

Thrive: The Power of Presiding

Scripture used: [Luke 15:11-32 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Today we were blessed with a special guest speaker, the Honorable Shelyna Brown (Retired Superior Court Judge of Santa Clara County). The concepts she shared with us are a part of her new book [Preside: A Judge's Guide to Unlocking Biblical Principles to Transform Your Life](#). Presiding is something that a judge does. It is similar to the Biblical concept of stewardship, which has to do with taking responsibility for things under our jurisdiction (our appropriate scope of oversight). Presiding over our lives is a choice we make to learn about Biblical principles and tie them into our mind set, our heart set, and our skill set. This is what the Prodigal Son did when he finally took responsibility for his situation and took action. Even though he had made many mistakes, he knew he could return to his father, who was good. This belief in his father's goodness gave him the confidence to take action, and he left a life of poverty in a pig pen and returned to his father's house where he was welcomed with open arms. This triumphant return is what we can expect too, when we make the choice to preside!

KEY POINTS

- 1. God wants us to thrive, and gave us the Bible so we could.** This is a promise made to every single person, not just some of us. Read [John 10:10 \(NIV\)](#). "Living life to the fullest" is another way to say "thriving." But thriving isn't guaranteed. There is no promise made by God that things will just work out for us without our participation. We have to take ownership of the things we're given. If we do, those things will flourish and multiply as in the story of the talents in [Matthew 25:14-30 \(NIV\)](#). The reverse is also true, however. If we do not take ownership then we will start to suffer from a lack of positive developments.
- 2. Presiding helps us thrive.** Presiding involves the heart, the mind, and also skills. Our mindset is what we need to think. Our heart set is what we need to believe. And our skill set is what we need to do. The Bible has been telling us for millennia these three things are critical. Finally, science is starting to catch up. Researchers and psychologists now emphasize the importance of what we habitually think, believe, and do. This is the same set of instructions that we received from [Proverbs 23:7 \(NIV\)](#) and [Philippians 4:8 \(NIV\)](#).
- 3. The parable of the Prodigal Son helps us understand how to preside.** He didn't appreciate the promises that his father (and God) made him. He approached life from a sense of scarcity. Fear drove him to ask for his inheritance early. Then he spent all his money and he ended up starving in a pig pen. Not all of that was his fault, but his heart, mind, and skills had undermined him. He couldn't thrive because he wasn't presiding over himself.
- 4. Presiding involves four actions we can take every day.** This is a sequence that doesn't end. We must be constantly cycling through them.
 - a. Being mindful.** We are God's only creation with metacognition. That means we can think about what we're thinking about!
 - b. Taking thoughts captive.** Just because we have a thought doesn't mean it's true. Read II [Corinthians 10:5 \(NIV\)](#).
 - c. Striking unwanted thoughts (like a judge!).** Remove unhelpful thoughts from your mind.
 - d. Writing new orders.** Replace them with Biblical affirmations such as "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" and "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"

DISCUSSION

- 1) HEAR** - Even though it is God's plan for us, there is nothing automatic about thriving. We must work hard, informed and inspired by the Bible, to thrive. Have you ever been in a courtroom and experienced a judge presiding? What would it look like to preside over your life in the same manner?
- 2) UNDERSTAND** - Like the Prodigal Son's father, Jesus is waiting for us. It doesn't matter what we've done. No one can be separated from God's unconditional love. Think about your life right now. Where are the areas where you might be stuck in "a pig pen"? How did you end up there? How long have you been there?
- 3) DO** - God wants us to thrive, but it is our choice to take responsibility and start presiding. We must come to our senses, believe that God the Father wants us back, and then act on that belief. Consider joining [NBCC's PF40](#) if you aren't already.