



ED LACY MINISTRIES, INC.

P.O. BOX 9062
MOBILE, AL 36691
(251) 660-8942



STRIVING TO DO GOD'S WORK, GOD'S WAY, FOR GOD'S GLORY

EDLACYMINISTRIES@CS.COM

(251) 660-8942

WWW.EDLACYMINISTRIES.ORG

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus,

The parable of the prodigal son is probably the most familiar parable told by the Lord Jesus! As I studied this passage in Luke 15, I was starkly reminded of two powerful spiritual realities found within this story. The first one is found in verse 17, where the Lord Jesus says of this reckless rebel, "But when he came to himself"; and secondly, while under the convicting weight of this young man's many sins against God and his own father, verse 20 declares, "And he arose and came to his father". Tragically, this young man's practice of reckless and wasteful living is the universal testimony of all humanity! For all of us were born into this world, with hearts that were prodigal by nature. The human heart is deceitful above all things and hopelessly wicked. The Word of God states in Colossians 1:16, "All things were made by Jesus and for Jesus". We were created to experience and enjoy the Lord Jesus, as the supreme love and the sovereign Lord of our lives. God has brought us into existence so that we would live our lives in a manner that would glorify Him! We were created to live under the mastery of Jesus and for the magnification of Jesus. However, the Word of God clearly indicts us with the reality that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". All have utterly failed to fulfill the purpose for which we were created. The prophet Isaiah said it this way, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way". Just like this obstinate, prodigal son prior to his conversion, we have all walked the course of wicked sinfulness and willful selfishness. All of us have wasted our lives on prodigal living. Every one of us declared with our lives, whether consciously or unconsciously, "God, I want all of the blessings that You give; but I don't want YOU as the central focus and supreme treasure of my life! I want to live my life by myself and for myself". The folly of every unconverted heart is that he imagines that he can walk his own path without the guidance and government of the One who grants him every breath that he breathes! His perverted heart purposefully desires to be free from the Word of God; the will of God; and the ways of God. But the stark reality is that this imagined independence from God is not freedom at all; rather, it is a life of slavery to sin. Every person on earth is either a slave to the Lord Jesus or they are a slave to sin. Friends, those who have not been converted to Christ, whether they realize it or not, are living a life of moral madness, spiritual insanity and wicked wastefulness, just as this young man in this parable. It is merely a state of existence in the "far country" of spiritual separation from God. In a very real sense, it is a futile attempt to satisfy a profound spiritual hunger with the shallow and worthless husks of this world!



The fact that Jesus reveals this expression, "When he came to himself", clearly depicts that this prodigal son was "beside himself" in a state of spiritual madness! This young rebel had engaged in a life that was alienated from his Father. Jesus does not neglect to inform us that there was great pleasure in sin for a season. Although ultimately it led him to the pig-pen of destitution, desperation and moral bankruptcy! But praise God, the pig pen was not the end of this story! The Lord Jesus declares these precious and penetrating words, "And he arose and came to his father"!

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It obviously cost a great deal of misery and heartache, for this son to finally come to conviction, and contrition, resulting in a humble return to his father. Friends, what will it take for those whom you are interceding for to come to themselves and turn to the father? It may take a health crisis for them or one of their loved ones. That's what it took for my precious wife, Dianne, and even my own dad. It may take a financial catastrophe or being "fired from the job". That's what it took for me. It may take the death of a loved one or that of a close friend. It might take a marriage crisis. It might be just the futility of attempting to satisfy one's soul, by climbing the ladder of success, yet never being fulfilled. The amazing truth is that God loves sinners enough to do "whatever it takes" to bring them to themselves and point them to Him. Those of us who have come to know the Lord Jesus intimately, have come to realize that true conversion is a "coming to yourself" and a "coming to the Father".

This is why I travel all over the world. This is why I spend half of my life away from home. This is why I preach the Gospel in churches, prisons, rescue missions, homes, in foreign countries, and anywhere else my King may open the doors. Because brothers and sisters, there is joy in the heart of my King and Savior, over one sinner who "comes to himself" and "comes to the Father"! There is a glorious celebration in Heaven, each time a prodigal repents of their selfish, sinful ways and turns to the Lord Jesus in saving faith. Friends, my greatest desire in life is to be a vessel that is used by God, to proclaim the only message that can rescue and redeem prodigals; and bring joy to the heart of my King. May each of us commit, with all of our being, to be faithful ambassadors for the Good Shepherd, who came to seek and to save prodigals and transform them into proclaimers!

TESTIFYING OF CONVERSION!

This parable clearly tells us that the Lord Jesus celebrates with great joy, when one of His lost sheep repents and comes to Him in saving faith. But not only is there a celebration in Heaven, there should also be a celebration on earth! AMEN? Since our last newsletter, I have had the personal joy of seeing a number of adults testify that they have "come to themselves in genuine repentance; and turn to the Lord in saving faith". Over the last few weeks, I have witnessed men, women and youth publicly declare that they have responded to the gospel call. They went to their homes agonizing over the lost condition of their soul. They sought the Lord for mercy and grace; they forsook their self-centered ways and trusted the Lord Jesus in saving faith.

I think of one young man named Aaron. After preaching a gospel message one evening, Aaron stayed behind desiring to speak with me. He shared that he had been raised in a Christian environment, by godly parents. This young man continued saying, "I have been the black sheep of my family. I have lived a life of wickedness and wastefulness. But Bro. Ed, by the grace of God, I am repenting of my rebellious ways and I am committing my life to the Lord Jesus. I want to be redeemed! I want to be saved! I want to follow Jesus as my Lord!" Since that night of this young man's confession of faith, I have seen him on a number of occasions; and it appears that Aaron is indeed a new creation in Christ!

Also, I recall a pregnant mom in Mississippi, who was just a few weeks away from giving birth. On Sunday morning and evening, she heard many truths concerning the reality and the evidences of what it means to "come to yourself and come to the Lord". She went home on Sunday evening, realizing that she had never truly come to true repentance and saving faith. She sought the Lord throughout that Sunday and Monday. Then on Monday evening, she testified before the entire church that God had birthed her into His Kingdom. She declared that she had turned from her self-centered life and had turned to the Lord Jesus in saving faith! The believers in this local body were rejoicing over her testimony, as well as the others who also testified of the saving grace of God in their lives.



In the most recent meeting in Georgia, I experienced one of the most unique evenings in many years. At the close of the Monday evening message, which actually focused on believers, a lady testified before the congregation that she had “come to herself” and “come to the Lord Jesus” in conversion. Upon the conclusion of that service, two men asked to speak with me privately. The congregation was dismissed and they left the auditorium. I began to converse with these two men, who had many questions concerning true conversion. As I began to deal with their questions from the Word of God, I noticed something quite amazing was occurring. Many of the congregation, whom we thought had left for the night, was actually filing back inside the auditorium. A large group of people had returned from the parking lot and sat down in the pews behind us. For the next hour and a half, they were listening to every question and seem to be hanging onto every answer. Friends, It was 10 p.m. when I finally dismissed them; and even then, no one wanted to leave! The Holy Spirit had visited us in mighty power. He was apparently doing some amazing “life-transforming” work in several lives. The pastor testified, “Our church will never be the same, because of the manifest presence of God this week. God has performed mighty works of grace in our church this week”! Folks, there is no doubt in my heart that we truly experienced “times of rejoicing” from the presence of the Lord being in our midst!

Our Lord has given me many wonderful opportunities to proclaim His saving truths in these last 2 months. I have had the precious privilege to preach the gospel in 3 evangelistic church crusades in 3 different states. Also, I preached the gospel on 8 individual evenings at The Mission of Hope and the Waterfront Rescue Mission, both of which are Christian rehab centers. These missions are overflowing with men, who entered them in the same conditions as that of the prodigal son. There is no doubt that our God takes no pleasure in the death of sinners; but He does take great pleasure when prodigals repent and believe; whether their rebellion is outwardly public or inwardly private. The Father delights when one of his wayward creatures come home to Him on His conditions. There is a celebration in the heart of this “former prodigal”, when our Lord allows me to be used as His minister of reconciliation!

RECOVERING THE GOSPEL CONFERENCE

I also had the wonderful opportunity to be one of the preachers at the “Recovering the Gospel” Conference at Grace Church in Lake City, FL. It was a tremendous privilege to serve with Pastor Jeff Noblitt of Grace Life Church of the Shoals, AL, Pastor Kurt Smith of GA, and Pastor Russell Taylor, FL, as we focused on this vital subject. I was asked to teach two sessions from “Christ-centered Evangelism”. I sensed a sweet liberty from the Holy Spirit through this time. It was a time of refreshing and rejoicing in my own soul.

NICARAGUA AND CUBA CONFERENCES APPROACHING

During the week of April 19-24, I will once again be granted the wonderful opportunity to teach 150 pastors and leaders of the Evangelical Mennonite Churches of Nicaragua. This is a miraculous “on-going” open door, that the Lord has given me to teach and preach to an entire denomination of leaders. These Mennonites descended from the Anabaptists movement in reformation history. This particular group is Baptist in their doctrine. This year, I will be teaching my workbook study from the beatitudes entitled, “The Key to Supreme Happiness and Spiritual Prosperity”. (Continued on next page)

We have been given many reports of how the truths from the "Christ-centered Evangelism" teachings have been multiplied in many of the Mennonite churches throughout Nicaragua. One of the directors of the Board for this Convention has personally taught this workbook to 16 different churches. What a tremendous opportunity for "MULTIPLICATION" of these foundational principles. Please pray for this open door.

Also, during the week of May 13-20, Bro. Garry Morrison, Pastor K.J. Pugh and myself will travel to Holguin, Cuba to teach the annual "church planters and lay leaders" conference at Marantha Baptist Church. I will be teaching an expositional study from Romans 5:12 through Romans 6:14 entitled, "Walking in Victory in the Reign of Grace". I am so excited about having another opportunity to serve these precious servants of God. Our ministry has been given the privilege to be the channel of support for 18 church planters in Holguin district. We are praying that the Lord will allow that support to multiply to new 'church planters' that the Lord is raising up. Please pray that the religious visas will be granted speedily by the Communist government. This is always an adventure of faith! We know that our King is Sovereign; and if this trip is in the stream of His wise providence and His Sacred will, nothing on earth or in hell can stop it!

**GRATEFUL FOR THE FAITHFUL ONES
WHO STAND WITH US!**

As I consider the tens of thousands of dollars that will be needed to take care of all that is ahead of us concerning 3 international conferences, I could be tempted to be overwhelmed with worry and stress. Then I remember the faithful promises that my Father will provide! But I also remember the loving churches and the gracious individuals, who so gladly sacrifice to partner with us. They share our passion and purpose to pour the "light of God's truth" and the "heat of our love" into the lives of these hunger pastors, church planters and lay leaders. Then with a grateful heart, I glory in our faithful God and rejoice over you, His listening children. Thank you for all that you do. YOU ARE A VITAL PART of each and every upcoming opportunity to reach untold numbers of people, through the multiplication of these truths. Please pray for each opportunity. Pray that many souls will "come to themselves" and then "come to the Father"! As I think of all the doors of opportunity and the redemption of the prodigals, a song rises up in my heart:



Oh to grace how great a debtor; Jesus saves! Jesus saves!
All the saints will shout forever; Jesus saves! Jesus saves!
Rising up so fast and strong; Lifting up salvations' song
The redeemed will sing forever- Jesus saves!



Thank you for helping us tell others about our Savior and King, the Lord Jesus Christ.
II Cor. 4:5

We Love you!
Ed & Dianne Lacy

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

- MARCH 16-20..... MISSION OF HOPE, AL - EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH & REVIVAL
- MARCH 27-31..... FIRST BAPTIST SMITHFIELD—FORT WORTH, TX
- APRIL 3-6..... PLEASANT GROVE PABTIST CHURCH—JONESVILLE, LA
- APRIL 10..... MISSION OF HOPE, AL—
- APRIL 17..... CROSSROADS BAPTIST CHURCH—ROGERSVILLE, AL
- APRIL 18-24..... NICARAGUA
- MAY 1-5..... THE CHURCH AT BURLESON—BURLESON, TX
- MAY 12-20..... CUBA