

Come Home - Biblical Fatherhood

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[0 : 00] I want to talk this morning about Biblical fatherhood.

! And looking at the story of the prodigal son, Luke chapter 15. If you've got a Bible, wave your hand and a hand. One of the stewards will give you a Bible if you'd like to.

Oh, here you go. Thanks, Phil. And Justice wants one. Yeah, wave your hand. We'll wait for you to get one. It's good if you can read along and you can follow what I'm talking about today.

And today being Father's Day, it's good to think about fathers, isn't it? As much as there's lots to be desired about human fathers at times.

I, for one, know that for myself as a father. And yet the Bible says what a father should be like. And we can learn from that, can't we? And we can take notice of that.

[1 : 09] So, you know, God's our father. We don't presume to call a man a father, as some would presume to call religious people fathers. Of course, we've got natural fathers. And I thank God for my father today, who's here today.

And this is a story of a classic story of a wasted life. A wasted life. And yet, of a loving father. The lavish, restoring love of the father.

And here is one of the best bottles of biblical fatherhood. If you're a father here today, I'm sure every one of you wants to aspire to be like that. To be a father that is like God the Father.

A father that is a model to us. And we see that pictured in this story. As we read in Luke 15. We're going to extract some truths from this. Some truths about fatherhood.

It's missing today, isn't it? Fathers are often missing. I know in the sphere of work where I work, in the health sector, it's very female dominated. And thank God for females.

[2 : 10] Thank God for ladies who care. And in the child care sector, there's lots of ladies who are very active. But sometimes it's the fathers that are missing, isn't it? And I think that's a sad reflection on today's society.

And the context here is the Lord Jesus is talking to some religious guys. Some Pharisees and scribes, they're murmuring, it says. In verse 2, they say, This man receiveth sinners, and he eats with them.

It was astounding to them. How could he mix with types like this? Sinners. They were murmuring. They were grumbling. This man receives them. Not only that, he eats with them. And he tells some stories.

And one of them is the story of the prodigal son. The lost son. And Jesus said in Luke 15, 11, A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.

And he divided unto them his living. He was the younger. The father was still alive. And this young son, you could call him, he was young and restless. Young and restless.

[3 : 17] And this son, he became a reckless son. He was really cheeky, wasn't he? His father was still alive, still in good health. And this son comes to him and says, Dad, I want my inheritance now.

I want to have it now. He was rude. He was cheeky. It was preposterous. In the culture of the day, he was virtually saying, Father, I'm eager for you to die.

I want you to die so I can get your stuff. That's what he was saying. It was outrageous. It was ridiculous. It was unthinkable. And really the correct response of the culture of his time would have been for the father to strike his son across the face and drive him out of the house.

And even the village really could have stoned him to death for a disrespect to the father. That was the law of the culture of the time, as you can read in Deuteronomy 21, 18 to 21.

But instead, this father was open-handed. He released him. He let him go. He sells off part of the family farm. And in effect, he gives this younger son something the boy had not earned.

[4 : 22] He had not earned it. And he certainly didn't deserve it. A major share of the family's inheritance before the father had even died. And in the context, we see that the father of this house,

he was the master of the house.

He had servants. He had authority. Fathers have got authority today. They should have fathers. The man of the house used to be, wasn't it? The father should have an authority.

He should have a place of respect. That's lacking today, isn't it, for fathers? Oh, my old man. You know, it's like just some sort of old geezer that you sort of happen to have sprung out of.

But he should be respected. A father should be respected and looked up to. And it's important that a father is a provider. We see in the story here, the father provided for his children as much as the guy got it a bit early.

And in the Word of God, it says, But if any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith that he's worse than an infidel. It's important for fathers to provide for their own.

[5 : 31] So we see the story goes on. Verse 13 is, we're hearing the story of this son that went away. He ran far away. It says that he headed into a far country.

He wanted to get as far away as he could. And he wanted to turn whatever cash or goods he had into fun, as he thought. As far as he could take then.

And verse 13 of Luke 15, it says, And not many days after, the youngest son gathered all together, and he took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

He spends his money as fast as he can. He wasted the family's wealth on wild living. He just blew it. Completely used it up. And verse 14, it goes on, And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land.

And he began to be in ones. There was a big famine. There was a drought. There was starvation. There was famine. Fortune goes and famine comes.

[6 : 40] You know, this young boy, he chose the wayward life. He chose riotous living. And he hit rock bottom. He hit rock bottom.

It says in the Word of God, God says to us, You will reap what you sow. He found out just that.

Verse 15, This young man, and he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.

And he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have filled his belly. He wanted to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.

And no man gave unto him. He joined himself to one of the people in the city. And the man sent him to feed pigs. You know, how low can you go?

Sin will take you to a ugly place. To the pig pen. That's where he ended up. And he got so desperate there that the food scraps that the pigs were eating actually made his tummy rumble.

[7 : 49] He actually got hungry for the food scraps that the pigs were eating. That's how desperate this young man was. Now verse 17, And when he came to himself, he came to himself.

He came to his senses. He realised how far sin had taken him. What a mess that he was in. He saw himself as he really was. He came to himself.

And he said, How many high servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare? And I perish with hunger. So, something happened here.

He saw what a state he was in. And he started to head back home. He started on that journey homewards. Back to the father's place. Back home. You know, there's a song that says, Come home.

Come home. Ye that are weary, Come home. It's still his call. Come unto me. Come home.

[8 : 48] Verse 18. He says, I will arise and go to my father. And I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Make me as one of thy servants. Thy hired servants. The three hardest words for man to say is, I have sinned.

I have sinned. He came to that place where he realised he was lost. He was sinful. You know, thank God, this young man, he had a father who had taught him the difference between right and wrong. He had a father who taught him what sin was, what really mattered in life. He had a father.

Likewise, we need fathers today.

Fathers who will teach their children spiritual things, things that really matter. More than making a buck and making a living. It's about truth.

[9 : 59] It's about life. It's about salvation. Real life in Christ. We need fathers today. Verse 20. And he arose and came to his father.

He got up out of that pig band. He arose. He did a U-turn and he headed back homewards. What a pitiful, pathetic sight he was. His father yet was watching for him.

His father yet had watchful eyes. We need fathers today. Fathers who will watch for their children. Fathers with watchful eyes.

Fathers who will watch and pray. Who will watch over their family in prayer. That's what we need today. Fathers who will pray. Verse 20.

In the middle there it goes on. But when he, the son, was yet a great way off. His father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

[11 : 01] When he was yet a great distance away. A great distance away. A long way away. The father recognised him.

And the father ran to meet him. You know, it says here, he was yet a great way off. He was yet a long distance away. God is a long distance runner.

God is a long distance runner. He sees us in our sin and he runs to us when we come to him. When we turn, he runs to meet us. This was something quite undignified for this father to run.

Of the day, of the time, it was something that a father would not naturally do. You know, possibly holding his long robes and running madly along and a long distance too.

It was quite undignified. But there was no hesitation from this father. His son was coming towards him. He was eager. God runs towards us. God runs towards you when you turn your face towards him.

[12 : 08] It's like Spurgeon says, the father may be out of breath but never out of love. You can imagine this father having run a long distance. Run!

Not casually jogged but he ran. He raced towards the son. He might have been a bit out of breath. A bit out of puff there as he got close to his son but he wasn't out of love.

He held him. He threw his arms around him. He hugged him. He kissed him. He kissed him. Much. Again and again. What love! The love of the father for the son.

The love of God for you. For you. For me. The sense of it here is that he embraced him and he kissed him again and again.

It was a joyful reunion. You know, this young son on that dusty road the last thing he needed was a lecture but he got a hug.

[13 : 04] He got a hug from his dad. That's important, isn't it? I know there's dads here today going through some troubles. There's dads here today going through some tough times. Thank God. You can have love for your children.

You can have love for your children. That's something precious, isn't it? I know you do love your children here today. And here was their son. He was still dirty. He was still covered in pig muck. He was still stinking and foul in his filthy rags. Dirty. Yet the father kissed him. He kissed his dirty face.

He kissed him. Yet he kissed him. A mark of acceptance. A mark of trust. A mark of restored trust of acceptance. And like God the father who loves us even when we failed.

This father loved this son even when he had failed. even when he didn't deserve really anything at all. When we have rejected God yet he loves you.

[14 : 05] Yet he loves you when you've rejected him. When you spat on his face. When you've taken and taken. When you've taken yourself into sin. Into that dark place.

Yet God is ready. He's watching for you. He's looking for you. He loves you even when you've failed him. Notice the father's many kisses. He was not heartless but forgiving.

He brought compassion and healing. We need fathers today. Fathers who will love their children. Fathers who will love their families. Verse 21 And the son said unto him Father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

That was as far as he could get with his prepared apology. The father then cut him short. He proceeded to honour this son this rascal this scoundrel this good for nothing.

The father stopped him in his tracks. He replaced his filthy rags with the best robe with the ring with the shoes and the fatted calf to boot to feast upon.

[15 : 16] There was restoration. There was sonship. The father was forgiving. There was no grudge here. There was no axe to grind. And we need fathers today who will extend themselves beyond what would be the natural.

What would be the expected. What would be what the society would say is reasonable. Fathers who will love beyond those limitations.

Fathers who will not hold bitterness in their hearts when their children do them wrong. And I know some fathers today your children have done you wrong. They've hurt you. They've said things spitefully.

Hard things. Harsh things. Yet be that father. Be that father like God the father is to you. Think of what he's done for you. What extent he went for you. Don't hold bitterness and resentment in your heart but give freely.

This is what happened. Verse 22. But the father said to his servants bring forth the best robe. I want the best for my son. And put it on him.

[16:17] Put a ring on his hand. Shoes on his feet. This robe was of the best quality they could find. And the ring on his finger was a signet ring. It was the ring that they would use to stamp.

In the old days they had wax on documents and they would make that ring hot or the wax hot rather and they would press that ring into the wax.

It was the sign of being legally part of the family. He could seal letters and documents with the hot wax marked with the imprint of the ring.

And he gave him shoes too. Shoes with a sign of a son. It was the servants who went barefoot but the sons wore shoes. He had the sandals of restoration.

The sandals of sonship placed upon his feet. God is a restoring God. He restores. And he keeps on giving. He cried out to the servants.

[17:14] Verse 23. Bring hither the fatted calf. Bring that calf that we've been getting ready for this special occasion to come. This is the best time the best reason for us to kill this calf.

Let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found and they began to be merry.

There was joy. There was rejoicing. You know the father's love it was extravagant. It was extravagant. It's like I heard it said the word prodigal means wasteful. It means extravagant.

You could say in a way the father was extravagant with his love. You know the son was extravagant with his waste with his rejection and rebellion to his father.

He was wasteful. But God expended his love extravagantly. That's what he did on the cross for us. Jesus died for you. His arms outstretched for you.

[18:18] His body filled with your sin. Those nails nailed for you for me. Extravagant wasn't it? The father's heart overflows still.

The fatted calf it was especially reserved for a feast for someone very special and the father said you can't get more special than this. My son my son is here. He was overjoyed.

It speaks to us this story of the joy of God. The joy of God as you read in the passages around it too. Of the sheep found of the coin found the joy of something found of a son.

What more joy than the son's return when a sinner comes to the father's house and is saved. Our Lord is generous with his unlimited kindness to the most unworthy and undeserving.

And yet in this account we see that not everyone was so pleased about the son coming home. The elder son was in the field verse 25 he was in the field and he came and he drew nigh to the house and he heard this music and dancing and he said what's all this noise going on?

[19:31] What's happening? And he called one of the servants and asked what these things men's. And verse 27 and he said unto him thy brother is come and thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he has received him safe and sound and he was angry and he would not go in.

Therefore came his father out and entreated him. Here's the older son the older son he'd been faithful he'd been working hard yakka on that farm he'd stayed home with his dad and this younger son has gone and blown I understand it was a third of the estate would have gone for the younger son and everything was wasted trashed that's how he treated his father the older son comes in and says what's all this about?

And verse 28 it's got the sense of he flew into a rage he was really livid he was really aggro about what was going on he flew into a rage that's the sense of it here and he would not go in he was not willing to go in it's like you could say as someone put it he was pouting on the pouch you know the younger son was messing around in the pig swill in the pig pen but he turned around and came home but the older son he was pouting on the porch he didn't want to go in you know the father wanted him to come in he says come in and enjoy this feast come and celebrate come and join in

and rejoice but the older son was bitter and angry and in the context you could see it as referring to the Pharisees the religious crowd hey we don't want sinners to come we want to be all nice and everything together and just so that was the kind of crowd that was around and yet Jesus says come my invitation is to all to come to the younger to the most sinful to the furthest from me he says come that's his message and even to this older boy he entreats in him he's got the sense that he kept on beseeching him there was a continual beckoning from the father to the son and yet we see the father some more thoughts about the father here he listened to his son he went out he entreated him he beseeched him he beckoned to him at least he did give the older son his ear and he heard what he had to say and verse 29 the son goes on about how he's not ever done anything wrong he says in verse 29 these many years do I serve thee neither transgressed

I at any time thy commandment you know he's big noting himself he says I've never done you wrong dad I've never disobeyed you and yet the father is saying come in and he's saying I won't so you know it's quite hypocritical of the older son and he says he goes on verse 13 but as soon as this thy son was come which is devoured thy living with harlots thou hast killed for him a fatted calf you know the young bloke he's been off with prostitutes wasting our money wasting the family estate blowing it in sin but grace grace we see grace in the eyes of the father even for this the older son could have been stoned to death for his disrespect to the father for how he treated his father the community could have stoned him to death in the laws of its time but verse 30 but grace but grace and he said unto him son thou art ever with me and all that

I have is thine it was meet it was right that we should make merry and be glad for this thy brother was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found now the story stops there we don't know the end of the story we don't know what happened to this older son we don't know what happened to the older brother maybe he did come into the house maybe he was restored we don't know we won't know the end of the story until we ask the Lord maybe one day the older son he wasn't in the pig pen but he was pouncing on the porch you know we need to come whether we think we've got it all together whether we think everything's just oh I'm just so good or whether we're in the pig pen stinking foul ugly we can come no matter how ugly you are in your sin no matter how righteous you might feel in your standing with God we all must come we all must come to the foot of the cross where the ground is level we all must come unto the Father come home come home friends just to close what we can learn as fathers from this story what we can learn as fathers as sons from this account the beautiful picture that it paints of God the Father what greater father can we ever know what greater father our earthly fathers may disappoint from time to time

[24 : 30] I know I have disappointed my children as a father from time to time yet this father he loves you with an everlasting love that's the kind of father that we would I hope would come to know friends the Father and can we be like God the Father himself open handed be open handed with your children be a provider be a teacher of spiritual truth to your children be one who watches over your family with prayer be loving embracing compassionate be forgiving be generous be willing to heal hurts and restore and listen be the kind of father who reflects how God the Father relates to us his children let us pray heavenly father we thank you we can call you that we can call you that not because we deserve it but because you grant it freely to us that joy of being yours of belonging to your family

Lord we thank you that in Christ you came taking our sin our shame all the foulness of the pig pen you can cleanse away by virtue of your act of love to us Lord we pray for any here today everyone here today that they might know what it is to know that love and for fathers here today that we might be challenged to be more like you with our children as children let us respect our fathers even though they may disappoint at times that we might extend love to them that we might care for them help us to love fathers that might be hard to love today we thank you for fathers that have passed away for their example to us and for what we've learnt from them and we just joy in you our God that we can be sons and daughters of the living God by faith as we trust you we thank you for this in Jesus name

Amen ending ending ending Thank you.