

THE ROUND-TRIP JOURNEY

No matter where we are in life, we need to keep moving forward. You might feel like you're going nowhere fast. Maybe, something jump-started you recently. Did you go to a church service and hear something useful? Did you attend a religious event and decide to make some changes? Did something bad happen that got your attention? Whatever ... let's go through this brief Bible study to keep you moving.

DOWN THE ROAD, ACT 1

Luke 15:11-13 - Then Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them told his father that he wanted his share of his inheritance right now. So the father divided up the value of the family business and gave the younger son his share. And not many days after this, the younger son packed up his belongings and traveled to a faraway country. There, he blew all his money on vulgar & wasteful living."

We have done & said things in our past that were hurtful, evil, and wrong. Maybe, you treated people in your family badly. Remember? Don't you wish you could have those days & years over again?

1. ___Yes ___No Do you think the younger son was worrying about whether he was hurting anybody at the time?
2. ___Yes ___No Did the younger son ask the father if this decision was a good idea or not?
3. ___Yes ___No Is it possible that the younger son had been thinking about this for a while?
4. ___Yes ___No This younger son knew how things were going to turn out when he made this poor decision.

Why can't we see the consequences of our decisions ahead of time. Have you noticed that most of our decisions benefit "Me". We want things our way. Isn't it sad that we hurt people to get what we want?

5. Do you remember a time in your life? Would you care to share?

Can't you almost hear the younger son saying, "Father, give me the money now. I cannot wait around here for you to die." I told my dad to go to hell once years ago when we were in an argument. I remember wanting to take my fist and beat his face to a pulp. How sorry I was later but I didn't care how it sounded before.

6. Even though the father probably tried to talk him out of this decision, what words in the Bible text tell us the younger son was paying no attention?

7. ___Yes ___No Do you think that the father probably spent many nights in tears & in prayer before the son left home?

8. ___Yes ___No The father knew the disaster that faced his son but he had to let him go.

9. ___Yes ___No If the father had really loved the son, then he would never have allowed the son to leave.

It makes no sense that the younger son would choose to leave the safety and security of home with hurtful words & selfish plans, and go to a place he had never been before. When we make selfish decisions and destroy the people around us, do we make any sense?

10. Oh, how he must have hated that home. How was the place where the son was going described in the Bible text?

He blew all his money on vulgar & wasteful living. The things he was doing he had probably never done before - drinking until drunk, having sex with women, gambling, etc.

11. ___Yes ___No The home where the son came from probably had drinking, women, and wasting money on anything.

12. ___Yes ___No The friends he had probably had good values and were committed to hard work & doing things the right way.

13. ___Yes ___No There were obviously family rules to honor & obey.

Here's a thought. Since he was still young (probably late teens), he may not have had to make a lot of important choices. The choices were guided by the values of the father & his home.

14. What decisions could you make when you were 14 years old?

15. What kinds of decisions were you not allowed to make when you were 14?

Some of our parents were more strict and kept tighter controls. My parents were that way. However, since I was a rather obedient kid, they rewarded me with more freedom as the years went along.

16. How did your parents handle this for you?

17. Do you remember a time when you screwed up and got in big trouble? Maybe, one of the first times. What happened?

18. ___Yes ___No Did your parents punish you big time & ground you?

What caused this? Well, you made a choice about something. It could have been minor like: you lied about where you were; you lied about who you were with; you were late getting home; there was alcohol on your breath; your mom found drugs in your coat the next day.

19. ___Yes ___No When you made this choice, did you do it all alone?

20. ___Yes ___No When you made this choice, did you really think through the consequences & troubles you would have to face?

21. ___Yes ___No Had your parents ever mentioned not doing the bad thing that you did?

22. ___Yes ___No Had you ever seen your parents or guardians do the same behavior that you got in trouble for?

Making a bad choice is still our choice, and no matter who we learn that choice from, we end up paying for it.

There are also major choices: you could have stolen money from a person or from a store; you could have stolen a car; you could have hurt someone due to a bad drug sale, or hurt hurt someone while drunk or stoned.

23. Think back. If you did one of these things, think carefully; why did you do it? Why did you make that choice?

24. If you could relive that time, what would you do differently?

DOWN THE ROAD, ACT 2

Luke 15:14-16 - But when he spent all his money, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be hungry, needy, and homeless. Then, he searched and found someone who he could work for. He was sent into the fields to feed the pigs. And he would gladly fill his stomach with the same food that the pigs were eating because no one gave him anything.

It appears that the "friends" he had while he had money were gone. You have probably had people in your life like that. They get what they want from you, and then they throw you out like trash.

1. ___Yes ___No Have you ever been hungry, needy, and homeless?

2. ___Yes ___No Did you get into this situation all by yourself?

3. ___Yes ___No Did a bad choice have anything to do with this?

4. This son was a Jewish boy who did not associate with unclean animals. How do we know that he was desperate when he took the job?

5. Have you ever been in a mess where you would agree to do just about anything to get some help? You didn't care if it was right or not. You didn't care if it went against all your beliefs & values. You would do anything. Explain.

Have you noticed that sometimes to fix a bad choice, we have to make more bad choices. Consider this. Many times, when we made a bad choice in the past, we did it with other people; we made the bad choices together. Some people don't have the courage to make bad choices alone, so they drag in others. That may have happened to you.

Usually, you are alone when the consequences & troubles hit.

6. ___Yes ___No Does it appear that the son was alone with the pigs?

7. ___Yes ___No Do you think that the son deserved to be in this mess?
 8. ___Yes ___No Do you think that this son was still valuable in the eyes of his father?
 9. ___Yes ___No Did this younger son feel valuable & loved out in that field?
 10. ___Yes ___No There must be someone the son could blame for all this.

When the bad choices finally began hurting the son, he could make other choices: blame someone else and hurt them, or admit the mistake, blame himself, and possibly hurt himself.

11. Have you found yourself in a dilemma like this? Have you ever been at the end of your rope? Have you ever been absolutely hopeless? Explain.

12. Can you feel how the son felt when it says, "nobody gave him anything"? This guy was alone. He caused it. He pushed people away. He felt like a piece of garbage. Explain.

There is another way to respond to the problems that are caused by bad choices. Instead of pushing people away, you can hang on to people; keep them under your authority & hostility & control. If you have to suffer from your past bad choices, then, so do they. This will probably result in all kinds of abuse.

13. ___Yes ___No Has this been done to you?
 14. ___Yes ___No Have you done this to others?
 15. ___Yes ___No Bad choices hurt a lot of people.
 16. ___Yes ___No RIGHT NOW - Are you living out bad choices in your life?
 17. ___Yes ___No Is it possible that you feel worthless & of no value?
 18. ___Yes ___No Can a person who makes bad choices be valuable to God?

DOWN THE ROAD, ACT 3

Luke 15:17-19 - But when he came to his senses, he thought to himself about how many of his father's hired servants have enough bread to eat and then some extra; yet, I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants."

If he "came to his senses" there in that field of pigs, then he did not have his senses from the beginning of this story until now. This could mean "not in your right mind" or "not acting the way you normally would".

1. ___Yes ___No Is it possible for a person who is a believer in God to sometimes "not act the way he normally would"?
2. ___Yes ___No Is it possible for a person who is **not** a believer in God to sometimes "not act the way he normally would"?

A non-believer is not trying to please God with his life so living an evil, rude, wild life would not be abnormal. His normal life would be whatever turns him on. However, a believer in God (a Christian) would usually want to please God & live an obedient & honorable life. If he stopped doing that, this would be "not acting as he normally would".

3. Remember a time when you decided to do something that was wrong? It was definitely wrong; you knew it was wrong. You did it anyway knowing you should not do it. How do you explain this?

4. ___Yes ___No Could an answer to question #3 be that we are sinners and we make decisions with a sinful mind & heart?
5. ___Yes ___No Could an answer to question #3 be that we are full of pride and we choose to do what we want to do?
6. ___Yes ___No A rebellious person makes decisions based on what his sinful heart wants to do, not based on what makes sense.
7. ___Yes ___No A person can resist & ignore the messages that the Holy Spirit gives.

The devil does not want unbelievers to ever hear how to get their sins forgiven and become a Christian. He blinds their minds and hearts & eyes. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

The devil also wants to destroy believers. Look at these verses.

Luke 22:31-32 - And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brothers."

Luke 22:33 - But Peter said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death."

How could Peter make this statement in Luke 22:33, and then deny he ever knew Jesus at the trial. Could he have lost his normal senses?

How could Adam eat the fruit from the forbidden tree just because Eve said it was OK when he knew better. Could he have lost his senses?

How could King David steal a man's wife, have sex with her, and then have her husband deliberately killed in battle? He lost his normal senses?

8. ___Yes ___No When **Peter** denied knowing Christ, he lied. **Was that sin?**
9. ___Yes ___No When **Adam** believed Eve rather than God, and disobeyed even though he knew better, he rebelled. **Was that sin?**
10. ___Yes ___No When **King David** stayed home from the battle, he saw & lusted. He planned adultery. **Was that sin?**
11. ___Yes ___No When the **younger son** secretly planned to leave home, was living a lie at home, and then dishonored his father & the family, he was a hypocrite & a fake. **Was that sin?**

When sin takes over our lives for a period of time, we definitely lose our senses (the good senses that the Holy Spirit put within us). We still are believers & belong to God. But, we are not sensitive & responsive to God; we are not listening. We are like a train that stepped off the rails.

12. Remember doing something bad that did not make sense? Explain.

The younger son was starting to get his head back on straight, but notice that his primary need and concern was food; he was hungry.

Luke 15:17-19 - But when he came to his senses, he thought to himself about how many of his father's hired servants have enough bread to eat and then some extra; yet, I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants."

13. ___Yes ___No The son does sound humble and sorry; however, his primary motive might not have been to make amends with his father but rather to get some food & not be hungry.

I know this sounds harsh to say all he wanted was food; however, let's be honest; sometimes, God lets us get into a real bind so that the next choices we make are better ones.

14. ___Yes ___No If you were in the son's sandals, would you be that eager to return home a failure after the fool you made of yourself when you left?
15. ___Yes ___No At this point in time, would the son have thought about returning home had he not been hungry, dirty, & alone?

When we have to admit we made a mistake, it is not easy; we do not want to do it. We are too proud. We are so proud of ourselves when we are allowed to make our own choices. I heard a Christian 16-year old boy say the other day, "Yes, I want to drink someday." I said, "why"? He said, "because I have not been allowed to do it yet."

16. What should be the reasons why we make certain choices?
- a. ___Yes ___No I have not had a chance to do that yet, regardless of whether it is good or bad.
 - b. ___Yes ___No I do not like to be told what to do, and how to live.
 - c. ___Yes ___No I trust myself to do the right thing all the time.
 - d. ___Yes ___No My parents are not always right about everything.
 - e. ___Yes ___No I made this choice once before and got away with it.
 - f. ___Yes ___No I am going to prove to everyone that regardless of what they think about it, I know what I am doing.
 - g. ___Yes ___No Listening to the advice of others might be wise.
 - h. ___Yes ___No Maybe, since this choice did not work too good for my friends, it might not be a good idea for me.
 - i. ___Yes ___No Maybe, I should consider how it will affect others.

HEADING HOME, ACT 4

Luke 15:20 - And he arose and came to his father.

1. What was he leaving behind? _____

After we make a crummy choice (#1), why is it so hard for us to make a good choice (#2) that will start the processing of fixing the damage done by choice #1? If you can figure that one out, you're smarter than me.

2. Was the younger son still valuable to his father? ___Yes ___No
3. Regardless of the poor decisions and mistakes you have made, are you less valuable to God than you were when you were born? ___Yes ___No
4. Would a father stand outside the house looking down the road day after day looking for his son if he did not love him? ___Yes ___No
5. Would a God Who created you and made you in His image declare you worthless? Human fathers might; God the Father – never. ___ Yes ___No

REMEMBER THE DIFFERENCE IN THESE TWO WORDS.

"Guilt" = ***I am sorry for what I have done.*** (God like to hear this one).

"Shame" = ***I am sorry for who I am.*** (God does not like to hear this one).

YOU ARE VALUABLE; YOU ARE SPECIAL; YOU ARE FORGIVEN.

GOD SAYS, "YOU ARE MINE". "YOU ARE MINE". "YOU ARE MINE".

I WILL NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER FORSAKE & ABANDON YOU.

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