

Stan Holder
Administrative
Bishop



GETTING CONNECTED

Highlighting Churches of God ministries in Maryland, Delaware, DC and the Virginia Peninsula



July - August 2023

Church of God Delmarva-DC Region

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Pig Pen Perspectives Luke 15:11 - 24

The parable of the prodigal son is one of the great passages in scripture. Through the years, I have read, taught, preached, and pondered this parable and its application for us today. I have preached from the sons' perspective, the father's perspective, and the elder brother's perspective. If I can borrow a few minutes of your time, allow me to ponder from the pig pen. Perhaps, the insight will do us all some good.

The first perspective deals with the worst kind of deceit which is Self-Deceit. Deception is a spiritual disease that hinders us from seeing things from the father's perspective. Self-deceit is defined as *"the act or an instance of deceiving oneself or the state of being deceived by oneself."* The prodigal son deceived himself by thinking that personal freedom was more important than personal responsibility. Freedom is the desire of all mankind. However, I cannot find in scripture where freedom immunizes us from responsibility. The prodigal no longer wanted to be under his father's authority. He wanted to call his own shots and make his own decisions. In doing so, he placed himself in a vulnerable state.

The second perspective deals with the issue of Self-Defeat. He *"squandered his possessions in prodigal living."* We are not given the exact timeline of his financial demise, only the timeline of his departure from his father's house, *"... not many days later ..."* Whether his failure was in year one, year five, or year ten, we do not know. What we do know is that *"when he spent everything"* and a severe famine hit the land, he was left with nothing. His resources were spent and his financial well dried up. He had hit rock bottom! Rock bottom is that place where you have nothing left to lose. It is the lowest of the lows. The term was first introduced by Alcoholics Anonymous. This organization deals with people who have hit the bedrock of life. Bedrock is the solid earth crust, that is twenty to twenty-five miles thick and rests on the earth's mantle. There is nothing lower. Should one find themselves there, self-defeat is the song that plays 24/7.

GETTING CONNECTED

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Thirdly, we can see the perspective of Self-Doubt. Perhaps the greatest weapon that Satan can unleash upon a person is self-doubt. Realizing that his decision placed him in a position of want, the prodigal son *"hired himself to a citizen of that country"* to care for his swine. He was so mentally defeated in a foreign land; he could no longer see himself the way that his father saw him while he was home. Self-doubt is a very powerful strategy in Satan's arsenal. David's brothers, along with their fellow soldiers, doubted their ability to defeat the giant in their path. I guarantee you that when they joined Saul's army, they were filled with vigor and fight. But after forty days of verbal assaults, both morning and evening, the verbal abuse from Goliath took its toll. Verbal abuse is emotional abuse. They believed the giant's lies and no longer viewed themselves as victorious soldiers in defense of Israel. The goal of verbal abuse is to make you doubt your self worth. It plays tricks with your mind. This is what happened to the prodigal. He was so filled with self-doubt; he lost his perspective on who he really was.

Finally, we see from the perspective of Self-Determination. *"I will arise and go to my father..."* Although he still struggled with his self-worth (*"... I am no longer worthy" ... "make me like your hired servant" ... "I am no longer worthy to be called your son" ...*), the place where he was at, was not where he was supposed to be. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man cannot coexist. They are diametrically opposed loyalties. When one starts mixing devotions, trouble ensues. The first step in getting the prodigal son out of his own self-made dilemma was a determination to correct his course and return to his position as a son.

He went home, admitted his failure, and submitted to his father's authority. Sometimes our loving Father will allow our setbacks to springboard us back into sonship again. Notice what happened to the prodigal.

- A sonship ring was waiting to adorn him.
- A sonship robe was waiting to array him.
- A sonship banquet was waiting to honor him.
- A sonship legacy was waiting to position him.

Some might think that the prodigal didn't deserve such glorious treatment. But our God is a God of grace and mercy. None of us know more than our heavenly Father. How foolish for us to think that we are wiser than He who sits on the throne of glory. This is the final pig pen perspective ... that our loving Father is waiting, longing, watching, and planning for our return to Him. All that is required is action on our part to admit that our ways are not His ways, and our thoughts are not His thoughts. He is ready. What about you?

*Bishop Stan Holder
Administrative Bishop*



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Designed for Church Planters and anyone interested in planting a church



February 25th, 2023
August 26th, 2023
Registration @8:30 am

The Church Planters Gathering is free but registration is required.
Complimentary lunch will be served.

Purpose of Gathering:

Sharing Testimonies and ideas
Prayer Partnership

Encouragement among Church planters

Delmarva-DC Church of God
Resource Training Center
7127 Long View Road
Columbia, MD 21044

Email: nicole.pope@delmarva-dc.org to register