

A Pastor's Heart

Encouragement from Pastor McGill

How to recover from a bad choice

Luke 15:17 *And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father; I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

This is one of the all time great stories in the Bible. I never grow tired of reading it or preaching from it. Commonly called the story of the “prodigal son,” it is a great example of how God restores us after we make a bad choice. When we read the Bible, we see that there are some things common to every character in the Bible, regardless of stature. One of them is that, they all made bad choices at some point. Thus, the question for us is not whether we will make a bad choice, but how will we recover after having made a bad choice. This story of the prodigal son gives us a model to follow for full recovery and restoration. We can duplicate the actions of the son to recover from the bad choices all of us make. Let's examine the text.

First, the son repents. The scripture says that he came to himself. He was not so lost that he could not reason and understand that he was in a place that was beneath his inheritance. The Father had trained His son in the way he should go. There was something the father placed in the son that he could draw from. As parents, we must be sure to train our children. Training did not prevent the son from making a bad choice; however, it did give him something to remember and come back to. When we repent, we have a change of mind and heart and our actions line up with the confession of our mouth. He spoke it before he did it, but he also did exactly what he spoke. There was corresponding action to his words. Sometimes we say what we are going to do and never move. He did not allow his present state to cause him to be ashamed to go home. Many of us would have talked ourselves out of going home based on what we were wearing, how we looked and how we smelled. He did not look like a son. The lowest slave at home looked better than he did. This would have been enough to stop many believers from recovering. **Repentance is paramount to recovery.**

Secondly, he submitted to authority. He was willing to return to the place that he did not want to be. He went back to his authority and submitted. This meant that he was willing to be held accountable and willing to suffer the consequences of his bad decision. He had no idea his father would respond so favorably toward him. He was willing to submit to whatever his father would have required. Of course, this shows the unconditional love of God for all of His children. Don't ever be ashamed to come home or afraid to go back to God. Oftentimes the place that we want to flee from is the exact place God has chosen to bless us. **Submission is a requirement of recovery.** If a leader falls and refuses to submit themselves to those who mean him well and be held accountable, he will never recover.

Thirdly, he made the decision to walk upright. He told his father that he was back home and that he would serve him not as his son but as a servant. Notice also that he ADMITTED what he had done wrong. I have witnessed countless people who are sentenced by a Judge to longer prison terms because they refused to confess. They chose to fight even though they knew they were wrong, and at the end of the trial, they received the maximum penalty. In God's Kingdom, when we confess our sins, we qualify for God's mercy. If we allow pride to dictate our actions, God has no choice but to resist us. Confession lightens our load and releases our burden. It actually makes us whole. When I counsel people, I realize that a big part of what I am doing is allowing them to get things off of their shoulders. Take time to listen to people, you are actually helping them more than you may realize. Jesus came to set us free. The son here was willing to work as a lowly slave as long as he could stay right in the house. Right became a priority and a passion for the son. Once we have made a bad choice we must be willing to do what is right, treat people right and deal in truth. This is referred to in the scripture as righteousness. The Bible declares in Matthew 13:43 that the righteous shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father. **Righteousness keeps me on the correct path.** God, being the loving Father that He is has a built-in plan already in place for the bad decisions we all make. Take the steps today to recover from a bad choice. Make it a great day.

Blessings and Peace

Pastor McGill