

I AM HOME

— Prodigals Welcome —

I Am Home | *Homecoming* | Shawn Johnson | 9.16.17
LG Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

Think about your homecoming or prom dance, do you remember who you went with and what was the theme song that night?

SHARE

When we hear the word 'home' what comes to mind?

For many that word brings to mind a place of refuge or retreat—a sanctuary where we can be ourselves and leave our socks on the floor. However, for others, the very word 'home' can bring up hurt and frustration. Maybe we didn't have a good home, and the things we have experienced in life have distorted everything a home should be. In this series "I Am Home," we are going to explore what it means to come home and be home through the many facets of the story of the prodigal son.

Mark Twain, speaking of Jesus' story of the prodigal son, reflected that it was "the best story ever told." It is a powerful and intriguing story of family turmoil, heartbreak, struggle, jealousy, grace and redemption. It was the best story ever told, because God is the best story teller. It speaks to the heart of man and the struggle between our prodigal hearts and our ultimate search to find home. In God's Kingdom, home is where He is. When we start walking home, the Father doesn't stand on the porch with arms crossed, rather, the Father runs to us and meets us with a huge embrace and an even bigger party. The picture of the Father running to the prodigal son and walking him home is at the heart of Red Rocks Church.

We welcome home prodigals.

Shawn continues our series looking at the significance of the moment when the son and the Father reunite. Last week, we looked at the dire situation of the younger son and how he had the courage to start heading in the direction of his home. Based on the culture of that day, the son deserved to be excommunicated and cut-off from society. In some circumstances, dishonor of the Father meant the child would be stoned to death according to law. But this father, this father was different.

Read Luke 15:11-19

What was the younger son's plan for coming home and talking with his Father?

Do you think there are a large percentage of people that feel the same way about how God would respond to their homecoming? If yes, why?

What do you fear when, after a period of distance from "home," you make plans to reunite the Father?

G R O W

Interruptions happen in life. Interruptions are not usually welcome because they slow down what we want to happen or are expecting to happen. The younger son had thought up a plan that would win over his father and might even give him employment as a hired hand. But what happened was unexpected and life changing.

Read Luke 15:20-24

The son was making his way home, who was the first to interrupt his plans?

What do the father's actions say about his heart for his son?

Looking closely, we see the son was interrupted from reciting his speech and telling the Father of his preconceived plans. Why is this so tremendously significant? What did the Father say when he interrupted him?

Have you ever been graciously and lovingly interrupted by God because he had better plans for your life?

M O V E

When Jesus told the story of the prodigal son, he specifically said that the father “...ran to his son”—a detail that is of utmost importance. Culturally, it was dishonorable and unfitting to have a person of honor running to do anything. So the father was willing to humiliate himself in front of everyone in order to embrace his son and welcome him home. The actions of the father reflect the heart of God and his willingness to endure pain, humiliation and suffering in order to save and restore those He loves.

Read Hebrews 12:2

Is it hard to imagine that Jesus was filled with a deep joy to endure the cross for you?

Do you struggle in accepting God’s grace? If yes, what ways do you see this play out in your life?

Let’s re-read Luke 15:22-24

The father, filled with compassion, ran to his younger son and endured humiliation to restore and forgive his boy. The younger son was interrupted by the father, and instead of punishment, received three very significant gifts. As you read about the gifts below, think about your relationship with God and what he is offering you.

‘Best robe’- not the son’s old robe, but a new one and the best one. Culturally, it was a long-flowing robe and was intended for festive occasions; it was the robe brought out for the swanky parties—the best the father owns. Wearing this robe communicated one’s *identity* as part of the family, as a son and not a servant. Whoever wore the robe was the guest of honor and the father wanted everyone to know it. For the younger son, wearing the best robe signified that the father was not embarrassed of him, but proud of him.

'A ring' - gold or silver, a sign of wealth, but most importantly in this story, it would have been a "signet ring." As such, the Father is literally granting his own authority to his son. The ring most likely had a family crest or symbol of belonging, so when others saw it, they knew the son had been given *authority*. For the son, it would be a daily reminder that he belongs as an heir to the throne—set apart with purpose and calling.

'And sandals on his feet' - In direct contradiction to the son's meager hope and plan of becoming a hired servant, he instead, received sandals. Hired men did not wear sandals. Every time the younger son would step forward, rather than being barefoot like a servant, he would step forward wearing sandals. This is a powerful reminder to him that he is *'worthy'* to be called son. There is nothing the son could do to earn it, but rather, it was literally 'put on' him by the father.

Looking at what the robe, ring and sandals signify, which of the Father's gifts do you most need to accept in your current season of life?

How might accepting that gift impact the way you feel about being at home with the Father?

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. If you are in a coed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to share more freely.

T O G O

Ephesians 2:8

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

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