Calling The Prodigals Home

Intro: One song we often sing at the close of a sermon is, “God is calling the Prodigal.” The song is based upon Luke 15. *Prodigal* means “wasteful.” The younger boy was wayward because he, “wasted his substance in riotous living” (Luke 15:13 “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.”). This is one way to depart from the service of God, but there are many other manifestations of the same spiritual dilemma.

1. The Christian today needs to beware.
   a. 1 Cor. 10:12 “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”
   b. 2 Cor. 13:5 “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

2. The sad fact remains that many of those baptized into Christ return to the world.
   a. Gal. 4:9-11 “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? 10Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”
   b. 2 Pet. 2:20-22 “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

3. What causes this? Let us notice a few possible reasons for the apostasy of brethren.

I. A LACK OF REAL CONVERSION TO BEGIN WITH.
   A. The word convert suggest a change of life due to a new determination.
      1. Rom. 12:2 “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
      2. 2 Cor. 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
   B. Some fail to count the cost before entering into Christianity.
      1. Luke 9:23 “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”
      2. Mat. 8:19-22 “And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 20And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 21And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.”
      3. We must endure to the end; Mat. 10:22 “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”

II. LACK OF ENCOURAGEMENT BY FELLOW CHRISTIANS.
   A. Parable of the sower.
      1. Christ teaches that the devil tries to immediately snatch the seek away from the newly taught person.
      2. Satan is trying to discourage the Christian.
3. Thus, we must encourage one another; Heb. 10:24-25 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

B. How we can encourage others.
1. By living godly before them.
2. Don’t discourage and disappoint others by a lack of zeal and dedication for the cause of Christ.
3. By attending all services.

III. THE WRONG ENVIRONMENT AND IMPROPER ASSOCIATES.
A. 1 Cor. 15:33 “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”
1. ASV: “‘Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals.’”
2. ESV: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’”
3. NET: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’”
B. We must separate ourselves from sin.
1. 2 Tim. 2:19 “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”
2. 1 The. 5:22 “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”
3. This sometimes includes friends and even family; Mat. 10:34-38 “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. 37He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”
C. Truly we must put first things first.
1. Mat. 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
2. Rev. 2:4 “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

IV. A FAILURE TO STUDY THE BIBLE AND PRAY OFTEN.
A. Every Christian has access to two great avenues of potential spiritual power.
1. We can talk to God in prayer.
2. We can let God talk to us through His Word.
B. Prayer.
1. We have access to God through Christ.
   a. Eph. 2:18 “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”
   b. John 14:13 “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”
2. Mat. 7:11 “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”
3. 1 Pet. 5:7 “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
4. Jam. 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
C. Study God’s Word.
1. 2 Pet. 3:18 “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”
2. But many lack knowledge.
   a. Isa. 5:13 “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.”
   b. Hos. 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”
   c. Rom. 1:28 “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;”

3. A description of this is found in Heb. 5:12-14 “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

4. This is why we urge every Christian to attend Bible Classes.

V. SOME DO NOT RECOGNIZE THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITY.
   A. Many Christians are to concerned with what the church as a whole has done.
      1. We need to be concerned with what the individual member has done.
      2. Christianity is a religion of doing for others.
      3. Phi. 2:12 “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”
      4. Truly we have been saved to serve.
   B. The Christian is to reach out to a lost humanity.
      1. It is such a joy to be saved, we should gladly share the message of the cross.
      2. Mat. 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
   C. When we do our duty we become fellow workers with God; 2 Cor. 6:1 “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”

VI. MANY DO NOT REALIZE JESUS IS THEIR PERSONAL FRIEND.
   A. Many think Christianity is just a set of rules to be obeyed or ethics to be followed.
      1. Surely there are commandments to be obeyed.
      2. John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”
      3. But these directives have power because of the one who gave them: Christ.
   B. Christ is not only our Redeemer, but he is also our greatest Friend.
      1. 1 Pet. 5:7 “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
      2. The One who bore our sins in His own body upon the cross is interested in our daily welfare.
      3. Heb. 7:25 “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

VII. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO RESTORE THE WAYWARD.
   A. When we see a member of the church drifting away we need to exhort and pray for them.
B. We need to restore, convert them.
   1. Gal. 6:1 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the
      spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”
   2. Jam. 5:19-20 “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20Let him know,
      that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide
      a multitude of sins.”

C. The one who has forsaken God must repent; Acts 8:22 “Repent therefore of this thy
   wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”

D. If all else fails to bring the erring member back, church discipline must be exercised.
   1. Mat. 18
   2. 2 Cor. 5
   3. 2 The. 3

Conclusion: In the Bible story of the prodigal son we have a happy ending. He “came to himself”
and returned home to serve his father. We pray that all modern day prodigals will do the same.
Return to the Lord Today. Truly God is calling the Prodigals home.