

Not
School's out!

Summer lessons from the parables

Main Point

No matter what you've done, or how far you've run;
You are God's own, and you can always come home



Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

Luke 15: 11-12 NIV



Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.



Luke 15: 13-14 NIV



So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

Luke 15: 15-16 NIV



“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.’

Luke 15: 17-18 NIV



I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and 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 to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15: 19-20 NIV



“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Luke 15: 21-22 NIV



Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.



Luke 15: 23-24 NIV



The Younger Son's Story

- ❖ Asks for inheritance early
 - Totally unheard of
 - Shame and disrespect to the family
- ❖ Runs off to a distant country



Chasing a Dream



The Younger Son's Story

- ❖ Abandons his family
- ❖ Things go poorly
 - Squanders his money
 - Famine hits the land



The Younger Son's Story

- ❖ Gets a job
 - Feeds the pigs
 - They're "unclean" to a Jewish man
- ❖ This life is not what it's cracked up to be



“Back Home” - Yellowcard

*“Back home, I always thought I wanted so
much more,
Now I’m not too sure.”*



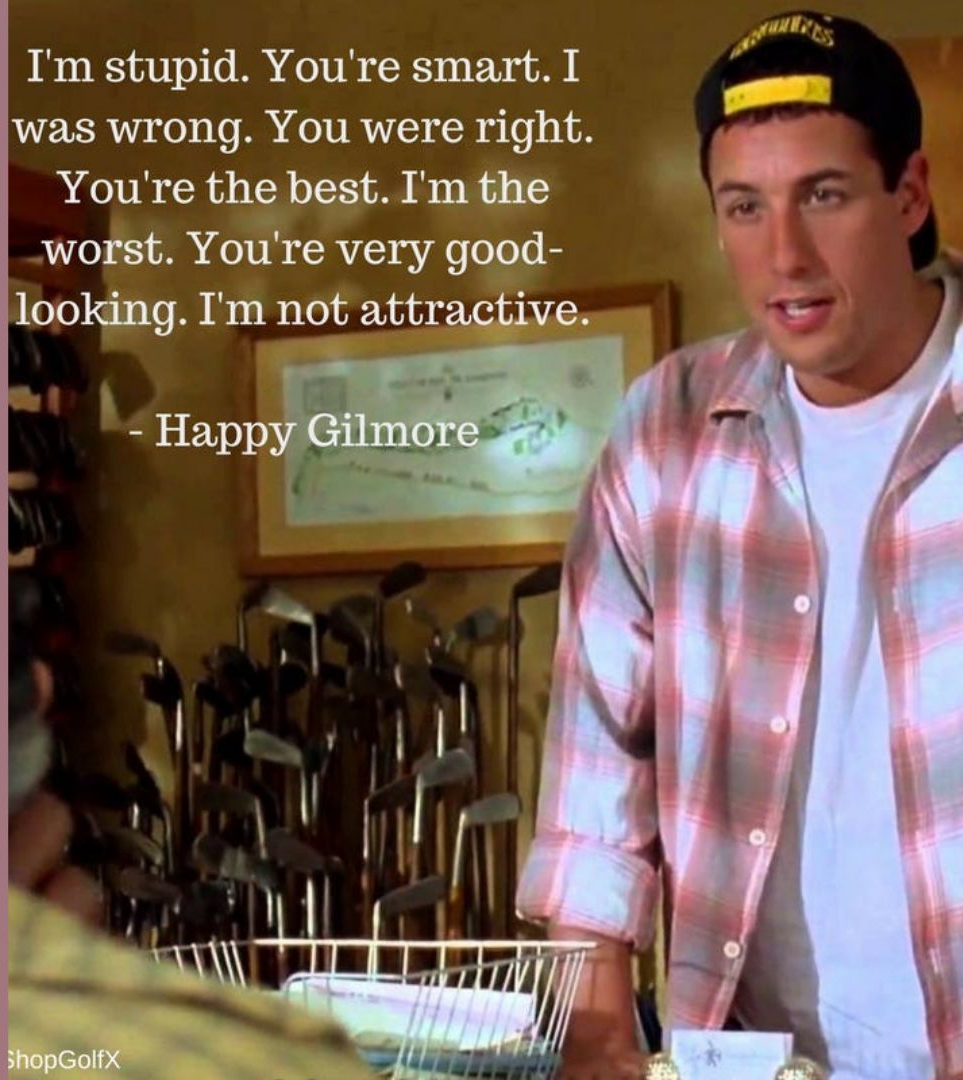
The Younger Son's Story

- ❖ Comes to his sense
 - Needs to go home
 - Father greets him warmly
 - He confesses



I'm stupid. You're smart. I
was wrong. You were right.
You're the best. I'm the
worst. You're very good-
looking. I'm not attractive.

- Happy Gilmore



How Do We Get Here?

- ❖ The ending is beautiful
- ❖ To come home, we first have to leave home
- ❖ Leaving can be messy, painful, uncomfortable



Leaving Our Spiritual Home

- ❖ Why do we leave?
 - We're mad at God
 - We're bored at home with God
 - We drift until we don't "need" God anymore
- ❖ We're searching for something



Watertown

Geoff Left Home



Madison



Leaving Our Spiritual Home

- ❖ What do we find?
 - Love, acceptance, praise,
 - BUT, it's conditional, temporary, "if love"
 - What we find will fade



Coming Home

You can always come home
No really, you can always come home



Coming Home

- ❖ Realize what has happened
 - We left home
 - Things aren't as good as we thought
 - God's love wasn't enough
 - We were looking for things in the wrong place



WHERE IS IT!?!?!?!?!?



Coming Home

"The real sin is to deny God's first love for me, to ignore my original goodness. Because without claiming that first love and that original goodness for myself, I lose touch with my true self and embark on the destructive search among the wrong people and in the wrong places, for what can only be found in the house of my Father."

-Henri Nouwen



Coming Home

❖ Can we do it?

❖ YES!!

- If you're mad at God - you can come home
- If you're bored with God - you can come home
- If you don't "need" God - you can come home



Coming Home

- ❖ Confess to God
 - “I looked in all the wrong places for what I have in Your house.”
- ❖ Take in His forgiveness
- ❖ Be welcomed back as a child of God



Coming Home

- ❖ You can always come to Hometown too
 - No matter what you did last night, last week, last year
 - “When you’re here, you’re home.”



Wrap Up

- ❖ Have you left home?
- ❖ God wants you to come back
- ❖ Not to punish or demean you, but to welcome you
- ❖ You can always come home



Audio file

[The Younger Son Audio.mp3](#)

Transcript

I would pick to be the youngest. I actually am the youngest. I'm the youngest of three and I absolutely loved it. My brother is 6 years older than me. My sister is 4 years older than I am, so about that high school time. It was ideal because my sister had just left for college. My brother was already gone and I'm entering into high school. My curfew got extended way sooner than theirs. I did. I got way more leeway with the car and borrowing the car by senior year if I was going to be late for curfew, I'd call be like I'm gonna be like an hour late. Parents would be like, OK, whatever fine versus my brother and sister. They've been waiting up. Them my brother and sister are not happy about any of this. I love to still throw it at them anytime I see them and they roll their eyes and get mad at it. I played the baby card like nobody's business. Also, I'm going to be completely honest about all this. I loved it. My mom will probably listen to this and be like you. Didn't get away with. That much? Yeah, I did. I did. Why do I bring this up? Not to gloat about being the baby of the family, but because today we will start a three-week little mini series in a parable about a family. If you haven't been with us all summer long, we're just going through different parables. We're calling it schools not out for the summer. We're going to keep learning from the teachings of Jesus through the parables. And today we will start the parable of the prodigal son. The parable of the Lost Son. Now, a lot of times this parable only focuses on kind of 1 member, and that's that younger son, the prodigy. The son. But it's really about 3. It's about the younger son, the older son, and then the father. And what we're going to do is actually spend 3 weeks talking about each one of those characters, because I think there is so much we can take from each one of them. And today will be. The younger son, so we'll start there. But so much has been done with this parable. We have this picture here. This is actually a picture of a painting done by the Dutch painter Rembrandt. He painted the the return of the prodigal son, or the homecoming of the prodigal son. They think it was probably. Then somewhere between about 1665-1669 right before he died and the best of my knowledge, it's still in Saint Petersburg, Russia in a museum. And it inspired a book that I have with me here called the return of the prodigal son by Henry Nauen, who was a Dutch priest, professor, author, theologian. I've read this book multiple times and it's fantastic. But what he did is he was so captivated by this story and by this painting he went to Russia and had special accommodations made. He sat just in front of this painting for days and just stared at it and took in everything. Got it. And then wrote this book where he goes through all three characters and about them and how he's been like all these three characters. So I kind of went back to this book for the section on today on the younger son, and I'll reference him a few times. Basically what happened is the younger son wants to be young and free, so he leaves his father's house. And eventually we'll realize it's not all it's cracked up to be, and he will come back home and what we're. Going to look at this today. Is kind of our own version of, leaving our spiritual home, leaving in essence God's House. And then what it's like to come back and how we can come back. So what I want you to remember kind of drive home today is this. No matter what you've done or how far you've run, you are God's own, and you can always come home. That's going to be a thing today, no matter what you've done or how far you've run. You are God's own. We've sung that in a few songs. Yes, and you can always come home. So let's read part of the parable. We're going

to read just the younger son section. This will be Luke 15 versus 11 through 24. It is there on your Bibles, on the table. It is bookmarked in some of them it will also be right up here behind. So let's read the parable of the lost son. Luke 15 verse 11 says Jesus continued there was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father. Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had and set off for a distant country. And there squandered his wealth and wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went out and hired himself out to his citizen of that country, who sent him to his field to feed the pigs he longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have food to spare? And here I am starving to death. I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. So he got up and went to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son through his arms around him and kissed him, the son said to him. Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants. Quick bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger. His sandals on his feet bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found, so they began to celebrate. We will stop there. All right. Let's just kind of we're going to tell the story. So it starts off. We have this younger son and he asked for his share of the inheritance given kind of the cultural context of the day, he would have been due 1/3 of the father's estate. His older brother would get 2/3, probably in the form of land livestock, things that his father owned. Here's the kicker, this was a huge deal in this day. This is on. Heard of? He's not usually going to get this until the father dies. One of the big reasons is if the land or the livestock produce anything the father has rights to that until he dies so he can reap whatever comes of. This is basically the the son saying to the father. I wish you were dead. Now that's the equivalent of what he's doing, right? He's like, I want all this. I want the proceeds from it and I can't have it till you're dead. So I don't care if you were dead. I want it all now. This is. Incredibly shameful to his family. To his father, it's disrespectful. It is unheard of, but he wants it. He wants it all, cause he wants to just run away, off to a distant country. And this isn't like, hey, can mom and dad, can you support me? Can I go off and just chase? Dream I had some friends in high school that did that. I had a buddy that we graduated and he ran off to LA. He wanted to be an actor, so he went to acting school and got some small parts and like some of these weird MTV shows or whatever, and eventually that didn't pan out. Another buddy. That was a really good golfer, ran off and he wanted to. Be a golf pro at a club out in California. So we went out and did that. These are like chasing the dreams where maybe mom and dad supports you. What this guy in our story did was not that he abandoned his family for his own joy, his own pleasure, his own fame. And he does it at their expense. While he goes off distant country again, he completely leaves. Has all this money in his pocket somehow? And things go poorly. He squanders everything. Who could have predicted that? Young kid, bunch of money in his pocket, running off far away. I can only imagine teenage or young adult Jeff with a bunch of money in his pocket. We're running off. We'll look lounges. Let's go. Right. Hey, look, casinos. I used to at least play cards. Hey, restaurants, right, we're going to make it rain. Let's go. And it's all squandered everywhere and it's gone. That's monopoly money, by the way, if you couldn't tell. I've never have that. I don't think they make \$500 bills, do they? That's monopolies got right. So it's like he goes off and just squanders at all, which is not surprising. But now a famine. It's makes it even worse now, squandering the money. That's all on this guy. That's all his fault.

Not his fault. Food becomes very, very scarce, so he's out of money. It's gone. There's very little access to food. He is down already without the money. And now he's feeling like he's getting kicked. He's down and it's getting worse. People that maybe he met along the way that might have wanted to help him, they're taking care of themselves with their own food and their own issues. I feel like this has got to be like him all alone in a time of need. I get this image if you ever like locked out of somewhere you're trying to go or locked out of a house and it's cold and it's windy and it's snowing. Maybe you have your coat and you're trying to put something above your head and. The wind just keeps knocking it off and you're just. Just like. And nobody's there to help you. That's where I think our guy is right now. So he gets really, really desperate and he gets a job. So OK, not a bad play gets a job. There's a man in the country that lets him go out to feed the pigs. So he's out in a field feeding pigs. He's so hungry, so poor food is so scarce that he wishes he could eat the pig food, which are pods of like seeds from a carob tree. I can't imagine that would taste good, but that's how hungry he is. Tack on to that. This is a Jewish man, and by Levitical law, Leviticus 11. Pigs would be unclean. He's not supposed to even be out there with. So he's gotta be humiliated with all this. But he's looking at these pigs and probably thinking they have more value than me. Somebody's taking care of him. Somebody's feeding them, right? They have food, so he's hit rock bottom and he still feels like he's going going down. It's like I ran off. I did all this and it's just not, but it was cracked up to be. There was a song I remember listening to a lot my senior year of high school by a band called Yellow Card. Song name was back. And before I left. For college, I remember listening to this. A lot and I. Had a lyric. That says back home. I always thought I wanted so much more and I'm not too sure. It's kind of the story of being like, man, we were somewhere and we thought that it was going to be great going somewhere else, moving away to the bright lights or a bigger city or something and you get there and realize this wasn't. As good as. I thought back home. I thought it was going to be. And it just wasn't and I think that's what's happening to our younger son. Here he had everything. He had money in his pocket. Things were OK, and it probably started great. But now it's terrible and not everything he thought. So he finally comes to his senses as sometimes rock bottom moments will do. They will make you kind of. Hit it and say OK, I have to do something different. So he finally thinks to go home. He knows his father has servants and his father even takes care of his servants, so his thought is OK if I go back and offer to just work for my father, I know I completely disrespected him. It was shameful, but maybe he'll just hire me back as a servant and I can be taken care of. So first it seems like this is all just survival. But then in the next few verses, I think he hits at home. When he says. I will tell my father I sinned against heaven. I sin against you. He gets it now. I think he does. I think he finally understands the gravity of what his leaving home meant to his father. But he also understands the gravity of his situation that I got to. Try to come back. So he goes home and he goes home. To his father. He doesn't just go back to the country he's familiar with and hope that maybe I can sneak in here. He doesn't just run back to the town or neighborhood. It'd be like if I came back home and I didn't go to my parents. But I went somewhere else in town, like, oh, I remember little Jeff. You when he was 8 years old. I'll take care of him and bring him in. It's not that. He goes right to his father. And the father sees him coming and he runs out and greets him. And we'll get to the father in week three of this little series. But he doesn't run to him to turn him back around and say, uh, you're going back. He doesn't run to him to chew him out. He runs to him. He hugs, he kisses him, he embraces him and he. Welcomes him back. And then the sun puts the confession out there. The sun lays it on the line. It talks about how much he screw. I don't know why, but when I was reading this and thinking about what was like a confession or somebody apologizing, I thought back to the Adam Sandler movie Happy Gilmore. If you're unfamiliar with the movie, he's like, he starts to play golf and he meets his golf pro

that's going. To help. Him. Well, he they. Have a falling out and he needs his help for the final tournament so he has to. To apologize so he calls? This guy says I'm stupid. You're smart. I was wrong. You were right. You're the best. I'm the worst. You're very good looking. I'm not very attractive. He has to put it all on the line. He has to confess. He has to apologize. Now the sun starts to do this. And apologize. I sinned against heaven. Father, I sinned against you. And before he can even finish. And offer to work for his father, his father tells the servants. We're having a party. We need to celebrate. My son was gone. He is back and he is welcomed home. Now the ending of this story is great, right? That's beautiful. The sun's gone. He's back. We love redemption stories. We love the stories of homecoming. These are great. But to get there and we're going to. Get there we have. To have the leaving home story, the home leaving story, we have to have. The mess or the something that hurt or the something that maybe makes us a little uncomfortable. So let's talk about leaving our home, leaving our spiritual home. So for all you home bodies like me that don't ever want to leave home, this can actually happen because we're talking about leaving kind of our home with God. So let's look at this. Why do we leave? That's kind of the first piece in this story. It seemed like it happened abruptly. The younger son is like I want what's mine and I'm. All right. And the leading role can take on many different forms for us one way. And I'll just put out a few that. I have come. Up with first one being maybe we get. Mad at God, right? Things aren't going the way we want. Things don't make sense, so we're off, right? We swear we do the stomp. Our feet kick thing and we are out the door. I'm moving away and I'm never coming back. And I get it. We're we're taught and it's right to not get mad at God or question God, But this happens. The way God acts doesn't always make sense to us. He doesn't do what we want exactly when we want, so the human nature is to get a little frustrated or mad and want to leave. And I get it. I have yelled. At God and been mad at God in my own life, I have swore at God I know. It's not right. But we're human and it happens. So sometimes when we get mad. We leave. Another one. In essence, we get we almost. Get a little bored. Or get a little too comfortable. We want more excitement. We want freedom. That's sweet. Sweet freedom. Like moving out of mom and Dad's house. We want that freedom. Nobody can tell me what I can and can't do anymore, and I think that's a lot of what our guy in the story is. Like it's like I want out. I want to go do. My own thing. We look out, we see the lights, the fun, the exoticness. It gets the pulse racing, right? It's amped up. You feel alive. So we leave. I think it can also be a little less direct. We kind of just wander right. It's kind of wander away a little bit. We're here. We're home, it's good. And we get a little taste of something. So we go another little taste and we go. And we go and we're finally gone and we realize we don't need need to come home as much. Right. I don't need to go home to do my laundry anymore or get that home cooked meal anymore, so we don't come back as much. Thought about this when I left. Home for college, I moved from Watertown, WI, was about 45 minutes from here. When I moved to Madison in 2004 to go to college and I went to Edgewood and I remember the day pretty well. My parents drove me. We packed up our minivan, loaded all my stuff. We got there. My dad helped me set up my computer. Mom made my bed. Help me unpack some things. My mom cried all that good stuff. It was a classic home leaving store.

OK.

And during freshman year, I went home a fair amount. I remember four or five weeks in with my first trip back home. Did the laundry, got the meal, all the good stuff. But then as I progressed through college and had apartments and jobs, I went home less and less. I didn't need to. I sort of learned to do my own laundry and sort of learned to cook for myself. I didn't didn't really need. To go home, I was growing and maturing and becoming independent. I always could go home. But in my head I just. I didn't

need to. So I was growing up and moving on. Now that's a good thing for my life. But when we leave our spiritual home, it's not as good of a thing because where we do our growing and maturing is with God and is in that spiritual home. But we can get to that point where we go away and go away and don't think we need to be there anymore. So that's kind of what can happen to us. And I think if we look at all three of those ways that we leave, I think it boils down to the fact that we're. Searching for something? We'll leave in search of something we're missing in search of some type of love, so we leave. Because we want to fill that void. Right. So we leave and we look for something or what happens, do we find it? And I think the answer is, yeah. Most times we do, we leave in search of love, acceptance or praise or admiration, and we will initially find it. But it's conditional usually, and it's temporary Henry now and in this book kind of references as like an if love, I'll hang out with you if you have the money to buy drinks and dinner, you're welcome with me and my friends. If you bring something to the table, if you can help us with something so we find it and it's great for. A while, but it eventually fades or it crashes or something. Either way, it's almost like this riches to rags type of feel, and we're left with the decision. Do we stay where we are and fight and claw and scratch our way out on our own and we're kind of taught that you made your mess. Clean it up. You dug your hole. Get yourself out. But as followers of Jesus, it's a little different because we always have a place to go. We can always make the decision to come home. Spiritually, you can always come home. Hear me again. No, really. You can always come. Home and I think the first thing we have to do is realize what's happened. Realize that we. Left and that where we are isn't as good as we thought and it comes from an emptiness again because now we're missing something again, right? We were home with their spiritual home with God. We felt like we we needed something else, so we leave. And now over here like. OK, that didn't actually fill me because what we're missing? Is that love of God that we have? That only he can provide. So we take the Road home and we prepare to talk to God. We have to look inside ourselves and see where it went wrong. How did we end up here? Why did we end up? And then when we narrowed down, we were searching for something. We were searching for some type of love. But we're looking for the right thing. Loves a good thing to look for that godly love. But we're looking in the wrong place. Have you ever been to a store? Any store? I use a grocery store, for example, where you're looking for an item and you can't find it. And you find you're just looking in the wrong place. I do the grocery shopping for us, and I also do a lot of cooking for those who don't know me. And I have found that bread crumbs. Just a picture here tend to be in different. Spots in about every. Store and it drives me nuts I have. Looked in with bread because they're bread crumbs? Nope, not there. I've looked with, like the baking and the spices cause that made sense to me. But then eventually I would find them in random places. Sun dried tomatoes. That's the other picture. Like to cook with those sometimes not. With the Jarred vegetables in some store or with the Pickles and the relishes, where I thought they should be in with, like, the produce in a jar. Right, nothing wrong with that. I was looking for these ingredients I need for my recipe, for the right thing, but I was looking in all the wrong places. We tend to look for love, acceptance and praise. We always look to God for it. We don't look to God for that acceptance. We don't look to God enough for his love. God loves us first before anyone else, and that's what we should look for it in the book Henry now and has this quote that I love about it. He says the real sin is to deny, deny God's first love for me to ignore. My original goodness, because without claiming that first love and that original goodness for myself. I lose touch with my true self and embark on the destructive search among the wrong people and in the wrong places for what can only be found in the House of my father. That love can be found with God. So can we? Actually come home and the answer is yes. If you left mad at God. You can come home. If you left because you were, you were bored and you were in search of that freedom and you realize it's not that

great. You can come home if you just drifted off, feeling like you didn't really need God anymore. You were growing up on your own. You can come home. Just confess that to God's. I looked. God, I was looking for that love. I looked in all the wrong places and I want to be back to your house, to your home. Where that love is repent of that and then ask for that forgiveness and take in his forgiveness first John. 19 says if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. Purify us from all unrighteousness. Taking his forgiveness, don't believe that he won't forgive you or you're not welcome to back. Based on what you've done, because remember our story again. We hit it kind of hard with how disrespectful and shameful the younger son was. He was welcomed back. He was forgiven. He wasn't welcome back as a hired servant, he was welcomed back as a child of God as a child. Of his father. You are always welcomed back as a child of God. And I want you to kind of know just. As a side. Note you're always welcome home here at hometown, right? You can always come here too. No matter what you did last night. Last week. Last year we have a model or tagline. We use that at hometown. When you're here, you're home. Just like you can always go spiritually home to God, I want you to also know. Always come to hometown here. With us. So I want you to think about a little bit. Do you feel like you've left home or is there a time when you've left home in? One of these ways. And I want you to remember that you can always come home and that God wants you to come home, not to demean you or to punish you for leaving. But to forgive you and welcome you back to his family. Because no matter what you've done or how far you've run, you are God's own. And you can always. Come home, let's pray. Got to thank you for the story for this. Just the lesson we can learn from that younger son. God, that because we all maybe think about ways we've been like that younger son and that we've we've left in a way. Got to thank you that we know we can always come home that you welcome us home, that you welcome us back as your child. God, that you have that forgiveness and that love for us. So I pray that whether we're in a place that we know we're home right now or that we. Feel like we've left that. You would make those decisions got to either come back or to focus on making sure we stay and we would remember to follow you and to accept that love and forgiveness from you. God your name.