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It's when they need to come home that it all begins to make sense. This kid came to himself and he went home.

The ones that stay home aren't always so good either. The elder brother apparently had the same rules and restrictions, but he didn't leave home. But that doesn't mean he was a good boy. In fact, his attitude at his brother's return shows that while he was at home, his heart wasn't in the right place. He didn't disobey the rules, but that didn't mean all was well with his soul. How is it that he could not rejoice with the father at the return of his brother? Why did he react as he did? Why was he not pleased to see his brother's return home? The attitude of the older brother proves one thing: you can be evil in the midst of good surroundings. Just being close to good doesn't argue that you're good. Just looking good on the outside doesn't really argue anything; it's what's on the inside that counts in the ultimate reality.

Don't give up. *"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him..."* How do you account for that? Simple. His father was continually watching for him. He no doubt had prayed often for his return. He knew what direction he had gone when he left, and he knew that the boy knew the way home, so he just kept on looking and looking. And one day he saw him coming. There is never any give up in love. Love just keeps hoping and hoping, just keeps looking and looking. No matter how long it's been, no matter what has been done, no matter how deep the hurt or how long the anguish, the Father just keeps on looking; and so must we. Notice, I did not say "the father," but *"the Father."* We may leave Him, but He said, *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"* (Heb. 13:5). It's always in order to go home, no matter how far away you've been.

Parenting is hard business. I hope this has helped a little.
--Dee Bowman

Remember in Prayer:

Verna Jacks, Brandon Graves' grandmother, underwent a partial hip replacement surgery last week.

Berta Davidson, Debra Baham's grandmother, had a stroke last week. She is recovering at home.

Continue to remember others recovering from sickness, surgery and those dealing with cancer or chronic illness including: **Dennis Blanton, Xenna Gooch, Katherine Kenning, James Tanksley, Ronald Miller (Larry's father), Carolyn Lowder, Wayne Reeves (Debra Baham's father), Burton Brown (Bettye's brother), Lucille Hall (Ethel Wohlrabe's mother) and Pansy Hensley.**

News & Notes:

--**Group 1** will meet today in the Library after the morning service.

- ELDERS:** Doug Driver
Johnny Felker
- DEACONS:** Ralph Brown
Mark Claypool

Service Times

SUNDAY
Bible Study—9:00 am
Worship—9:55 am & 6:00 pm

WEDNESDAY
Bible Study 7:00 pm

Perry Heights Weekly Bulletin

Perry Heights church of Christ
423 Donelson Pike
Nashville, TN 37214
(615) 883-3118

"...let us consider how we may encourage one another"
Heb. 10:24

July 19, 2009

The Pain of Denial and the Joy of Forgiveness

I have been there and you have, too. Better judgment would have said that you needed to be somewhere else but better judgment doesn't always prevail. So, you were where you didn't need to be. You put yourself in a position to fail and, sure enough, you did. You said the wrong thing and the consequences were immediate and severe. Sound familiar?

"I can relate with Peter." You've heard it many times and perhaps you have said it. Perhaps you feel as if the two of you are distant cousins. The truth is, there is a *little* of Peter in a *lot* of us.

He was impetuous. Occasionally, he seemed to act without thinking. When Jesus finished feeding the five thousand, He sent the crowds away and the disciples out onto the Sea of Galilee.

After spending the night in prayer, He found the Twelve on the storm-tossed sea and came to them, walking on the water. When they saw Him, they were afraid. Yet Peter asked, *"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water?"* (Matt. 14:28). Why would a man want to walk on water? What was he thinking? Further, this wasn't the

only occasion he acted rashly. What about the time he rebuked the Lord (Matt. 16:21-23); or cut off the ear of Malchus (John 18:7-11); or out ran John to the tomb (John 20:1-8)?

Some people feel compelled to always be in the middle of things. They are the first to act and the first to speak. Why? I don't know. Some folks are just made that way and that is not a bad thing. You need people like Peter to motivate others to action. Sometimes, however, impetuosity can get you into trouble.

He was overconfident. *"Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away"* (Matt. 26:33). In his commentary on Matthew, John MacArthur said, "Peter considered himself incapable of disloyalty. He could imagine nothing that would cause him to waver, and not even the Lord's explicit prediction could convince him otherwise. He was certain he had come to the place of spiritual maturity, with his priorities straight, his convictions steadfast, and his faithfulness invulnerable. It was therefore inconceivable to him that he could be capable of defecting from the

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Parents and the Prodigal

The Parable of the Prodigal (Luke 15:11-32) is at once one of the most pensive and disturbing of Jesus' famous illustrative narratives. It connects to the human heart in a way that is direct and arresting. It speaks of losing, but it speaks of winning, too. It speaks of sadness, then gladness, then sadness again. It's very much like life, this parable. Please note these things parents can learn from the parable of the prodigal.

The far country is an enemy of the family. Forbidden fruit has always had its appeal. It's the same with the lights of the far country. This lad didn't just get up one morning and decide he was going to *"waste his substance with riotous living."* It was a process. He had thought about how great it would be for a long time. He had dwelt on its pleasures and contemplated its delights long before he decided to go over there.

We live in an age where restrictions are few and where the far country is not really very far. Its enticements, furthermore, are not frowned upon in many families and its allurements are not discussed because the family is not actually together very much. We need to wake up to the dangers of the culture we live in and warn our kids about its possible encroachments and the ease with which it can tantalize and tempt them and how quickly it can carry them away. It's fine to let out a little rope, but we need to pull on it once in a while, too.

Good families can have bad kids. There is no indication in the parable that the Father's values were ill-defined, or that his restrictions were loose and ambiguous. Actually, the indication is that the rules were strict and the values carefully stated and that's the reason the son wanted to be loose. He felt cramped by the rules, and his fun was hampered by the restrictions. No one knows what causes good families to have bad kids, but one thing is certain: every person has his own will and ultimately makes his own decisions. This young fellow came from a good family; but he wanted something else. He decided what he wanted by himself. And so a good kid went bad. Why? Who knows? He just went bad because he decided he wanted to.

But if a kid goes bad, it ought to be after we've done all we can. Far more youngsters go bad on account of a lack of restrictions than go bad in spite of them. We should not despair because our restrictions are thought to be impositions. We should not grow weary because our rules are disdained and our restraints despised by our children. We must keep in mind that love and discipline are always connected (Heb. 12:6).

Bad kids don't always stay bad. This kid went bad—really bad. He *"wasted his substance with riotous living,"* and probably *"devoured thy living with harlots."* That's bad, folks. Not only that, but he went so bad that he was feeding pigs and was ready to eat the millet they ate. He was about as low as you could get, wallowing about in a pig's sty. But, you know what? He came to himself. That's right, he came to! Furthermore, he remembered where he came from. He knew what to do about his situation. He decided to go home. It's just so that bad kids don't always stay bad. Some do, that's for sure; but many don't. Instilling high values and good morals is not a waste of time. It's encouraging that sometimes when they're at their lowest ebb, your training and discipline come to the fore. It's then that they remember their up-bringing and decide that maybe it wasn't so bad after all. It's then that they come to their moral senses and realize that your nagging and scolding had a reason.

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Lord" (p. 212). Peter would have done well to consider the words of his fellow apostle, *"... let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall"* (1 Cor. 10:12).

Impetuous. In the wrong place. Believing himself to be spiritually stronger than he really was. This was and is a prescription for disaster.

Rather than hear it from secondhand sources, Peter wanted to see the outcome of Jesus' trial for himself. Although Jesus told him that the elders, chief priests, and scribes would have Him killed (Matt. 16:21), Peter refused to believe it. And although He was afraid, his fear couldn't keep from following the anger-crazed mob into the lair of the lion. Perhaps he thought he could remain inconspicuous. He was wrong.

Peter felt the sting of the taunts. First, from a servant-girl—*"You too were with Jesus the Galilean"* (Matt. 26:69). Did Peter think that saying "Yes" would place him beside Jesus? Then the taunt came a second time and then a third. *"The way you talk gives you away"* (Matt. 26:73). He was convicted as guilty and that without a trial. Peter thought his only way out was to deny the Lord and he did. Not once, but three times!

Nothing was wrong with Peter's memory. *"Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times,' and he went out and wept bitterly"* (Matt. 26:75). He remembered the

Lord's prediction. He remembered his boastful response. He remembered other times he had failed the Lord, too. His pain was real and the hurt was deep. He cried.

The denied Savior was crucified and placed in the tomb of Joseph. Mark tells us that on the first day of the week when the women came to anoint the body of Jesus, they found the tomb empty, and a divine spokesman saying, *"He has risen; He is not here"* and instructions to *"go, tell His disciples and Peter"* (Mark 16:6-7). Though in an unexpected moment of weakness Peter had denied Him, Jesus still had a work He wanted His apostle to do (read the book of Acts).

Perhaps you can associate with Peter. A little impetuous? Often. Overconfident? Almost always. Taunted? Sometimes. Denied Him? Please forgive! Forgiven? Thankful beyond words.

Peter, with God's help, picked himself up from the ash heap of denial and was determined to serve the Savior with all of his heart and with the rest of his life. He learned that failures don't have to be fatal. Have you learned the same? --Jim Deason, *Biblical Insights*

Report from Moldova



Johnny arrived safely in Moldova. He is sending journals of his daily work via e-mail to those in the e-mail group. If you do not have e-mail, copies of the journals are available in the lobby.