

Published based on [Home for Christmas](#)

Home for Christmas

I'll be home for Christmas
You can count on me...

As I listened to the words to that classic Christmas song, something deep within me was moved.

I remembered one Christmas almost twenty years ago when my family and I lived away from my childhood Alabama home. We were going home for Christmas. Then it snowed. And iced. Yet I felt I had to go home for Christmas! I convinced my husband to drive home on the ice and snow in a little car that was certainly not an all-terrain vehicle. We made a three hour trip in six hours and I prevailed. I made it home for Christmas with my husband and two young children. I might not have been very wise, perhaps, but I was very determined.

This year, our daughter, Kara Beth, is in Dallas, Texas, with her husband's family for Christmas enjoying a big snow. Since she can't be home for Christmas, we video-chatted this morning together.

The following are thoughts from a message I recently shared at our church called "Home for Christmas".

The idea of "home" stirs strong emotion for most of us. Some never want to return. Others, like me, feel compelled to be there at Christmas, but I think it all has its roots in our spiritual DNA. Let me explain.

Home is the place you were created for! Adam and Eve were created and given a home in the Garden of Eden. Sin entered, and God cast them out of the Garden. I believe that ever since that moment, mankind has been longing for home, a longing which can now only be ultimately fulfilled in heaven but our earthly homes are to be reflections of God's design. You were created for home. It was God's original plan.

From the beginning, home was designed to be a place of compassion and love. It was only after Adam and Eve sinned that shame, blame, guilt, separation, anger, etc. entered the picture.

Jesus told a parable which is recorded in Luke 15 that we often call the story of the prodigal son. I think the story is really a story of home. A story of what a Father is to be. A story of relationships.

"There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'

¹²⁻¹⁶"So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

¹⁷⁻²⁰"That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say

to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father.

²⁰⁻²¹"When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

²²⁻²⁴"But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.

²⁵⁻²⁷"All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.'

²⁸⁻³⁰"The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'

³¹⁻³²"His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'" (The Message)

The younger son in the story asks for his inheritance, leaves home, wastes it with women and liquor, finds himself hungry, destitute and working in a pig's pen, and decides it is time to go home. His father sees him "a long way off" and runs to meet him. This picture that Jesus painted of home shows us that home is a place of love and compassion. The father wasn't angry when he saw his son returning. He was full of emotion. He ran to his son and kissed him. Men today need to note the Father's response. Emotion is okay! The younger son did not have to guess whether the Father accepted him or not. He could feel his Father's arms around him and see the tears flowing down his Father's face. He felt the kiss of the Father.

As I thought about what home was originally designed to be, and what this parable Jesus told portrayed home to be, I thought of how home is the place where your hunger is filled. The prodigal knew that if he could only get back home, his hunger would be filled. God longs to fill our spiritual, emotional hunger.

Home is the place where your Father covers you. The father immediately covered his son with the best robe. He didn't wait for the son to take a bath. He covered him. What a beautiful picture of how God covers us with his very best, the blood of Jesus!

Home is the place where you really belong. Home is a place of belonging. When the prodigal son got home, the father placed sandals on his feet, a sign that he was a son and not a servant. The father placed a ring on his finger, a sign of high position in the family. These were symbols of acceptance; the son was back where he really

belonged.

Home is the place of provision. The father prepared the best calf for a big beef BBQ, a sign that God must be a Southerner! No more pork for this Jewish boy!

Home is a place of celebration. Upon the prodigal's return the father said, "Strike up the band; we are going to dance and have a party. Prepare the best food." God loves to throw a good party! He celebrates when a child comes home. He puts forth the very best to signify the joy that fills His heart.

Home is a place of relationships. The Bible is so beautifully honest about humanity. It shows the truth about its characters; the good, bad, and the ugly. Not only are we shown the prodigal's failures, we are shown the struggles of the older brother. The Bible shows us pictures of real relationships, how those that go wrong, and how to restore them. Our Christian life is all about relationships, with God and with each other.

And home is a place you can leave if you want to. Part of our Christian freedom is that God doesn't force us to fellowship with Him. It is our choice.

I wonder if we could all stop and evaluate today where we are in relationship to home, spiritually. Where are our hearts in relation to home?

The younger son had been full of himself, left home, and returned feeling unworthy to be a son. The older son had never left home, but his heart did not reflect the heart of his father.

Have you physically left like the prodigal? Maybe you have literally left "the church" or your family. It may be easy for us to identify those who have blatantly "left", but how often have we found ourselves in a foreign place in our hearts while it appears on the surface that we are "home" spiritually?

There are lots of ways you can be away from God and no one else may even know. You may have allowed bitterness or anger to come between you and your Father. Maybe there is judgment in your heart toward your other brothers and sisters.

I love how this parable shows us the way to come home. The first step is:

1. Come to your senses. The prodigal came to his senses. Maybe he began the journey home just because of his physical hunger, but along the way his repentance became stronger and deeper, and I think real transformation came when he found himself in his father's arms.

2. Take a step in the right direction. That's all it takes. The prodigal began a process of going home.

3. Allow the Father's love to do the rest. What an awesome picture of God! When the son felt his father's embrace and his kisses, he knew everything was going to be okay. I believe the love of his father both reawakened his hunger for home and relationship and washed away his guilt. His father wasn't worried about the prepared speech the son was making, "I have sinned..." He just wanted to embrace his son and rejoice!

So as we celebrate Christmas today, may this day find us truly home, in our hearts and in our relationships. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we experience the truth of home that we were created for and know the Father's love in ways that draw our hearts closer to home than ever before.

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