

Welcome to New Life !

We are very pleased you are here. We sincerely hope you will be especially aware of God's presence as we worship. If this is your first time to worship with us, here is what you can expect:

Worship in Singing & Giving

- We leave how to worship up to you as an individual. During **singing** worship, you are free to connect with God in whatever biblical way that expresses your heart's adoration. Some may remain seated, others stand, kneel, clap or lift their hands.
- If you would like to receive personal **prayer** during worship with singing, you may go to one of the Prayer Teams located at the back of the sanctuary.
- Invitation is given for **tithes and offerings**. If you are our guest, please do not feel obligated to contribute when God's tithes and offerings are received.

Worship in Sharing God's Love

Expressions of greeting and God's love are extended to all, especially to our guests.

Worship in Meditating on God's Word

Teaching from the Bible for about 35 minutes.

We encourage you to use our **staffed Nursery** [which has a private nursing room] and **Children's Churches** during the service. Please ask an usher for assistance in locating the various rooms.

{over for sermon notes}

February 17, 2008

Pastor Bob Wine

THE FATHER'S PAIN

"Loving a prodigal can be very painful"

Luke 15:11-16

FOCUS FOR THE DAY ... "Bring Back the Prodigal"

Luke 15:11-16 11Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. 12The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 13"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

- Pain comes in different packages -- loneliness, hopelessness, loss.
- Love is really about pain. That is particularly true if you have a prodigal in your life.
- The word "prodigal" refers to wasteful, extravagant spending, which may apply to more than money.

How do we deal with the tribulation of loving a prodigal?

1. IF YOU LOVE A PRODIGAL, YOU ARE ENROLLED IN A BRUTAL ACADEMY.

When we love a prodigal ...

- 1st, we often feel **unwanted** and rejected.
 - When our child rejects our God, we immediately take it intensely personal, and think they're rejecting us.
- 2nd, we feel **powerless** and fearful.
- 3rd, we feel responsibility and **guilty**.
Luke 15:24 "This son of mine is dead."
 - When you've got a prodigal, you've got a vivid imagination.

[In New Testament times, the Greeks had a cruel method of execution. They would place a large rock on the chest of the condemned person and walk away. The rock would gradually crush the life out of that person. It was called death by tribulation.]

• When you've got a prodigal, there are times when you wake up in the morning, and all you can feel is that rock's never-ending pressure.

2. WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Think about what a prodigal really is.
- Get out of false guilt.
 - We must not claim responsibility for the choices our children, siblings, parents, or friends alone can make. For example: Adam and Eve.
 - Some of you have severely handicapped yourself because you have decided that it's your entire fault. We need to ask God to help us with that.
- Refuse to give up **hope**.
 - This father in the story kept looking for his son to return.
 - God is big enough and He is able.
- **Celebrate** small victories.
 - It's not realistic to expect total change within a month.
- Pray for **grace** encounters.
 - How would this story have turned out if the returning prodigal son had bumped into his older brother before he met dad? ... very differently?

HOW CAN I BEST PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE?

- **Picture** the prodigal(s) in your life, and then with them in mind, go back and reflect on the **"What Can We Do?"** portion of the sermon in your notes. Ask God to reveal what you must focus on in reaching and touching your prodigal.
- It is very important to know that God the Father wants them to return more than you do. This is important so that you don't try to do the work yourself.
- **Remember** that God the Father is looking out, scanning the horizon, longing for the prodigals to come home.
- **Contemplate** the darkness your prodigals are in, but also remember that when the darkness is darkest, Jesus is the light of the world. We're praying together today that His light will shine into the darkness where they are.

"DIGGING DEEPER"

For personal or small group study

Week of February 17, 2008

QUICK REVIEW: Which point or scripture passage most challenged, confused, or caught your attention in this week's message? Why?

Take time to read the story of the lost sons in Luke 15:11-31. Use this as the text for today's questions.

TODAY'S FOCUS

1. What is the greatest disappointment you have ever experienced after losing something?
2. How do you think the father in the parable handled the pain of a prodigal? How do you deal with the pain of a prodigal in your life [child, spouse, friend?]
Romans 12:9-10, 14-19; Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 8:11-12; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:29-32

GETTING THE POINT

1. Has your relationship with your earthly father helped or hindered your understanding of God as your heavenly Father? In what ways?
2. What is the lesson for you in this parable about the father's pain? Why?
 - a) You've got to let your children go, even though you know they will probably blow it.
 - b) God's love has no strings attached.
 - c) Waiting for your children to come back is painful
 - d) Love overcomes mistakes.
3. Even if you are walking with Christ, do you think God experiences any "prodigal pain" when we sin against Him or against another one of His children? Have you ever personally experienced being a prodigal? What effect did it have on you and those around you?
4. Take time to discuss the five different points found in the sermon notes under "What Can We Do?" Which one impacts you the most?

A LOOK INSIDE

1. How has today's lesson on the father's pain impacted the way you view God your heavenly Father?
2. Describe some of the feelings you may have experienced in loving the prodigal in your life.