

Coming Home: When to Try Again

Scripture used: [Luke 15:11-20 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon continued the series "Coming Home" with his sermon "When to Try Again". He provided two questions for our reflection: 1. How do I practice unfailing love with dysfunctional, irresponsible loved ones, regularly hurtful and destructive in their decisions? 2. What if the dysfunctional one is me, is there hope? As we reflect, we can be encouraged by the words of [1 Corinthians 13:8 \(NLT\)](#): Love never fails.

KEY POINTS

1) Dysfunctional vs. healthy families:

- a) The definition of a dysfunctional family system is "one mired in conflict, chaos, a lack of structure, or indifference so that physical and emotional needs of each member of the family cannot be met." Factors that contribute to a dysfunctional family are poor parenting, mental illness, chronic physical illness, and poor communication. Life in this family system is often defined by chaos, tension, and trauma. Abuse, neglect, and secrecy are common. Yelling and screaming are often the only means of communication. The definition of a healthy family system is "one where family members nurture and support each other."
- b) In [Luke 15:11-12 \(NLT\)](#), the son acted radically dysfunctional when he asked his father for his inheritance even before his father had passed away.

2) Learn to recognize the inappropriate use of manipulation and punishment

- a) Manipulation happens when we see ourselves as the victim, and we use shame, guilt, threats, and playing favorites to get someone to do what we want them to do,
- b) Punishment happens when we withhold something in an effort to harm the other person.
- c) In [Luke 15:12 \(NLT\)](#) the father uses neither manipulation nor punishment when his son behaves so hurtfully. He only agrees to his son's request to give him his portion of the inheritance.

3) When do I try again? When should I re-engage? Clues and hints to know

- a) In [Luke 15:17A \(NLT\)](#), a shift happens in the son from irresponsible to responsible behavior. This verse tells us "...he finally came to his senses".
 - b) The son takes four corrective steps that demonstrate this shift from irresponsible to responsible behavior. 1) [Luke 15:17B \(NLT\)](#): He recognizes that he is in the pigpen eating the pods because of his own actions. He knows his behavior is the cause. 2) [Luke 15:18 \(NLT\)](#): He prepares his explanation to his father. He takes ownership of the fact that he has hurt God, and he has hurt his family. He does not create an excuse and blame others for what he has done. 3) [Luke 15:19 \(NLT\)](#): He accepted the consequences that he might only be able to return to work as his father's hired servant. In other words, he says to himself, "I get it - I accept the consequences without complaining." 4) [Luke 15: 20A \(NLT\)](#): He also says, "I get it - I'm taking corrective steps." He returns to his house this time walking to his father step-by-step instead of running away.
 - c) His father recognizes the shift in his son, and in [Luke 15: 20B](#), we read that the father runs to embrace his son. The time to re-engage is when we see steps of change - even baby steps!
- 4) **Sometimes you can't come home to others, but you can always come home to God.** At times, the wounds we have caused others, or the wounds that someone else has caused us, might render it impossible to reconcile. But we can always reconcile with God.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Have you had a broken relationship that was reconciled? How did you know it was the right time?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Ask God to reveal to you places where you are pushing him away, and you are hesitant to engage with him. Ask him to show you places where perhaps you've wounded others or places you've been wounded. Are you pushing God away because of these wounds? What do you learn from the story of the Prodigal Son that can help you interact with a loved one with destructive behavior? If needed, what have you learned from the shift the son made that can encourage you to do the same?

- 3) **DO** - If God is asking you to re-engage with someone, how will you be proactive in doing so? Maybe you need to go to someone and ask for forgiveness like the son. How will you move forward in doing so? Join us next Sunday for Palm Sunday!