

Prodigal Son-Daughter & Metanoia

Talk #3

Scripture Ref: Luke 15:11-32; Acts 9:1-18

Speaker & Length Adult, 30 Minutes

Progression The "Prodigal Son" scripture shows one who changed his life from sin back to God. It brings out the difficulties involved in "turning around". The father's attitude is complete acceptance in love and joy. The speaker's witness shows who one was - and who one is now - someone attempting to follow Jesus.

Purpose This talk is a combination of "Prodigal Son" meditation and "Metanoia" (change of heart) talk. It places the emphasis on Metanoia - a change of heart - a turning to God. The "Prodigal Son" provides the scriptural background for Metanoia. It is a talk of truly personal witness as to the change in one's life in following Jesus. This is usually very ordinary and should be given simply.

Introduction

This talk should make us all aware that this is a story about us. It's about God's forgiveness, goodness and mercy. God is already waiting with arms open for us.

It is important to give this talk from your own experiences. Show how you have experienced God's mercy and love.

I. Lead in with these questions:

- A. How would you feel if:
 - 1. You saw a person throwing away money?
 - 2. You saw a person giving money to another person knowing full well they would waste it?
- B. Would you:
 - 1. Give something to someone knowing that your gift would be abused, misused and possibly destroyed?
 - 2. It is hard to imagine all of this, but this is the story we all share with the Prodigal Son.

II. Read the story of the Prodigal Son/Daughter. Luke 15:11-32

- A. The word 'prodigal' is one of those words that has two meanings that sound contradictory.
 - 1. It means wasteful and excessive.

2. It also means exceedingly generous, akin to excessive.

- B. In this story, we see the father (representing God) giving the son much more than he deserved because of the father's love.
 - 1. The prodigal father (parent) gives out of love.
 - 2. Thus God's gifts are exceeding generous, but not wasteful.
 - 3. Love for the son is not wasted because it brings about his salvation (homecoming).
- C. The Prodigal Son is excessive (excessive spending, excessive drinking) but for wrong reasons. He is selfish. The father is excessive on behalf of another.
 - 1. The basis for excessive giving is love.
 - 2. Love is directed toward another person, not yourself.
- D. When times get rough the boy comes to his senses.
 - 1. A crisis brought him to his senses.
 - 2. He missed the love waiting for him back home.
 - 3. He had to make the decision to go home.

III. This story is really about us. You and Me.

- A. Our parents have provided for us.
 - 1. Look beyond the material things your parents have given.
 - 2. We have received love, ethics, a sense of right and wrong, and quality of life.
- B. Have we wasted the gifts of love from our parents and God?
 - 1. What about wasted material things, overuse, over consume?
 - 2. Have we taken advantage of our parent's love and God's love?
- C. Now, it's time to tell your story - A Prodigal Son/Daughter; once lost, but now come home.
 - 1. Background of family and faith history.
 - 2. What caused you to change your lifestyle? (Conversion?)
 - 3. Focus on relationship with parents and God.
 - 4. Think about what it meant to have your relationship right with God.

IV. Where are you in your life?

- A. Ask friends to look at their own story.
 - 1. Where are you on the journey?
 - 2. Are you being deceived by the world and settling for less, or do you know that the love you need is at home?
- B. God has a special ideal or blueprint for each of us to follow and become.
 - 1. God calls us to our ideal by love.
 - 2. God is very generous with patience and love.
- C. In spite of God's grace, we still have hard times.
 - 2. We make mistakes and are lonely.
 - 3. During the same time, we fool ourselves into thinking we're having a good time while we ruin our lives.
- D. God still loves and wants us
 - 1. He takes us just as we are (warts and all).
 - 2. He overlooks the mess we've gotten ourselves into.
 - 3. When we realize and accept God's forgiveness, we can go home.

V. It requires a change of heart - Metanoia

- A. Explanation of Metanoia (change of heart).
 - 1. Definition - turning away from self. Everything does not revolve around myself.
- B. Changes in actions and attitudes. A change of heart will be seen in the way we act or react. The following are examples of ways you may have changed. Share from your own actual examples of metanoia.
 - 1. Neighborhood
 - a) Compassion instead of anger at the people who put me down.
 - b) Understanding of poverty rather than condemning people for not getting a job.
 - 2. Family
 - a) Not being different just to prove I am better than they are.
 - b) Trying to avoid conflict by staying away from areas in which I disagree with my parents, rather than staying away from my parents.
 - c) Trying to communicate with my parents rather than just acting out my role as son/daughter to them on the basis of need, i.e., "What's for dinner?" or "Can I have some money?"
 - d) Emphasis is on subtleness of change - not a dramatic one. Example: My parents and I have not conquered the generation gap, but we have a much better time around the house.
 - 3. Friends
 - a) Change in my desire for freedom. Freedom is the courage to believe or not to believe, to do something or not to do it. It takes courage to break habits that bind us and then we are free. Share how your desires for freedom have changed.
 - b) Change in how I relate to my friends about their joys and sorrows, i.e., a new girl/boy friend, a sick parent, etc.