

THIS WEEKS MESSAGE

This Week's Message: "The Porch Light is On"
Pastor Mark Burch

Luke 15:22-24 But the father wasn't listening...servants...dress him! ...put a ring on his finger! ...set the banqueting table...My son is here! Given up for dead, but now alive!



"Home..."

At it's very best, "home" is a place we all long for...a place that is safe...a place we are unconditionally loved...a place we can let our hair down and know that we will not offend...a state of being...secure...safe...at ease... "home".

So many in our day have not experienced this kind of "home" in growing up, nor have they understood the offer of "home" that our heavenly Father extends to us. Instead of seeing a loving Father waiting at the door, they have feared an angry God. But the New Testament paints a much different picture of God – and maybe its an image you need to embrace. The image of the porch light being left on at night...the picture of a daddy worried sick as He waits for His runaway child to come home.

The truth is, we are ALL runaways in our own way. Some of us have begun the journey home, others still need to turn around...but ultimately we walk the same path. Maybe it's time you headed for home. The porch light is

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

History (Making it Personal)

1. Has anyone in your group lived through the "runaway" experience? Either you yourself ran away from home – or your son or daughter, brother or sister? Briefly share the impact it had on your home?
2. Can someone share a time when they "ran away" from God? What was happening at that point in your life? What caused you to turn around and head for home?
3. Why does the runaway not head home? What are the obstacles that keep kids on the streets? What would it take to convince a runaway that it was in their best interest to head for home?

Digging Deeper (Looking to the Bible)

4. Try to translate the discussion above into the spiritual realm. Why is it that people find it hard to "return" to God? What are the emotions, the fears, the expectations?
5. Read Luke 15:11-32. Who is your favorite character – and why? Who is the person you personally can relate to the best? Why?
6. Talk about the son's rebellion...How would you as a parent feel if your child treated you in this way? How do we explain the Father's response in 15:22?
7. Talk about the older brother...what was his issue? Do you relate to his frustration with the Father? Do you see some of his attitude in your own life? Toward whom? What kind of people today do we consider the prodigals?
8. Read our mission statement on the back of the bulletin and talk about it line by line:
 - a. Do we really believe we are ALL runaways?
 - b. Do we understand our personal need to repent?
 - c. Have we created a "safe" family for prodigals?
 - d. What is life in this family REALLY like?
 - e. Are we actually "eager" to see others join us?

Taking It Home (Application)

9. What part of our mission statement do you personally feel you need to understand and live out more effectively?
10. Spend some personal time in prayer/reflection this week, thanking the Father that He left the porch light on for you.
11. What are some practical steps our church family can take to make it a more welcoming place for prodigals?
12. If God has convicted you of having some "older brother" type at-