

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}

March 16, 2008

Pastor Bob Wine

THE SPIRIT OF THE ELDER BROTHER

Who is the real prodigal?

Luke 15:25-32

FOCUS FOR THE DAY... the "church prodigal" misses the Father's joy.

Prodigal means "extravagantly wasteful" ... with money, opportunities, relationships, etc.

Jesus' painting of the elder son (Pharisees) resembles us in more ways than we are comfortable with.

Luke 15:25-32. "Meanwhile, the older son was **in the field**. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

The older brother **became angry** and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat **so I could celebrate** with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

'My son,' the father said, '**you are always with me**, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because **this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**' "

What can we Learn from the Older Brother?

1. GOOD WORKS DON'T IMMUNIZE ME

• It's commonly thought prodigals are those outside the church. But Jesus is saying they can also be in the church.

• When you are in a sour mood, how does a happy person initially affect you? **Irritating!**

• God is most honored when your greatest pleasure is in your relationship with Him.

Luke 15:29-30 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat **so I could celebrate** with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

• He was **home**, but not really.

- Over time, hard workers tend to confuse their love for “ministry”, and the feeling it gives them, with their love for their relationship with God.

- Unless your ministry flows out of your love for God, your ministry becomes self-gratifying instead of God-glorifying.

2. MY BAD SPIRIT AFFECTS OTHERS

- If you had made really bad choices, but came to your senses and decided to go back to God, which person would you rather meet first when you returned -- the father or older brother?

Christian fellowship can so easily be turned into a house of judgment, instead of grace.

Hebrews 12:15 “A bitter and soured hearted person will defile other good people.”

3. GOD BEGS YOU TO RECEIVE HIS GRACE

- Most fundamental to this story is the difference between the father’s heart and the older son’s heart — one filled with love and compassion, the other lacking concern for those who are **spiritually lost** -- undeniable evidence of a “church prodigal.”

- **We often ask:** “Why can’t I get closer to God? ... have a heart like His? ... have joy in my relationship with God?”

Matthew 5:20 “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” ESV

- As this father begs his son, please, please refocus your values by placing your greatest value in an intimate relationship with the Father God who has His arms outstretched to you.

How Can I Put This Into Practice?

Please don’t let your outstanding tradition of faith keep you from a passionate love for God today -- that alone will make worthy all your efforts.

- Decide to be real and repent. If you discover you’ve been traveling in the wrong direction on the freeway for the last hour, what do you do? ... Keep driving? No! You admit your mistake, groan and moan as you take the exit coming up to get off that southbound freeway to head north.

- Humbly admitting that your thinking has been wrong is the first step!

- If you lack spiritual passion, will you choose to humble yourself and get off the freeway today? The Holy Spirit will help coach you from that point on. **God has His arms open to you too.**

“DIGGING DEEPER”

For personal or small group study

Week of March 16, 2008

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

Read Luke 15:25-32 for the following questions.

TODAY’S FOCUS

1. Put yourself in the shoes of the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son. Do you think he had any justification to be angry at his brother or father? If so, what was his justification?
2. Did you grow up in a Christian environment? What are the advantages to growing up “in church?” What do you think a “*church prodigal*” is? How does this relate to the older brother? Who is the real prodigal in the story? Why?

GETTING THE POINT

1. There is a statement that goes like this, “*The ground at the foot of the cross is indeed level.*” Read Romans 3:9-12. How does this passage apply?

How does it relate to our parable? Does the father in the parable express favoritism toward one brother more than the other at any point in the story?
2. How did the older brother lose his joy? In what ways was his loss of joy revealed? Can we compare the older brother to a long-time church attendee who has lost his/her joy? Explain.
3. What does it mean to be lost? Do we always know that we are lost spiritually? Which brother knew he was lost? Which is worse ... to be lost and not know it ... or to be lost and know it?

What does a heart that does not care for the spiritually lost reveal? [Luke 19:1-10; Romans 3:23; 5:6-8]

A LOOK INSIDE

1. What steps do you intend to take or implement into your life this week that will help you apply the message of this story of the older brother?