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*Come
Home*

Josh Moody

Come Home

There's a story of a young woman who lived in a small village in the countryside of South America. She left home to make her way to the big city. After a while, her parents became concerned because they had lost contact with her.

Time passed, and still they heard nothing.

In the end, her parents decided to leave for the big city themselves. They carried with them copies of their daughter's most recent photograph. And they put that photograph up everywhere they went. Every bar. Every coffee house. Every red light district. Every street corner and every store they could find that would allow them to do so, they put up the picture of their daughter.

On the back of the picture they had written a simple message:

Wherever you are.

Whatever you have done.

Come home.

THE PRODIGAL SON

In many ways, that message—"Come Home"—is a good summary of Jesus' famous "The Prodigal Son."

The story comes from one of the early Christian disciples called Luke who wrote about what Jesus said and did and recorded that in the New Testament of the Bible. Here is what Luke wrote:

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 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.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

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.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² 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.’”

(Luke 15:11-32, The Bible, NIV)

SOME BACKGROUND

It’s a beautiful story.

To really understand what Jesus is saying, it’s helpful to have a couple of background pieces of information.

First, this is what is called a parable, which is a form of teaching that Jesus often used. A parable is like a story, but a story told with normally one main meaning. So there are a lot of details here in the story, but the aim of the story is to get us to feel, think, and believe one main idea or message.

Second, this parable is not meant to just be a story, but a rendition of the story of God as recorded in the Bible and salvation history. Jesus here is retelling what God is up to in the world in a simple story to help us see it, understand it, and believe it.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

With those two background pieces of information in place, what does this parable or story tell us?

Wherever you are.

Whatever you have done.

Come home.

Perhaps you are like the younger son who left his father. The prodigal son was saying to his father that he wanted all his inheritance now. He was wishing that his father was dead. Jesus is saying that many of us treat God like that. We want his world, but we don’t want to serve him as the Creator of the world. We want his stuff, but we don’t want to live under his roof or abide by his rules.

But that route leads to disaster. He went to the big city. He had a fine time. He partied with his so-called friends. But eventually the money ran out. It always does. Sooner or later, time

runs out, and you are faced with your own mortality. And he realized that he had wasted his life. Ruined it. Wasted the gifts that God had given him. Longing to fill his stomach with pig husks, he woke up and came to his senses! Eating pig food—what a thing for a Jewish boy to have to do! He had reached the bottom of the pit.

Yet, Jesus says there is a way back to God from the dark path of sin. All you need to do is come home. The prodigal son got up and decided to go back home. He rehearsed a speech to himself about how unworthy he was to be called a son.

His father saw him coming from a long way off. And he ran to greet him. Running was not something a dignified man in the ancient world would ever do. But this father ran. He loved his son. And before the son could get his prepared speech out of his mouth, the father hugged him and told him they were going to have a party.

And that's what God will do with you if you come home. All will be forgotten. All will be forgiven. And there will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.

Come home. Don't delay. Come home now.

THE OLDER SON

But there is another character in the story too. The older son.

He needed to come home, too—not physically, for he was at home physically, but spiritually. While he lived at home, his heart was far from God.

Perhaps you are like that. There are many people who go to church, who grew up in church, who do all the right things and have been baptized or confirmed, and yet they don't really know God. They haven't spiritually come home.

That older son needed to come home too. He needed to come and ask God for forgiveness for his hardness of heart to his brother, for his bitterness to his Father God. Would you do that? Would you also come home?

Wherever you are.

Whatever you have done.

Come home.

IN SUMMARY

The message of the Bible can be expressed in four simple words: **God, Us, Jesus,**

Response.

God. God made everything to be a relationship of loving obedience.

Us. We rebelled against God. We ran away from home. And God's just judgment on our rebellion is separation from God now and for all eternity. He in his sovereign wisdom honors our choice.

Jesus. But God sent his only Son to take the punishment we deserve so that if we come back to God, then he will forgive us, restore us and bring us to his heavenly kingdom. God can't "just forgive." He must hold up his own holy character. But through the sacrifice of God in his own Son, there is a way back to God from the dark paths of sin. God conquered sin and death through victoriously raising Jesus from the dead.

Response. And we must respond. Salvation is not automatic. We must come home.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

How long does it take to come home? It's instantaneous. You need only ask and commit your life fully to God as your Lord and Savior, without holding back, and he will rescue you and bring you back into his home and hold a party for you who were lost but now are found.

Wherever you are.

Whatever you have done.

Come home.

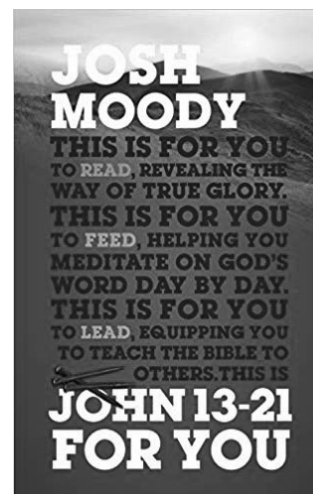
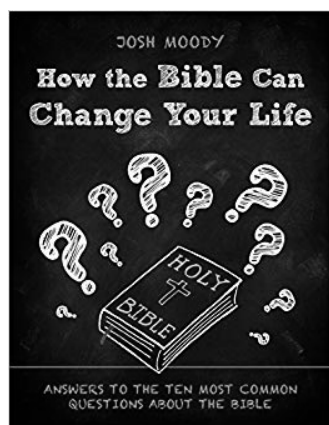
"Lord Jesus, I have wandered far from home. In my heart and in my actions, I have rebelled against you. Please forgive me. Please give me your Spirit to make me new. Please bring me back into relationship with you so that I can enjoy you in your home both now and forever."

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Whatever you have done.*

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The words “Come home” are a good summary of Jesus’ famous parable of “The Prodigal Son.” Perhaps you are like the younger son who left his father. Many of us treat God like that. We want the gifts he gives us, but we don’t want to serve him as the Creator of the world and abide by his rules. Or maybe you are like the older son. Though he did not leave home, his heart was still far from God. To both sons—and to each of us—God says, “Come home.”

Dr. Josh Moody is Senior Pastor of College Church, Wheaton, Illinois, and President of God Centered Life Ministries. He studied at Cambridge University and Yale Divinity School. The author of several books, Josh is married to Rochelle, and they have four children.



GOD CENTERED LIFE

P.O. Box 1025

Wheaton, IL 60187

info@godcenteredlife.org

godcenteredlife.org

833-425-5622