

“UNSTUCK – Repentance” (5.21.17)

Maya Angelou—brilliant poet & author

In an essay that originally appeared in *Family Circle* magazine, America's beloved poet Maya Angelou described the birth of her first and only child, a son named Guy.

When I was 16, a boy in high school evinced interest in me, **so I had sex with him—just once.** And after I came out of that room, I thought, *is that all there is to it? My goodness, I'll never do that again!* Then, when I found out I was pregnant, I went to the boy and asked him for help, but he said it wasn't his baby and he didn't want any part of it.

I was scared to pieces. Back then, if you had money, there were some girls who got abortions, but I couldn't deal with that idea. **Oh, no. No.** *I knew there was somebody inside me.* So I decided to keep the baby.

[After I tried to hide my pregnancy from my mother], I'll never forget what she **[asked me]**: *"Now tell me this—do you love the boy?" I said no. "Does he love you?" I said no. "Then there's no point in ruining three lives. **We are going to have our baby!**"*

[She] was very loving. Very accepting. **Not (1) minute** of recrimination. **And** *I never felt any shame.*

I'm telling you that the best decision I ever made was keeping that baby! **Yes,** absolutely. Guy was a delight from the start—so good, so bright, and I can't imagine my life without him. At 17, I got a job as a cook and later as a nightclub waitress **My mother said, "Remember: You can always come home & she kept that door open.** And every time life kicked me in the belly, I would go home for a few weeks.

I struggled, sure. **We lived hand-to-mouth, but it was really heart-to-hand.** **Guy** had love and laughter and a lot of good reading and poetry as a child. **Having my** son brought out the best in me and enlarged my life.

That **OPENDOOR** is a powerful picture of **God's heart** toward us = it's never too late to **COME HOME** to **GOD** – **He always keeps the door unlocked!**

(Today message) is really practical –
we are going to talk about what it takes to get **UNSTUCK** in our life.

Let's jump right in...**how to get UNSTUCK** from the messes of our own making!

I. Parable of Prodigal—Lost Son (**from a different vantage point**)

A. ® Luke 15: 1-2 or p. 797

B. Backdrop: Jesus was being hassled by the religious leaders of the day.

C. **ALL (3) Parable in Luke 15 are** spoken as an answer to the accusation of the Pharisees and the scribes in verse 2 that Jesus "**associating w-such sinful people— even eating with them.**"

1) Jesus was making a place for them at his table and them to stay and eat with him. *encouraging*

2) Luke uses this word "receive/associates" (*prosdechomai*) six other times in his writings and every time it means "**eagerly await or expect and look for.**"

a. ® Luke 2:25, Simeon was "**eagerly awaiting**" the consolation of Israel.

b. ® Luke 2:38, Anna the prophetess spoke to those in the temple who were "**eagerly awaiting**" the redemption of Israel.

3) In other words, Luke 15:2 says that Jesus /SNOT just receiving sinners; **he is looking for them and eagerly awaiting their coming.** He has his eye out for them. He's actively seeking sinners and tax-gatherers to come to him & eat w-him.

II. **Picture of a GOOD-GOOD FATHER**

A. © Luke 15: 11-12

B. This would have been **unfathomable in that culture** and the *father would have had the right to literally disown him* for such an audacious request.

- 1) **Not to mention** *the hurt of knowing this was his son writing him off for dead.* You usually only get your inheritance after the death....
- 2) But this *father gave it to him* and *let him go* to a distant country.
 - a. Not only saying give me.. but heading off as far away as he can from the influence of his father so he can live just as he wants..
 - b. The story of one who runs as far from God as possible *because they think God cramps their style.*

C. [NOTICE] God gives—gifts us with FREE WILL

- 1) The Father gave the son the “freedom/freedom of choice” God never forces his will upon us = He understood what the son was saying, asking for his inheritance to leave and go spend before the father’s death was basically saying the father was dead to his son.
- 2) God cares so deeply for each of us – he’d never dream of manipulating us
 - a. I don’t know if you ever went & visited the “...distant land of sin,” [BUT] if you did go = you know 1st hand, **it NEVER ends well=NEVER!**
 - b. **We go to “...distant land of sin,”** for one reason = *to find happiness & fulfillment.*
 - c. The prodigal son LIKE many of us tried *to find happiness & fulfillment* by the way of **SELF-DISCOVERY.**
- 3) The logic behind self-discovery is simple = the individual says,
“/’m the only one who can decide what’s right or wrong for me.
/’m going to live as I want to live + find my true self & happiness *along the way.*”
 - a. For a short time ~ this path of **SELF-DISCOVERY** seems to deliver what you had hoped it would ~ **at 1st it’s a lot of fun!**

- b. Did I mention this path never ends well...
- c. Traveling to the "...distant land of sin," is like **BUYING THINGS on credit** = when you have no money to pay for it. **At 1st = its fun!**
 - i. You can travel to Europe -- stay in 1st class hotels -- eat at the finest restaurants & live like a king & queen.
 - ii. **BUT** when bills & high interest start coming = **it's not fun anymore**

D. **® Luke 15: 13-16**

- 1) So he got a job feeding pigs.. not only hitting rock bottom as a hired hand but the ultimate humility for a Jewish boy.. feeding pigs.
- 2) Not only is he serving the pigs, **but he now envies the pigs... wants their food.**

E. **® Luke 15: 17-19**

- 1) The most pivotal point.. WHEN HE CAME TO HIS SENSES. And sees life for what it really is. This is the first step of repentance.
- 2) **The first step of repentance** = taking responsibility for his actions **AND** the consequences of them. He owns it...

(Truth is...) sometimes we get stuck in life
 (we make bad choices & then have to live w-the consequences).

Whether you are currently stuck, just got unstuck or your moving forward, there is always hope and a set of principles that always work =

This hope and principle = **The Gospel–The Good News** =
 Jesus has rescued us & when He cried out on the cross **"it is finished"** paid in full = those chains that make us feel stuck **don't have to stay on us**. He has already freed us.

III. **(+) Bible Principles** (that speak truth when we've made a mess of our life)

A. 1st Bible Principle = NO MESS *is too MESSY* for GOD!

1) We can never be too far away from God. **That is why Jesus came.**
As long as we have breath, it is never too late to come to (or back to) God.

2) ® Luke 5: 32

If Jesus conquered death—He can handle your mess.

Next one is not such good news – but this is the God of the Bible!

B. 2nd Bible Principle = Sometimes GOD DOES NOT RESPOND to our prayers!

1) Sometimes God is not who we've made Him out to be in our mind =
Gracious Grandpa in the Sky who takes us for ice cream when we say we're sorry.

2) Sometimes people think that God didn't hear you just because He didn't answer or fix your prayer exactly like you asked. He has never promised to do that, to fix it the way we want it fixed. **He promises to forgive if we repent.**

3) **Truth is...** *if you want a life without God,* He will let you live your life without Him.

✚ If you want to go to a distant land and live your own way... He says go ahead.

✚ ® Psalm 81: 11-12 or p. 451

4) **Contrary to popular belief...** just simply having remorse and saying we are sorry, and just crying out to God for help, is not how we remedy our situation.

NOW back to some really '**GOOD NEWS**.'

C. 3rd Biblical Principle = GOD ALWAYS RESPONDS when we REPENT!

- 1) Remorse does not equal repentance. They are not the same thing.
Remorse is only the first step.
- 2) Repentance (I know it is a churchy word).
 - a. Taking full responsibility = we are all victims in this culture but that doesn't fly with God. We like to blame and shift the responsibility off ourselves so we don't accept fair consequences.
 - b. IT LITERALLY MEANS = Turning around and coming home.
 - c. ® | John 1: 8-9 or p. 941
- 3) The Biblical meaning of confess is different than when we use it in English.

✚ *To us, confess means admitting to it but it leaves room for making excuses.*

- ✓ I was born that way...
- ✓ It is my parent's fault...
- ✓ It was just one... (look, listen, taste, drink, kiss..etc..)

✚ Biblical confession means renouncing and turning away from the sin...

- ✓ not that we will get it perfect or do it right the first time...
- ✓ but it is not just remorse but action to change.

D. 4th Biblical Principle = GOD'S CHARACTER always trumps OUR UGLY SINS!

✚ ® Luke 15: 20-24

Never ever forget this:

GOD always keeps the door open—He's a GOOD-GOOD FATHER