

BIBLICALLY PARENTING THE MATURING CHILD
Part X: Reaching And Discipling Our Prodigals Using The Missionary Approach
(Acts 19:1-20 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. Due to problems of the past, parents may realize their maturing child does not respect their parental roles over him. They may wonder then how to heed Ephesians 6:4 and rear that child as God desires.
- B. For the solution, we consider the achievements of Victorian Era missionaries: they went to Third World cannibalistic tribes that did not innately respect them so that, armed with the Gospel and God's power, these missionaries emerged with lasting converts who heed Christ and in turn reach their countrymen as did the demoniac in Mark 5:1-20; 7:31-8:9. Thus, if starchy Victorian Era missionaries can be used of God to disciple Third World cannibals, God can equip parents to disciple their prodigals (as follows):

II. Reaching And Discipling Our Prodigals Using The Missionary Approach, Acts 19:1-20 et al.

- A. Assume a mental posture of **unconditional love** for the prodigal. Paul did this in Romans 9:1-3, choosing to keep attached to his rebellious countrymen. Victorian Era missionaries took sometimes 20 years of total commitment before gaining just a credible standing with cannibalistic peoples they tried to disciple.
- B. Assume a mental posture of **unconditional sacrifice of all offensive "rights" that obstruct rapport with the prodigal**. Paul did this according to 1 Corinthians 10:31-33. Parents of rebellious teens often have **little** or **NO** parental influence with their children, explaining why the child is a prodigal! Thus, for the parent to trust the prodigal will respect his authority as a parent is a grave presupposition for him to make! That authority must be earned by the parent from the prodigal's viewpoint!
- C. Allow **God** to *push* us as the parent into **confronting** the prodigal with his error as God did with Paul in Acts 18:5-6. If **GOD** creates the confrontation, the parent must not shy away from the response!
- D. Once **God** has pushed the parent into making the confrontation, the parent must **hold his ground!** Paul kept trying to confront his countrymen in synagogues even though he had suffered hostile rejection from them, Acts 18:5-6 with 18:19; 19:8. God can use persistent confrontation that is coupled with meek love!
- E. If the prodigal makes even the smallest step of progress, the parent **must NOT criticize his progress, but nourish it!** Paul chose to nourish the disciples of John in Acts 19:1-7 when they claimed not to know anything about the Holy Spirit. In reality, they **should** have known, for all four Gospels record John the Baptizer had preached about the Holy Spirit and Christ, cf. Matt. 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16; John 1:19-34. Paul graciously helped these faltering but open disciples into the fullness of the truth in Christ!
- F. When the parental **authority** is *accepted* by the prodigal, the parent should try to **isolate** the prodigal from negative *peer pressure*, Acts 19:9. Paul did this in Acts 19:9-10 to hasten the discipling process.
- G. The parent should **rely on divine intervention to provide him the credibility he needs to disciple the prodigal**. Paul needed credibility at Ephesus due to tremendous opposition to his ministry from officials in the synagogue (Acts 19:8-9a), so God miraculously performed significant miracles through him that unusually countered the false legalism of his Judaistic opponents: (1) people were healed from worn work aprons, ceremonially "unclean" cloths he had discarded (Acts 19:11-12) and (2) several Jews were unable to exorcise a demon by trying to copy Paul's words, and God allowed them to be beaten and stripped to flee naked, Acts 19:13-17a, an event that produced great respect for Paul's Gospel, Acts 19:17b-20. Accordingly, the parent of a prodigal must wait upon God to give him credibility and impact in the viewpoint of the prodigal so that the parent can disciple him!
- H. When God supplies the parent victory in discipling his prodigal, he should **share his experience with other struggling parents!** Titus 2:3-4 and 2 Timothy 2:2 tell both women and men to duplicate in others what they have been taught so others can disciple still others! The Body of Christ needs this counsel!

Lesson: *Effectively discipling a prodigal begins with the parent's shifting from a position of assumed parental authority (which he no longer has) just to win the child's respect (which missionaries must do) in a life of faith in God in the process. When that respect is gained by God's grace, the parent can use the authority gained under God's leading to speed up the discipling process!*

Application: *May we parents of prodigals view ourselves as MISSIONARIES to ESTRANGED people in dealing with our prodigals that we might draw upon God's spiritual, Biblical resources for power!*