathersrights/a/fatherless_children.htm

• **(THERE IS CLEAR CONNECTION BETWEEN A FATHER'S PRESENCE AND THE IMPACT OF A CHILD'S BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT)**

- 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless families.
 - This stat had to make me wonder about the connection between absent fathers in Korean culture and the high suicide rates here, especially in youth, teens, & 20's
 - We need to PRAY FOR A RETURN ... and for *father's* to come home.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2518247/Growing-father-permanently-alter-BRAIN-Fatherless-children-likely-grow-angry-turn-drugs.html>

- Canadian scientists conclude that growing up in a fatherless household can permanently altar the brain, causing more aggressive behavior.
 - The effects are damaging to both sons and daughters ...
 - Boys don't know what it means to be a man (gentleman) ... and girls don't know how to recognize good values in guys because of the father's absence.
 - There's an increase in depression ... promiscuity ... failed relationships ... and addictions ... esp. in girls who were raised without a father.

- You see ... God created families to be a mother and a father loving ... discipling ... and raising children TOGETHER.
 - And when that order is broken ... the health and growth of a family is also at risk.

- The reason why I mention this is because there are MANY in this NATION ... and many in ministry families ... who grow up without a Dad ...

- Through divorce ... *maybe* ...

- But also MANY who are simply DISTANT ... emotionally ... and bc of work.

- THAT leads to children growing up LONGING for the embrace of a father ...

- It results in a child who MAY have a Dad ... but in their heart ... they feel just like an orphan ... WITHOUT A DAD TO LOVE THEM ... AND LEAD THEM!

- WE NEED TO PRAY ... FOR PRODIGAL CHILDREN ... AND EVEN PRODIGAL PARENTS TO COME HOME ... and for healing to begin.

So we should pray for a return ... but also we should ...

Pray for restoration

Luke 15:20 ESV 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. [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.' [22] But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. [23] And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. [24] For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

- Verse 20 says: While he was still a LONG way off ... his father saw him:

- That tells us that the Father was waiting ... and LOOKING for his son ... each day.

- ***(e.g.) Looking into the distance ... seeing a shadow ... that looks familiar ... realizing that it's him! It's my son!!!! AND HE RUNS!!!!!!***

- In that culture ... older people and people worthy of respect didn't run ...

- But he didn't care about how he looked ... he cared about his son coming home!

- And in the same way ... when we take ONE STEP back to God ... God will RUN the rest of the way! (AND THAT IS GOD TO YOU TODAY TOO!!!!!!!!!!)

- The son is repentant ... returns home ... and the father RECEIVES HIM ... and RESTORES HIM!

- The ROBE and the RING signify his rightful STATUS as a SON!

- He was being RESTORED to his proper place ... as ROYALTY ... in the family!

- THIS IS WHAT THE GOSPEL DOES WHEN SATAN THROWS SHAME IN OUR FACE!

- It reminds us of our IDENTITY as deeply loved children of God!

- You see ... guilt says “I failed” ... which reveals I was wrong in my action

- But shame says “I am a failure” ... which reveals an issue with my identity!

- Shame pushes down, not just what we do, but WHO WE ARE ...

- And the GOSPEL reminds us that WHO WE ARE is because of WHOSE WE ARE ... WE BELONG TO HIM!

- THEREFORE: In Christ ... you are significant! You MATTER! You are LOVED!

- Though you fail ... you are NOT a failure ... for through faith in Christ ... all our failures and sins were PLACED ON HIM!

- And He gives us instead ... HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS! Acceptance. Sonship. Salvation!

- It is the business of God ... to heal and restore things we have lost.

Joel 2:25 ESV I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.

-God can heal ...

-God can restore ...

•YEARS ... DECADES ... RELATIONSHIPS ... FAMILIES ... MARRIAGES ...

-For His love is wider ...

-His love is deeper ...

-His love is higher ...

-His love is stronger ...

- AND THIS RESTORATION IS THE GIFT THAT COMES THROUGH REPENTANCE!

•New life and recovery of the lost are some of the things that results from repentance.

I'm always AMAZED ... when I see PK's who grew up hating the church ... living in deep rebellion ...

- Find healing through Christ ...

- I know SO MANY ... who after they returned to Christ ... they enter seminary or pastoral ministry themselves ...

• THAT is a picture of the restoration that the gospel brings ... the hope that repentance brings ... it is a hope that comes ... only through the cross.

So we pray for a return ... we pray for restoration ... and ultimately ... we ...

Pray for redemption

[25] “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. [26] And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. [27] 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.’ [28] But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, [29] 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. [30] But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

Luke 15:31 ESV And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. [32] It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

-The older son NEVER RAN AWAY ... but ... his heart was NEVER REALLY AT HOME EITHER ...

- He was a son ... but he still lived like a slave.

-And that’s how a lot of us live too ...

-We are unable to CELEBRATE THE GIFT OF LIFE, ADOPTION, AND REDEMPTION ... bc we still live as if we are slaves!

-But we must remember that BECAUSE WE ARE NOW IN CHRIST ... EVERYTHING NOW SERVES A GREATER PURPOSE IN OUR LIVES ... and ALL things will bring glory to the name of Jesus in the end!

-For we know that in ALL things God works for the GOOD of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose!

Genesis 50:20 NIV You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

- God now redeems ALL things in our lives ... even sin ... for the purposes of Christ ... and for the glory of His name!

- AND A LIFE THAT UNDERSTANDS REDEMPTION IS A LIFE THAT UNDERSTANDS CELEBRATION!

- One of the most beautiful things about this parable is the CELEBRATION that is done by the Father ... at the repentance of the son!

- You see ... when ONE sinner repents ... God throws a party in heaven :)

Zephaniah 3:17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

Song of Songs 2:4 He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.

(e.g.) One pastor said the biggest challenge in his life ... is to believe that God really loved him.

- That is a challenge that a lot of still face ...

Brennan Manning once said: "If I am not in touch with my own belovedness (that God TRULY loves me), then I cannot touch the sacredness of others. Experience has taught me that I connect best with others when I connect with the core of myself. When I allow God to liberate me from unhealthy dependence on people, I listen more attentively, love more unselfishly, and am more compassionate and playful. I take myself less seriously, become aware that the breath of the Father is on my face and that my countenance is bright with laughter in the midst of an adventure I thoroughly enjoy."

- God is HAPPY EVERY TIME you come to Him.

- And ***God is happy when I realize that I need Him***

... and that often only happens after we make a lot of mistakes on our own.

- You see ... the gospel doesn't KEEP us from failing ... but it TRANSFORMS our failures into something that becomes fruitful for our lives. (THAT is redemption!)

• **Our failures do not DEFINE US ... they REFINE US! Through faith in Christ!**

- Everyone needs to be reminded of the gospel on a regular basis ... even pastors.

• For the gospel reminds us that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more ... and there's nothing we can do to make God love us less! :)

(e.g) There was a saying I once heard that when we stand before Jesus, he won't be looking for medals ... he'll be looking for scars ...

- You see ... we are called to take up our CROSSES AS WE FOLLOW JESUS.

• And a cross means: SUFFERING ... PAIN ... and even DEATH ...

• AND THOSE WHO STILL FOLLOW ... AND TRUST ... THROUGH SUFFERING ... THROUGH PAIN ... THROUGH LOSS ... THROUGH BETRAYAL ... THROUGH FAILURE ... THROUGH SINNING AGAIN ... unto death ... will be found at the right place in the end ...

• At the foot of the cross ... desperate ... and depending on the Savior!

SO PRAY THAT PASTORS WOULD TRUST IN HIS REDEEMING POWER ... EVEN AS THEY GO THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

Conclusion

- We may fail ... but that does not define us.
- We may fail ... but we are still loved ...
- We may fail ... but we are accepted by God ... who has taken our failures upon himself.
- We may fail ... but we are invited to be an honored child of the King.

Brennan Manning says it well:

“May all of your expectations be frustrated,
May all of your plans be thwarted
May all of your desires be withered into nothingness
That you may experience the powerlessness and poverty of a child ...

- And can sing and dance in the love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen

- Even in failure ... (no, ESPECIALLY in failure) ... may we fall into the hands of our gracious God ... who will catch us ... hold us ... and restore us again.
- May we fall on our knees ... before the cross ... and know that THIS is the place where true healing and restoration begins ...

Let's pray ...

- But I also know that this is how some of YOU feel today too ... you've messed up ... you've failed ... and you feel like you've let God down ...

