

When Junior Blows It
Luke 15:11-24

The deepest hurts we can experience come from our families -- our spouse, our children, our relatives. They can be ungrateful, they can be unkind, they can be unfaithful.

This is a story that gives hope for hurting parents. It's not just a lesson about God's love, but it's a lesson about key parenting principles.

The story is told about Charles Shed, who used to do a seminar on parenting when he was single called, "How to Raise Your Children." After he got married, he changed the title to "Some Suggestions for Parents". After he had his first child, he changed it to "Feeble Hints to Fellow Strugglers". And after he had three children, he said he stopped giving the lecture.

This story illustrates, what do you do when your children grow beyond your control and your hurt is great.

Notice three stages in this story.

STAGE ONE: THE REBELLION OF THE SON.

V 11 *"Jesus said, There's a man who had two sons and the younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them and not long after that the younger son got all he had together and he set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."*

Thought: If you don't believe, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" then you've never been a parent.

The son says V 12 *"Father, give me"* that's the root of rebellion. If I could just do as I please, be my own boss, didn't have to answer to anyone life would be great.

V 13, it says *"He got all he had together and set off for a distant country and squandered his wealth in wild living."*

What do you do when you can't control the children anymore? This father performed three difficult actions and it provides a model for us because God is the perfect Father and this is what he would do it with us.

1. LET THEM GO

"the younger son set off" The father didn't chase him. He released him. Probably the most difficult task of parenting is knowing when to let go. Here, the father let him go.

The fact is, the tighter we hold on to our children, the more they resist and one day they will explode maybe even after we are gone.

2. LET THEM MAKE THEIR OWN MISTAKES

"he squandered his wealth in wild living" It was party time and he probably tried everything, especially those things that were forbidden at home. Wine, Women, And Song

Do you think that this father knew that his son was going to waste it and was headed for trouble? Do you think he was tempted to send letters of advice? **Sure he was.**

But the father realized that there are some things we only learn through pain and the only way this kid was going to learn was through the school of hard knocks.

Prov. 20:30 *"Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways."*

Thought: Frank Freed says, "I've talked to a lot of people and most of them say, *'If I had to do over I'd do less for my child and make him do more for himself.'*"

Force him to be responsible and grow up. **Thought:** When we take responsibility for our children, we take it away from them. And they resent it deep inside. But now, the hardest thing the father did is

3. LET THEM REAP THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR OWN CHOICES.

There is a price tag for rebellion. It says, *"after he spent everything, he began to be in need."* Gal. 6:7 teaches *"Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked."* What you sow you will reap.

V 14 *"After he spent everything, there was a severe famine in the whole country and he began to be in need so he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he longed to fill his stomach with the husks of the corn the pigs were eating but no one gave him anything."*

The party's over! He's broke and the father is watching this son reap the consequences of his own choices. He probably felt sorry for the kid and embarrassed, but remember, you are not the only influence in your child's life.

Thought: James Dobson says that once a kid reaches about grade school already at that point, the parent is no longer the primary influence in their life.

There's a great temptation here as parents and we have even done it ourselves. That is to intervene when they blow it. Send the care package. Bail them out. Fly out to see them. Send them money.

But remember, nature has a way of disciplining our children in ways that we can't, so we need to be careful and don't short circuit the natural consequences.

Let them reap the consequences of their own decision. Because it's those kinds of things that people remember the longest.

But because the father did not intervene, they came to

II. STAGE TWO: RE-EVALUATION AND REGRET

V 17 "When he came to his senses he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to death? I will set out and go back to my father and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. And I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men."

He goes through a process from re-evaluation, to repentance.

Re-evaluation. He begins to wise up. He faces the facts and recognizes "This is stupid! The fact is, we never seem to change until we get desperate. God has to get our attention.

Notice V 12 he says, "Father, *give me...*" then V 19, he says, "*Father, make me...*" He's broken. He's saying, I made a mess of my life, make me one of your hired servants -- A change of heart.

But what does a parent do while they're waiting for a child to come to the re-evaluation stage and regrets. Three things, first.

1. YOU PRAY

Pray, pray and never stop praying. That's one of our chief responsibilities as parents is to pray for our children every day.

2. COMMIT

Commit them to God. The things that are out of our control are not out of God's control so commit them to the Lord.

3. WAIT

Wait and Wait patiently. But whatever you do, don't short circuit nature's discipline. Because the father waited, the son came to stage three.

III. STAGE THREE: THE RETURN

This is an important part. V 20 *"So he got up and he went to his father. But while he was still a long way off his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran and threw his arms around him and he kissed him."*

The father did three things and in fact, it is what God does to us in our rebellion and is therefore a model for us. First.

1. LOVE THEM FAITHFULLY

You never give up. It says, *"His father, while he was still a long way off, was filled with compassion."*

Not when he had come back home and had gotten his life together. He was filled with compassion while he was still a long way off.

The father had never given up hope. No matter how far they fall, no matter how long you wait, the door was left open for reconciliation. You love them faithfully.

2. ACCEPT THEM UNCONDITIONALLY

It says His father went out and it says he threw his arms around him. He ran to him and he kissed him and hugged him. He did not say, "Go home and get shaved and a haircut and a bath and then I'll hug you and kiss you."

He runs out and gives him a big bear hug. Unconditional acceptance.

Thought: You may be saying, "How can I accept him without lowering my standards? How can I accept my child when I don't approve at all of their lifestyle?"

The problem is we tend to confuse acceptance with approval and there is a big difference..

Acceptance says, "I love you because you're my child. God made you and I love you, *but I do not approve of what you're doing.*"

Thought: You can accept a child or a person without approving of their lifestyle.

Thought: Ever wonder about the number of kids who are going around never hearing their parent's say "I love you, I'm proud of you," hugging them, kissing them.

Unconditional acceptance makes it much easier to admit they had been wrong. V 21 *"Then the son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. He had already rehearsed this in his mind and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.'*"

Confession is so easy when you know you've already been accepted. Love them faithfully and accept them unconditionally and

3. FORGIVE THEM COMPLETELY

V 22 *"But the father said to his servants. 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's feast! Let's celebrate!"*

The son didn't need a sermon here. The father simply gave him a second chance. He forgave him completely.

Notice he did three things:

1. He says *"Bring forth a robe"*. In Jewish culture the robe was a sign of sonship -- you're back home in the family.

2. He *"Put a ring on his finger"*. The signet ring is what you signed your name with to sign for any bills. It's like a credit card. He was basically saying, "Bring out the American Express and give him the credit card."

Thought: Would you do that to a prodigal returning home? Give him the ring, and unlimited credit. That's a sign of trust. That's a sign of being forgiven completely.

3. *Restored to a full relation.*

The father gave him responsibility. He forced him to accept responsibility when he came home. He did not allow his son to move back into a dependent relationship.

He comes home saying "make me". So the father forced him to accept responsibility, to act like an adult. He would not let him become dependent.

This story shows how God deals with our rebellion. We've taken matters into our own hands and we mess up our lives. But God says, "Come on home!" God gives us another chance.

Maybe you are in pain and you've got a child out there that you don't know if they're ever going to shape up. You don't know how they're going to turn out. Maybe they've rejected everything in your life and hurt you deeply. They've ridiculed your values, rejected your counsel, rebelled against your authority.

You're hurt and tend to take all the blame on yourself. You're angry. You wonder "Why?" What do you do? Give those hurts, anger and guilt to God because He's the only one who can heal them.

We all make mistakes. We all need to talk to our kids and admit mistakes on either side. But don't carry a load of false guilt.

And above all, remember, The ball game is not over. There's still plenty of time for God to do a miracle in their lives. That thought alone should help ease some of your pain.