

# 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.

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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 9, 2008

Pastor Bob Wine

## THE HEART OF THE FATHER ... WELCOME HOME

*"God's arms are open to all who have messed up"*

Luke 15:20, 22-24

**FOCUS FOR THE DAY...** God's "come as you are" atmosphere

Jesus' purpose for telling this story was to be a picture of how God responds to you and me when we come back to Him after we've really messed up.

### Discover how God Welcomes the Prodigal Home

**Luke 15:20, 22-24** 20 So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 22" But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the **best robe** and put it on him. Put **a ring** on his finger and **sandals** on his feet. 23 Bring the **fattened calf** and kill it. Let's have **a feast and celebrate**. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

### 1. How Do You Show Your Love?

- **Gary Chapman** – "Five ways we give and receive love: words, time, gifts, deeds, and touch." [We use more than one, but one will dominate.]
- One way isn't enough.  
*"How do you personally welcome those you don't know at church?"*
- The father in this story didn't just offer a greeter, but faithfully watched for his son to return -- never giving up hope.

### 2. What Should Welcoming A Prodigal Look Like?

Here is what the Father did in our story in Luke 15:

- **First ... He gave his son a hug!**

**Luke 15: 20** "his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

- Jesus did not come just to make us all better people. Rather, He came to invite us to come into an embracing relationship with the Father.
- Authentic corporate worship is a **group hug** when we press beyond our feelings and circumstances and lift our hands in heartfelt love and adoration to God.

• **Secondly ... He put the best robe on him.**

**Luke 15:22** “Quick! [*Don’t wait all day!*] Bring **the best robe** and put it on him”

- How did God accept you when you came to Him?

**Matthew 10:8** “Freely you have received, freely give.”

- Offering **acceptance** is who we are. (Agree?)

*“Deep down even the most hardened criminal is starving for the same thing that motivates the innocent baby, love and acceptance.” - Lily Fairchild*

• **Next ... He put a ring on his finger.**

**Luke 15:22** “Put a **ring** on his finger ...”

- As a church, let’s not just welcome and accept people, but also empower them to serve. And realize when they start off in ministry that they might not necessarily get it right.

- The ring speaks of **authority**. Prodigals come home to the Father’s authority.

• **Then ... He put shoes on his feet.**

**Luke 15:22** “Put ... **sandals** on his feet.”

- The sandals spoke of **dignity**.

**Exodus 3:5** [*God to Moses*] “Take off your **shoes** for this is holy ground”

- In Jewish thinking, as an act of reverence and a statement that you were impure, you took off your shoes

- The father was returning the prodigal’s dignity.

• **Lastly ... He planned a feast for a celebration.**

**Luke 15:23** “Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a **feast and celebrate**.”

- We as a Christian family can laugh and have fun together -- because prodigals are returning.

- There’s no fattened calf killed -- there’s the only begotten Son crucified.

**The Father is giving His best** to allow you to be welcomed home.

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**Come home to the One who has paid the price  
for your sin and mine!**

## “DIGGING DEEPER”

For personal or small group study

Week of March 9, 2008

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

### TODAY’S FOCUS

1. In what ways were you challenged by the message in the sermon notes this week dealing with “The Heart of the Father?”
2. Do you ever feel like you have to “lie low” from God, even after you have confessed a sin to Him and repented? What causes us at times to think of God as being quick to get angry, and slow to get over His anger? [Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 145:8; Joel 2:13]

### GETTING THE POINT

1. Read Luke 15:20. How did the father respond to the younger son’s return home? It was considered very undignified for a senior man to run. Why do you think Jesus shows the father running to his returning son?

Right now, your God the Father is running to meet you and wrap you in His arms. How does this make you feel? [Isaiah 30:18]

2. Read Luke 15:21-24. When the prodigal returned home, what was the father’s attitude? Did the attitude of the son play any part in the response of the father? How does this expand your idea of God lavishing His grace upon you? [Psalm 18:27; Matthew 23:12; 1 Peter 5:6; Ephesians 1:7-8; 1 John 3:1]
3. Do you think it was wise for the father to “kill the fattened calf” and throw a party when his son came home? Explain. [Luke 15:4-7; 8-10]

### A LOOK INSIDE

1. The father in this story really represents God the Father. How has the story, up to this point, changed or enhanced your own personal view of God? Do you have more or less hope? Why? [Ephesians 2:4-5]
2. How have you been like the prodigal son in the story? [Isaiah 53:6; Luke 19:10]