

## GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

### "Part XXVIII: Renewing Household Families: Addressing Roadblocks - Discipling Prodigals With The Missionary Approach"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The most difficult part of parenting is experiencing the waywardness of a child.

(1) The March 1994 issue of Moody Monthly (p. 14) reports on the dramatic true account of a prodigal of Christian parents in Orlando, Florida. Bob and Hope Myers were involved in a Church ministry in Orlando.

Suddenly, Bob and Hope discovered that their son, Ritchie was leading a homosexual lifestyle and had a drinking problem. Deeply hurt and infuriated, Bob and Ritchie tried to talk their differences out, but only got into shouting matches.

On Easter Sunday shortly thereafter, Ritchie revealed that he had tried to commit suicide. Bob and Hope admitted him to a Christian center for alcohol treatment, but there he was diagnosed as having acquired the HIV virus.

Bob and Hope were stunned beyond belief. As they reportedly asked themselves, Bob and Hope wondered: "How could this happen to us? We dedicated him to God as a baby, and dedicated our whole lives to serving God. We had devotions and raised our children in the church where Bob is on staff."

(2) More than one Christian parent in our area has awakened to read the paper giving an account of negative activity by a wayward son or daughter. Sometimes the call comes in from the police station. At other times it's a friend of the child who gives the shocking news to the parent.

**Bob and Hope Myers case, though perhaps an unusually difficult one, nevertheless mirrors the drama many parents, even Christian parents have faced with wayward sons and daughters.**

What is the solution?!

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

***Need: "Either I or another parent has been 'thrown' by the way a son or daughter has turned against him and God! The bridges have all been burned so there's nothing left to mend! What NOW?!"***

**I. For perspective and direction, know that ALL men are prodigals!**

- A. According to Romans 3:23, all have sinned, prodigals **and** parents!
- B. That sin comes from sin natures in all parents and prodigals alike, for all men are inherently depraved sinners, Jeremiah 17:9.
- C. Accordingly, dealing with prodigals takes accepting this fact as a **reality**, an adjustment that is necessary to rear **any** mortal child!

**II. Also, if a parent and child function independently of Christ and Scripture, both spiral down into dysfunctional, spiritual failure:**

- A. According to Isa. 8:19-20; 9:1-2, if one does not make Scripture and Christ his **only** authority for insight, he lives in darkness in this world.
- B. That is because the world in which the family lives is fully controlled by Satan, the prince of this world, 1 Jn. 5:19b NIV; Jn. 14:30.
- C. Now, Satan aims to destroy people as a murderer, Jn. 8:44a.
- D. Thus, every time a parent and child act **independent** of Scripture and Christ as their bases of defining reality, the **parent** can **only** lead his child into Satan's web of destruction, for **all OTHER** ideas he has **available** to guide him are **ALL** of spiritual darkness, Mtt. 15:14a.

**III. Thus, a parent must take these steps to disciple a "prodigal" child:**

- A. **Step One** - Apart from Christ's help, the **parent** must view **himself** as being an **essentially inadequate** parent since he is a **sinner** who is **irrepressibly** subject to **Satan**. One must start here to help a prodigal!
- B. **Step Two** - **Based on this conviction**, the **parent** must believe on Christ as Savior from sin to be born anew, Jn. 1:11-13, receive God's Holy Spirit Who is under Christ's "parenting" leadership, 2 Cor. 5:17 with Jn. 14:16-18 NIV, being thus removed from Satan's domain to Christ's kingdom for victory in the angelic conflict, Col. 1:12-14.
- C. **Step Three** - The **parent** must fellowship with God by (1) confessing acts of sin for empowering by the Spirit (1 Jn. 1:9), (2) relying on the "parenting" work of Christ through the indwelling Spirit (Jn. 14:16-18 NIV; Gal. 5:15-23) while exposing himself to Scripture content for his **sole** insight to do God's will, Deut. 17:18-20 and 1 Peter 2:25! Thus

equipped, **not** the parent, but **GOD through** him produces *fruitful* child-rearing views and consequent actions, 2 Cor. 10:1-5 NIV!

- D. Step Four - There are often huge rapport obstacles between a parent and a prodigal. Yet, Mtt. 28:19-20 promises discipling advances with estranged **nations** regardless of **all** human rapport obstacles. Thus, parents can use the following missionary approach to reach prodigals:

1. Item One - Assume an attitude of unconditional love for the prodigal. Though persecuted heavily by his countrymen (Acts 14:19-20), Paul unconditionally, deeply loved them, Ro m. 9:1-3.
2. Item Two - Unconditionally sacrifice all offensive "rights" that Scripture permits us to sacrifice, and thus remove human barriers of rapport between us and the prodigal, cf. 1 Cor. 10:31-33.
3. Item Three - As with Paul, **God** may push us into a confrontation with the prodigal over his sin. If so, we must not shy away from our stand even if he responds in hostility. He **needs** it, Acts 18:5-6.
4. Item Four - Once God has thus led us into a stand on an issue, **hold ground** on it **without wavering**, Acts 18:5-6 with 18:19. God can use **persistent** people who are **also** meek and loving in such times!
5. Item Five - **Nourish** even the **smallest** of improvements by the prodigal, Acts 19:1-7. John's disciples had been taught by John that the Spirit was coming with Christ (Mtt. 3:11-12), but when some of them said they hadn't **heard** this, instead of scolding them, since they were **open** to Paul, he merely led them farther along!
6. Item Six - When the parent's rapport is **accepted** by the prodigal, the parent should seek to **isolate** the prodigal from troublesome peer pressure. Note how Paul did this in Acts 19:9-10 NIV.
7. Item Seven - Instead of promoting our credibility before the prodigal ourselves (Prov. 27:2), let **God** arrange for that to occur as **He** sees it necessary for us to continue to disciple well, Acts 19:11-20. Note how **God** intervened to produce authenticating miracles in Paul's efforts to disciple in his trying circumstances!
8. Item Eight - When God supplies us the victory in reaching the prodigal, **share** the experience via testimony with other struggling parents. Titus 2:3-4 and 2 Tim. 2:2 tell both women and men to duplicate in others what they have been taught themselves!

**Application:** Since SIN is behind ALL prodigal behavior, and ALL men sin, as a true missionary, every parent must address SIN with God's salvation FROM it (1) in his OWN life through Christ, and then (2) as a saved sinner HIMSELF in reaching his prodigal child!

**Lesson:** Since SIN makes ALL men "prodigals" before GOD, EVERY parent must disciple EVERY child to SOME degree like a missionary must disciple the estranged nations! Thus, we do well to START with this mindset with any child, regardless of the DEGREE of his waywardness!

#### **Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

When Bob and Hope Myers, involved in ministry in Orlando, Florida, discovered that their son was not only an alcoholic and leading a gay lifestyle, but had acquired the HIV virus as well, they turned back to the spiritual basics they had in Christ for a solution:

(1) Bob realized that as God had forgiven **him**, he was obligated to forgive his sin as he confessed. In doing so, **Bob** began to understand the unconditional love God had for him that **he himself** had **never** learned from his **own** father. (That was the core problem afflicting the relationship between Bob and Ritchie!)

(2) Bob then decided to confess to Ritchie his failure to be at home enough to spend time with Ritchie as he had been too involved in ministry at the Church to minister as a father.

#### **As a result, Ritchie's life started to turn around, and the family was reconciled.**

The dynamics behind waywardness in a child is the same as the waywardness of ANY person in relationship to GOD! Accordingly, we must get right with GOD as parents FIRST, and then, as we would to anyone else in the world needing Christ, turn and disciple our wayward sons and daughters as God's MISSIONARIES to them!