

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - December 2, 2021

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Title: "When You Have Drifted From God"

Subtitle: "Heartbreak Highway"

Scripture Reference: Proverbs 14:14

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself."

I. Introduction

A. A son in a large family resented his younger brother when he thought the "baby" received special privileges, so he tormented his brother.

B. He would hit him, then as soon as the younger brother cried, the older brother would become remorseful. He would then say, "I'm sorry; I didn't mean to hurt you. Don't tell Mom and Dad." This was pattern of the older brother and he repeated this time and time again.

C. One day the older brother hit the child and with apparent sincerity said, "This time I really am sorry. I mean it. Don't cry. I'm sorry."

D. The younger brother had enough of his older brother's hypocrisy and said, "I know you're sorry. What I want to know is, when will you be sorry enough to quit?"

E. Many people are sorry for what they do but not sorry enough to quit. There is a difference between being remorseful and repentant.

F. Remorsefulness is sorry for the past but doesn't want to change in the future. Repentance is also sorry for the past but **makes a change in the heart** so that the future will be different.

Repentance changes future behavior so that past mistakes won't be continually repeated.

G. When a child of God rebels against his heavenly Father, God has set up a process by which He can bring that child back to Himself.

H. The parable of the prodigal son reveals an amazing ten-step pattern that leads to repentance that occurs when a person backslides. When God removes his hand of blessing, the conditions in a backsliders life become so miserable that they will want to come back home. Here is what happens when someone travels down Heartbreak Highway.

II. Step # 1 - Rebellion against the Father

"And he ((Jesus)) said, 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." [Luke 15:11,12] (KJV)

Comment: In this passage, the father represents the Heavenly Father.

A. Rebellion is an inward separation in heart from our Heavenly Father. We always rebel on the inside before it shows on the outside.

B. This son wanted his inheritance even though his father was still living. He didn't want to wait until his father died.

Comment: His father's death could be years away, so he demanded to receive his inheritance right then.

C. Even though this son didn't want to live with his father anymore, he wanted to live off of his father's money. He wanted the father's presents, but he didn't want his presence!

III. Step # 2 - Rejection of the Father's presence

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all

together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." [Luke 15:13]

A. An inward separation in the heart is always followed by an outward separation in action. Consider what the Scripture says - "**Not many days after**," the son packed his bags to leave home.

Points: It doesn't take long for the outward separation of the rebellious heart to manifest itself.

B. Try to picture the scene in that home on that day. The Father's heart broke as he watched his son gather his belongings.

Comment: Although it is not recorded in Scripture, you can probably imagine that the father may have wept.

C. The father knew that the son was about to make a painful journey down Heartbreak Highway; the road that leads to the distant land.

1. Even though the son didn't realize the suffering he would experience in the foreign land, his father knew.

D. As much as the father loved his son, he didn't go down the road after him and beg him to return. No, he let him go.

Point: Sometimes the hardest thing to do when you love someone is to let them go, especially when you know what the person is about to experience.

E. This is a painful road to travel. It is so easy to backslide down Heartbreak Highway. It leads to a distant land, where famines occur and hearts break. The only way back to the Father's house is to return with a changed heart.

Comment: Many rebellious teenagers and bitter people have also traveled down Heartbreak Highway.

F. Some people return in a few days with their clothes torn and

scratches on their bodies. They have seen enough to know it is not the right way, and they humbly return to the Father's house.

G. Others are gone much longer, and the further down the road they go away from the Father, the worse it gets. This son was a long way down the road. He truly was in a distant land.

IV. Step # 3 - Removal of the Father's provision

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." [Luke 15:14]

A. When we are in fellowship with God the Father, He blesses us because He is the source of all blessings. But when we run from the Father, the blessings run out. He refuses to bless rebellion.

Comment: When Muhammad Ali was boxing as the Heavyweight Champion of the World, his opponents would generally stay away from him in the ring. Ali would shout, "You can run, but you can't hide."

B. The prodigal son was trying to run from God, but he couldn't hide from Him.

C. After the son spent everything, a severe famine hit the land. God will allow a famine to hit our lives when we are away from Him. It is part of the process in repentance.

Point: God will not send milk and honey to the foreign land. Milk and honey are reserved for the promised land!

[If you are where God wants you to be, that can be your promised land. But if you are on the run and out of place - stand by for some difficult days ahead.]

D. The son became destitute. He went from the luxury in his father's house to poverty in the foreign land.

Point: Part of the process God uses to bring a person to repentance is to strip them of everything so they can see their true condition.

E. People often have to hit bottom before they will look up to God. Sometimes things have to get worse before they get better. The removal of God's provisions is a very important part in bringing a person to repentance.

V. **Step # 4 - Realignment with the wrong fellowship**

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." [Luke 15:15]

A. The son no longer wanted to be with his father, which left a void in his life. So, he attached himself to a foreigner.

Comment: It won't be long after we leave God's fellowship that we attach ourselves to the wrong fellowship.

B. God has put within us a need for fellowship. We need to be with people. If we do not fellowship with the right people, we will associate with the wrong people!

Comments:

- 1) Have you ever noticed how bitter people always choose to be with other bitter people?
- 2) Why do rebellious teenagers always hang out with other rebellious teenagers?
 - The reason is because like hearts attract each other!

C. The foreigner sent the prodigal son out to feed his pigs. Pigs were unclean animals according to the Mosaic Law and greatly detested by the Jews. This was not what he had in mind when he left his father's house. The companionship he once had with his father was now replaced by the disgusting company of pigs.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him." [Luke 15:16]

D. No one was giving him anything to eat. ((His father hadn't sent any "care packages" to help meet his needs.)) Have you ever heard

the expression, "You don't miss your water until your well runs dry?"

E. Sometimes refusing to help a rebellious person in need is the most loving thing we can do. This is why 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says - "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

Comment: Hunger pains can motivate a person to change!

VI. Step # 5 - Realization of his true condition

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" [Luke 15:17]

A. He saw the pigs and heard them oinking. He smelled the mire, tasted the pods, and felt the mud that filled the pig pen. His five senses brought him to the reality of his now true condition. ((It could be said that - the light bulb click on inside his head.))

B. His miserable condition in the pigpen caused him to recall fond memories of living in his father's house. He no doubt remembered the delicious food at the dinner table, the comfortable bed he used to sleep in, and the closet full of clothes. ((Someone once said - "There's no place like home."))

C. He had to lose everything in order to see the contrast between life with his father as opposed to life away from his father.

Comment: Sometimes we don't realize what we have until it is taken away!

D. This young man finally realized his father's kindness by remembering the way he treated his hired servants. The son was now himself a hired man, but not like the men hired by his father.

E. His father's hired men always had more than enough to eat, but he was about to starve to death. It only made sense to leave the foreign land, go back home, and try to get a job working for his father.

VII. Step # 6 - Repentance in his heart

"I will arise and go to my father, and 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 hired servants." [Luke 15:18-19]

A. We know the son repented because he was willing to take the blame for his disastrous life.

Point: Repentant people don't point fingers, except back at themselves. "Father, I have sinned." He realized he had sinned against heaven and his father.

B. True repentance always produces a change of heart. His broken heart became humble and submissive rather than arrogant and rebellious. The Psalmist said - "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." [Psalm 51:17]

C. This young man realized that he was no longer worthy to be called his father's son because he had squandered his inheritance.

D. The prodigal son repented of his ways because he learned a painful lesson after traveling down Heartbreak Highway.

VIII. Step # 7 - Returning to his father

"And he arose, and came to his father." [Luke 15:20a]

A. Dr. J. Vernon McGee once asked, "Do you know the difference between the son in the pigpen and the pig?" The difference is that no pig has ever said to himself, 'I will arise and go to my father.'"

B. The son's inward heart change toward his father was manifested outwardly by his actions. A truly repentant person will always get up out of the mud, leave the foreign country, and return to the Father.

IX. Step # 8 - Reconciliation with the father

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

[Luke 15:20]

A. The father hoped his son would return. Every day he no doubt stood, watching for him. Then one day, he saw someone approaching, it was his wandering son. As his son drew closer, the Scripture says, the father had compassion, ran to meet him, and kissed him.

B. Instead of being rejected by his father, the son was warmly received and accepted.

Comment: At that moment, it had to dawn on this son how his father had always felt about him, but the son's rebellion had blinded him to his father's goodness and love.

C. God has a divine order. Reconciliation occurs after repentance, **not before.**

D. The farther did not run after the son when the young man left because the son's heart pointed away from him. No amount of chasing the son down the road would ever convince him to return home.

E. But now, because his son's heart was turned back toward his father, the father could run to receive his son. [See James 4:8] Once the son had decided to draw near to his father, his father was free to run to him.

X. **Step # 9 - Restoration of the son's privileges**

"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. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." [Luke 15:21-22]

A. The son began his rehearsed speech. "Father, I have sinned ... I am no more worthy to be called they son," then his father interrupted him and gave orders to his servants. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand."

Comment: The best robe and ring were symbols of the privileges of sonship.

B. Rather than the son becoming a servant and waiting on the father, the father had the hired servants waiting on his son. The privileges of his sonship had been restored.

XI. Step # 10 - Rejoicing in the father's house

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and 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."

[Luke 15:23-24]

A. Because the son had returned home, the father threw a party. Joy had once again returned to the father's house.

Comment: Rejoicing can only come after repentance and reconciliation have taken place.

B. If you have lost your joy, it may be because you have been away from the Father. When you return home, the joy of your salvation will be restored to its fullest.

C. Listen to this true story.

A man by the name of Robert Robinson was converted under the preaching of the great Anglican evangelist George Whitefield. Robert Robinson would later become a pastor and he wrote the hymn "Come, Thou Fount."

Later in his ministry, Robinson neglected the fellowship with God and drifted away from the Lord,

In an attempt to find peace, he traveled. During one of his journeys, he met a young woman on a stagecoach who sang the hymn, "Come, Thou Fount." The third verse contained the phrase, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." The woman asked Robinson what he thought of the hymn.

He was overcome with emotion and said, "Madam, I am the poor,

unhappy man who wrote the hymn years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds if I had them ((in order)) to enjoy the feelings I had then."

The young lady reminded him that the "streams of mercy" mentioned in his song were still flowing.

Robinson, convinced that this was a divine appointment, turn his wandering heart back to the Father and was restored to fellowship.

XII. Summary

A. Perhaps you have wandered from the Father. Maybe you have traveled to a distant land and have lived in the pig pen. Now you want to come back home, but you are afraid that the Heavenly Father will reject you because of the terrible things you have done.

B. Here is some wonderful news for you. Our Heavenly Father is still waiting for you, watching and desiring for you to return. He is a wonderful, loving, kind, compassionate, and forgiving Father.

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the passages below by filling in the blank spaces. All passages have been taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

"But if the _____ will _____ from all his _____ that he hath committed, and keep all my _____, and do that which is _____ and _____, he shall surely live, he shall not _____.
[Ezekiel 18:21]

"Again, when the _____ man _____ away from his _____ that he hath committed, and doeth that which is _____ and _____, he shall save his soul alive."
[Ezekiel 18:27]

"Have _____ upon me, O God, according to thy _____ -

_____ : according unto the _____ of thy tender mercies _____ out my transgressions."

[Psalm 51:1]

"All that the Father _____ me shall come to _____; And him that cometh to me I will in no _____ out."

[John 6:37]

"Draw _____ to God, and he will draw _____ to you. _____ your hands, ye sinners; and _____ your hearts, ye _____."

[James 4:8]

"For thou, Lord, art _____, and ready to _____; and _____ in mercy unto all them that _____ upon thee."

[Psalm 86:5]

RETURNING HOME

- In what ways have you rebelled against God?
- Make a definite turn in your heart from the "foreign land" to the "promised land."
- Take the steps necessary to leave you backslidden condition and return home.
- Pray the following prayer with sincerity:

"Heavenly Father, forgive me for rebelling against You. I will, with Your help, get up out of my pigpen and return to fellowship with You. Thank You for loving me in spite of the things I have done. By Your grace, I won't do them again.

This I pray in the Mighty Name of Jesus Christ,
Amen!"

I pray that you have been blessed, uplifted, and encouraged through the study of this lesson. May the Lord continue to bless and keep you in His care.

In the Master's Service,
Jude 3

Pastor Austin