

# INSIGHTS

## *the* FATHERHOOD *of* GOD

Jesus came as a revelation of the heart of God. His teachings, miracles, and healings all revealed an attitude about God that had not been understood before—God wanted to do special things in the lives of people.

As Jesus taught, the people were overwhelmed by His message. In Luke 4:22 it says, “So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth...” The way we might say that today is: “They wondered at His words of grace.”

The people were filled with awe because at that time religious leaders taught without grace. Jesus went beyond the limits of what the people had ever heard.

He declared God as His Father. The very idea stirred indignation and wrath in the religious mind because they understood the implications — Jesus put Himself on an equal level with God. The

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BY DR. DENNIS BURKE





# “THE RING RESTORED DIGNITY.”

The son once again had the rights as a member of the family.”

people cried out, “Blasphemy.” This was an outrage. No one called God “Father.” But Jesus’ message did not stop there. He revealed that God’s deep desire was to be *your* Father.

The word “prodigal” has the connotation of rebellion and stubbornness; of a person running from God. But “prodigal” is not a biblical word. It’s a word tradition has added to our biblical vocabulary. Tradition also has assigned it to the lost son in Luke 15:11-24.

The central figure of this parable is not the son. From the beginning to the end, the father is the center of attention. It is the father’s response that brings real insight.

This is a revelation of a prodigal father, not a prodigal son. This father reveals the Heavenly Father’s attitude.

To understand the picture Jesus is portraying of the Father, you must first understand the true meaning of the word prodigal. Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary defines it as given to extravagant expenditures, lavish,

extremely abundant. If you think about it, that describes the father in this parable much more than the son. The father was extravagant with his love. He lavished his goodness upon his son even though the son squandered his goods. And he was abundantly confident that his son would return.

*He has lifted you out of guilt into freedom. You are clothed with His righteousness.*

When the son left, he took his inheritance and squandered it away. Finally, he found himself at the point of desperation and took a job feeding swine. For a Hebrew, feeding swine

was a degrading position. Even among other nations it was a demeaning occupation. But this son was a Hebrew, one of God’s chosen people, a man with a covenant with God Almighty. And yet, he was at the bottom of society.

Why is it that we wait until everything looks hopeless before we look to our Heavenly Father for help? It seems that things must be desperately out of control before we reach out to God. That is not God’s intention. He does not want you to experience even the slightest break in receiv-

ing His inheritance. When you remain in fellowship with God, you continue to receive from the abundant supply of His inheritance.

Many times, Christians squander their inheritance also. They let God’s blood-bought provision slip through their fingers by not realizing that God accepts them. They do not understand their identity in Christ.

Even though they are a new creation, delivered from Satan’s power, they live according to old habit patterns; dominated by the evil one. It’s not necessarily outright rebellion, but rather, a failure to live to the potential dwelling within every believer. The prodigal father’s response to his son’s return was not the way many parents might respond. Some would disown their son for squandering the family inheritance. Others might make him repay every dollar he wasted. Still others might have threatened him if he dares step on their property.

Instead, Christian parents should do what this man did: Look with great anticipation for their children’s return.

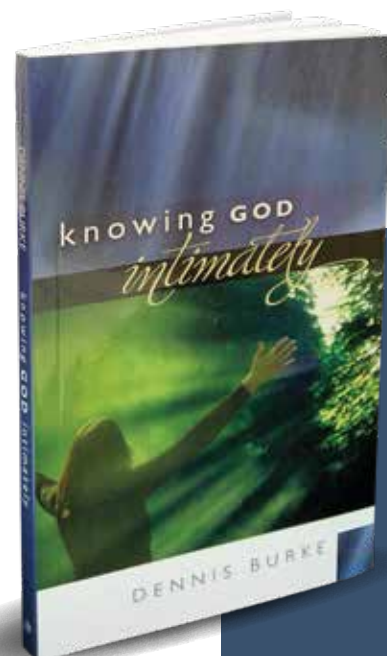
This father saw his son afar off. Everyday he looked to the horizon expecting his son to come home.

Then when he saw him, he ran to him and surrounded him with compassion and love. That is what will win your children. Stand on the Word of God, expecting their return, and show them the fullness of God’s love.

This prodigal father continued to lavish his son as we find in Luke 15:22-24:

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattest calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.”

The father didn’t pay any attention to the son’s



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carefully rehearsed speech. He didn't even allow him to finish what he was saying. Instead, he had his servants bring three things to the son. Each has significance in what God has done for you.

The best robe. This was the robe worn by the father himself. Isaiah 61:10 refers to this robe: "...He has covered me with the robe of righteousness."

It is the grace of your

loving Father who placed His robe on you. He has lifted you out of guilt into freedom. Jesus identified with your sin so you could identify with His righteousness by faith. Now you are clothed with His righteousness. You have been elevated into companionship with God the Father.

The ring. This was the ring of authority within the household. The ring

restored dignity. The son once again had the rights as a member of the family. Notice what John 1:12 says about our rights: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God...."

As a child of God, you have received rights in the Kingdom of God and authority on the earth through your sonship.

The shoes. When the son returned, he came as a barefooted slave. But the father put shoes on his feet. He was not an outcast any longer, he was once again a son. He was not a rebel but restored as a son.

It was time to celebrate! The father had a calf already fattened because he expected his son to return.

The far country in this parable is the realm of rebellion. It is a condition of

the soul, a way of thinking that cuts off fellowship with God. Setting aside God's desire and goals will bring you to the place of want. When you return to your Father you can receive:

*The kiss of compassion.*  
*The robe of righteousness.*  
*The ring of authority.*  
*The shoes of a son.*

What an extravagant blessing this father gave his son!

Whenever you turn to God, you'll find Him looking, longing, and waiting for your return. God is ready to restore you and lift you to your potential.

Acts 20:32 says, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those

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“Do not fear, little flock,  
for it is your Father’s good pleasure  
to give you the kingdom”  
(Luke 12:32).

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