

COMING HOME: KNOWING WHEN TO LET GO

Scripture used: [Luke 15:11-12](#) and [15:17-19](#) (NLT)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon started us on a new series, "Coming Home". Home is a place that is associated with comfort and safety, but the idea of home can also be a place of pain, dysfunction, and destructive behavior and irresponsible decisions. Formative experiences at home can empower our lives or undermine our future, especially if we don't bring our family past to the redeeming and healing power of God. [1 Corinthians 16:13](#) tells us that love never fails. So how do we practice unfailing love with very flawed people? This is the great conundrum, the riddle, that we will look at today.

KEY POINTS

1. We often think we're the only "normal" person in the household. Sometimes it's true, most often it's not. Whether we have to manage the dysfunction that others cause, or we are the cause of the dysfunction, we have to lean in and seek the deliverance and healing that God provides. Our iconic "Prodigal Son" parable says the father loved his young son, although the young son was spoiled, capricious, and generally the one source of trouble in the household. The father knew when to let go. The younger son made poor choices, demanding his share of the estate before having the maturity to be a responsible custodian of great wealth. Then he wasted all the money in frivolous and immoral ways. He was a victim of bad timing, found himself in an economic crisis, and faced consequences that were compounded by his bad judgment. He ended up destitute, taking care of pigs - the ultimate humiliation, defilement, shame, misery, and failure for a young Jewish man. The lowest point is often when we finally come to our senses, and the father, in letting go of control, allowed his son to experience the consequences of life in a way that led to true maturity, wisdom, and character.
2. The young son had been in a state of temporary insanity. The father could not reason with the unreasonable. We can inform others with knowledge, but we cannot develop character for them; often, lived experience is the best teacher. The father created space for the boy to test his "hypothesis" of life - that he knew more than his father about the best way to live. Later in the series, we will also look at how the older son is also dysfunctional but his dysfunction is disguised as apparent obedience - there are lots of different forms dysfunction can take.
3. Unfailing love sometimes brings us to a point when we realize we need to let loved ones go, because the love we are trying to show them traps us in a "failing" love. When our best attempts to love are not leading to healthy outcomes, or we are trapped by our expectations of others to love us in a particular way that they aren't able to, we need to let go of our expectations and let go of our need to control certain outcomes. When the father literally let his son go, there was a risk the younger son would never return, as his destructive decisions could bring about a tragic end. The father was not oblivious to this. But the father prioritized the best chance for his son's future and growth, versus avoiding short-term pain for himself. To hold on to the boy in a fruitless attempt to shelter him... that would have been failing real love.
4. We often don't have self-awareness. Yet God has designed us to strive for self-awareness. We can strive for healthy self-differentiation by identifying our own values, emotions, and needs, and not lose ourselves in others. The father knew the younger son was deeply immature and unreasonable. The father was aware of his own fears and emotions, and yet he put a boundary around them.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What comes to mind when you hear the word "home"? What was healthy about your home growing up? What was dysfunctional? How does it shape your life now?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider the relationship between father and son in [Luke 15:11-19](#). What would you have done if you were the father? How can letting go be an expression of unfailing love? How can we differentiate letting go out of love from giving up on the relationship or wanting to punish? What are different ways that "letting go" can look like? Consider letting go of our expectations, our need to control, our need to save or protect those we love from suffering or consequences, etc.
- 3) **DO** - Is there someone whom you are trying to love in a way that is currently failing and not fruitful? Where might you need to "let go" in order to entrust them to God's greater love? Join us next Sunday as we continue our series, "Coming Home."