

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Luke 15:11-16
Lesson #9
The Prodigal's Pain
11/24/2019

"It concerns me that so many Christians resist change while serving a Lord who came to change so much." Howard Hendrick

- ✓ We often pray that our **external circumstances** change.
- ✓ Some of us pray that our **personal lives** change so long as the process is quick, painless and will make us happy.



- ✓ Repentance is about change **but has nothing to do with changing our circumstances and may involve personal pain.**

1

Advice from Christian counselors:

- ✓ "What is your **theology** of change?"
- ✓ "The **good news** is that more change than you imagine is possible."
"The **bad news** is that it may be harder and take longer than you want."
- ✓ "Some people don't change because they really **don't want to do the work** involved."
- ✓ "True change takes place only when the **root** (not superficial) **issues** are addressed."

2



Three Parables

The lost sheep vs.3-7
The lost coin vs.8-10

Luke 15:10

"In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who **repents**."

What does it mean to repent?
The next parable provides a answer.

The lost son vs.11-31

3

The Parable of Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

1. The younger son demands **independence** and leaves home.
2. He becomes **destitute** through worldly living.
3. This brings him to **repent** and return home.
4. His father graciously **receives** him back.
5. His older brother becomes **bitter**, feeling the father is not fair in graciously receiving the wayward younger brother.

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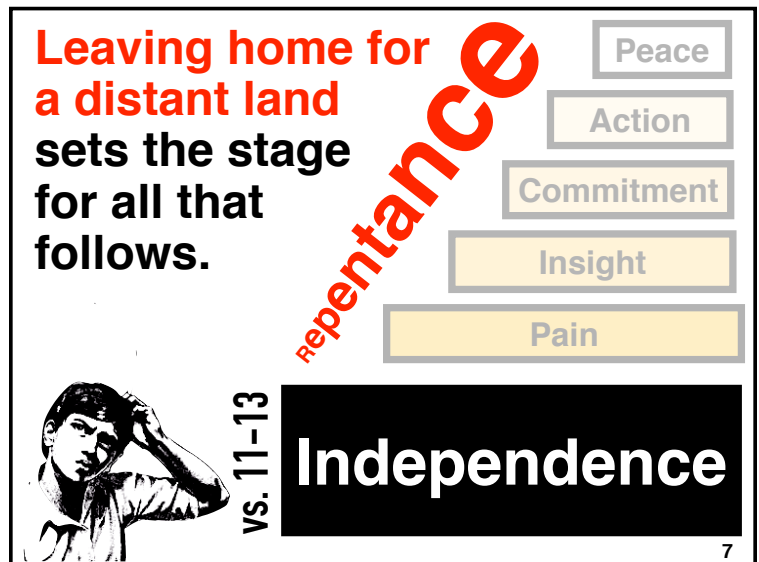
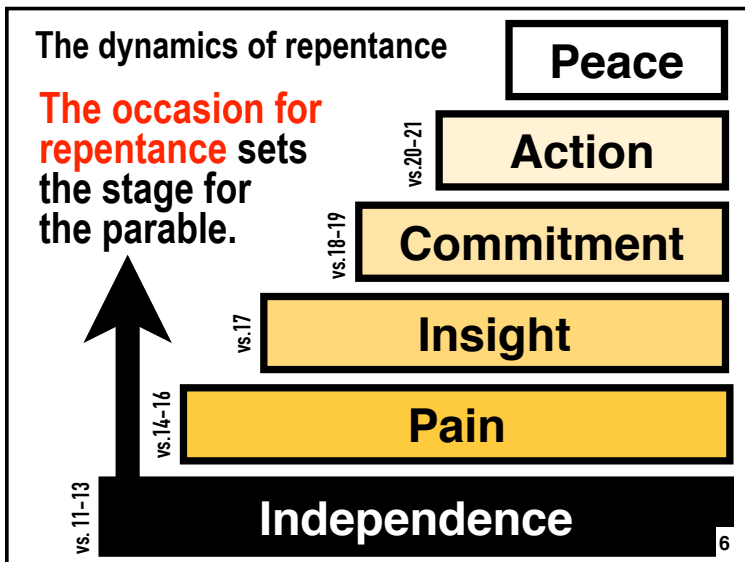
Luke 15:11

"And He said, "A certain man had two sons;
This is really the story of three individuals - Father and two Sons.

The **Younger Son's** heart sets the stage for the revelation of the hearts of the **Father** and the **Older Son**.

- ✓ The Younger (Prodigal) Son's story illustrates the dynamics of
"a penitent spirit".

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Steps to repentance

#1 Identifying the Problem

- Root - "Spiritual change of address"

"¹² and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them. ¹³ And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country,
- Fruit - "Tactical waste of life"

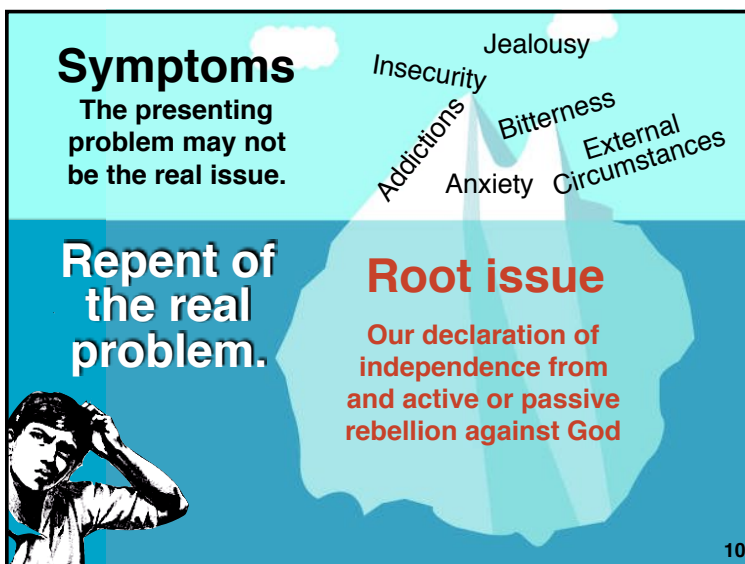
and there he squandered his estate with loose living."

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Two great missteps

1. The Prodigal Son in leaving home declares his independence.
2. The Prodigal Son squanders his inheritance in a distant country.

9



"You cannot change what you first do not acknowledge."

Dr. Phil

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Matthew 23

“²⁴ You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! ²⁵ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee, **first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.**”

- We can too easily miss the **core problem** as we speak of repentance.
- Cleaning up the Prodigal's behavior **in a distant land** misses the point.

12

“Men do not differ much about what things they call evils; they differ enormously about what evils they will call excusable.”

G.K. Chesterton



13

Take your baptism seriously.

You are not your own, you are one with Christ.



This defines your real home.

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A common mistake we too often make

1. Address **symptoms** not root **causes**.
2. **Misunderstanding** the real cause.
3. Declare ourself healed when **certain symptoms are removed**.
4. Failing to **KNOW OURSELF** at the soul level.



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Some signs that we may still be IN a distant land:

- Persistent **Anger & Anxiety**.
- **Peace and Joy** that are tied primarily to temporal treasures & experiences.
- Declaring ourself healed just **because certain symptoms are removed**.
- Expecting God to give us wisdom in using our inheritance **in a distant land**.

16

Christ saves us FROM our idols and protective strategies

NOT WITH THEM!



17

Paul echoes the point of the Prodigal Son's problem.

Romans 1

²¹ For even though they knew God, **they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.** ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁴ Therefore **God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity**, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them."

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Our distant country
(secular humanism)

Defining reality and making decisions as though God does not exist or does not matter.



- It's all about **this life**.
- MY hope is built on **this world**.
- God saves me **with MY dreams**.
- MY problems are **environmental**.
- I am **entitled to chase MY dreams**.
- Sin is reduced to **breaking the rules**.

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Steps to repentance

#1 Identifying the Problem

- Root - "Spiritual change of address"
- Fruit - "Tactical waste of life"
- Pie - "Painful consequences"

#2 Feeling the Pain

¹⁴ Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ And **he went and attached himself** to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and **no one was giving anything** to him."

20

"The worst disease in today's world is not leprosy or cancer: it is the feeling of being uncared for, unwanted, of being deserted and alone."



Mother Teresa

21

Feeling pain can be a blessing and a critical step to coming home.

Repentance
vs. 14-16

Peace

Action

Commitment

Insight

Pain

Independence

22



The son's initial response.

- He could have written home for **wisdom** in the use of his assets.
- He could have written home for **financial help** having learned from bad decisions.
- At first he tried to ease the pain by **reaching out in a distant country**.
- The **root issue** was not addressed.



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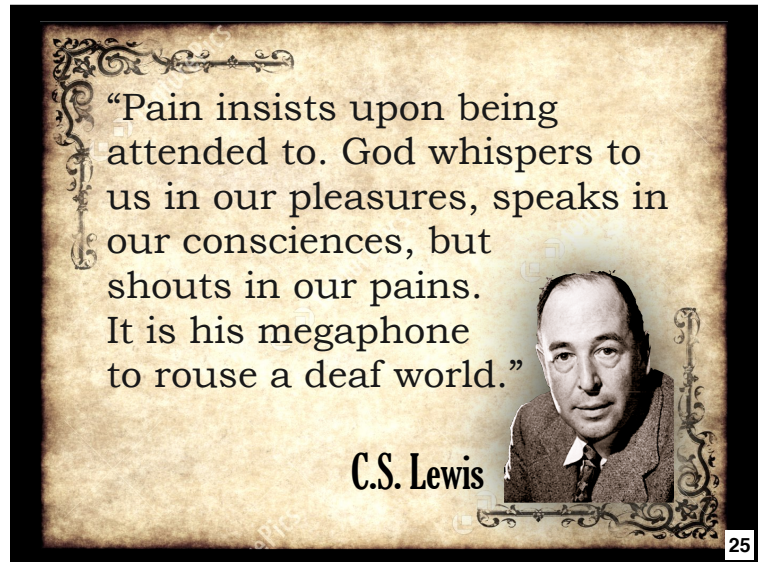
Steps to repentance #2 Feeling the Pain

1 Corinthians 7:10

“For the **sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance** without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Pain and sorrow
can lead to **life or death**.

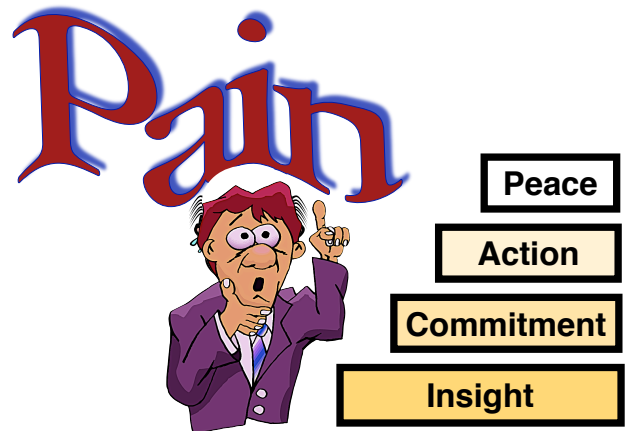
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When can rebellion become a blessing?

When it brings us to our senses about our spiritual neediness!

When it exposes us to the folly of life apart from God!

When it leads to deeper repentance!

These things can't happen if we resist the discipline, pass the blame, or kill the pain in our life story.

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Consider

Anger is a trailhead to a path that leads deep into your soul's most cherished values.



29

Consider

When you kill the pain you also may kill the appetite needed for change.



30

Consider

God's peace comes to those who do not resist discipline or pass the blame, in their life story.



31

As long as we can successfully avoid or medicate pain we probably will not repent!

Repentance

God takes a risk whenever He blesses us lest we use the blessing to kill the pain of foolish choices and stay in the distant country!

32

The truth about spiritual pain killers.

- **Western culture** is a breeding ground for spiritual pain killers.
- Many of them are quite **effective**.
- Some of them are cleverly **disguised**.
- They can be **addictive** and hard to kick.
- They are safe to use only **after** we see the Great Physician and repent (come home).
- Withdrawal from pain killers can involve **suffering loss**.

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Steps to repentance

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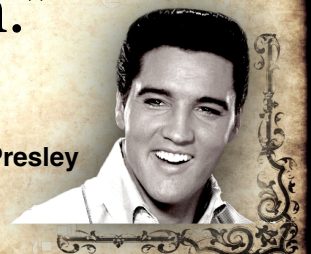
#2 Feeling the Pain

- Address the core issue not only the superficial signs that follow.
- Medicating our pain can kill our true hope.

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"When things go wrong, don't go with them."

Elvis Presley



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