

Loving Your Prodigal Son or Daughter

(Matthew 10:34-39)

- Introduction:
1. I have been asked to speak on this topic because it is of particular application to my family.
 2. I also suspect that many of you who are present for this lesson may find yourself in the same situation in which my wife and I find ourselves.
 3. As many of you know, I have been struggling for my life for the last two years, but that struggle pales in comparison to the suffering we have endured upon the spiritual loss of our oldest son.
 4. Before I share some thoughts with you on how to love your prodigal son or daughter, I want to share a preparatory truth.

I. Don't Bear Guilt That is not Yours to Bear

- A. Ills. of "Heaven in a Wonderful Place."
- B. Our children have free-will, just as you did.
- C. But what about Proverbs 22:6?
 1. Note the genre of literature – it is a proverb; a maxim.
 2. "The way" may have nothing to do with a "spiritual path" but a way in accordance with his disposition and talents.
 3. Solomon, the author of this verse, is proof to the contrary of what some say it means.
 - a. David taught Solomon to serve God (1 Chronicles 28:9).
 - b. God said David practiced what he preached (2 Chronicles 7:17).
 - c. Yet, Solomon turned away from God when he was old (1 Kings 11:4).

II. How to Love Your Prodigal Child

- A. I am going to share three ways to love your prodigal child.
 1. I'm convinced all of you will agree with the first two.
 2. I'm also convinced some of you will disagree with the third, though it is the counsel of God.
- B. Pray for your child.
 1. I'm not talking about a passing prayer, but fervent prayer.
 2. (Colossians 4:12).
 3. I'm talking about praying hard prayers; scary prayers.
 4. I would far rather attend my son's funeral if it meant that he was saved than for him to live a long life in rebellion to God.
 5. Ills. 2 Maccabees 7.
- C. Keep lines of communication open.
 1. We can't write them off, ignore them, treat them as if they aren't our child.

2. We need to continue to reach out to them and encourage and plead with them to do right.
 3. There are countless examples of Prodigals who “came to themselves” and decided to return home (Luke 15:11-32).
- D. Discipline them.
1. This is where people often shut down.
 2. But what does God’s word say?
 - a. (1 Corinthians 5:9-11) Don’t keep company/don’t even eat with.
 - b. (2 Thessalonians 3:6) Withdraw from.
 - c. (2 Thessalonians 3:14) Don’t keep company with.
 3. “I am not troubled by the things in the Bible which I do not understand, but I am troubled by those things which I do understand and which I find very difficult to measure up to” (Mark Twain).
 4. Discipline has been dubbed, “The Forgotten Commandment,” or the “Great Omission.”
 5. This is where Matthew 10:34-39 takes on meaning.
 6. Let me answer a few objections.
 - a. You can’t discipline your own family.
 - 1) Scripture please???
 - 2) Was everyone in the church at Corinth to discipline this fornicator except his father? And where is the cut-off?
 - 3) Who better to discipline than the sinner’s own family? They would have the greatest impact.
 - b. Discipline is a church action.
 - 1) Well, of course the church should take the lead, but if they don’t does that excuse you from following God’s word?
 - 2) What if a church doesn’t offer the Lord’s Supper every week. That’s a church action. Would you use that excuse?
 - c. It will only burn bridges.
 - 1) First, I’m not driven by results, but by the word of God (1 Peter 4:11).
 - 2) It does work (2 Corinthians 2:3-8; 9).
 - 3) Discipline has more goals that just the restoration of the lost soul (1 Corinthians 5:4-8).

- Conclusion:
1. Friends, if you have a prodigal child who is a Christian, muster the strength love to discipline your child as God’s word instructs.
 2. Some have accused my wife and I of not loving our son. I affirm we have disciplined our son because we love him (Hebrews 12:5-11).
 3. Prayer.