



March 2024

Dear CWR/PTM Friend and Partner,

No doubt you have heard someone say, as they prepare to tell a story which others might have heard or read before, “stop me if you have heard this before.” You are well aware of this story I want to rehearse, so don’t stop me, please! *This is one of the best stories ever!* Let’s enjoy this brief re-telling again, together!!

Once there was a father with two sons. He loved them both, with all his heart. The youngest of the two sons was a “free spirit.” He was a party waiting to happen, the life of every gathering, a handsome playboy who felt his father owed him a living. The older son was the “good son”—working hard, never causing a fuss, never the center of controversy.

You are way ahead of me. This story is the parable of *The Prodigal Son* (Luke 15). Some call it *The Lost Son* parable—but the core and center of the story is not about either son. The father is the fulcrum of this story, so perhaps it is more aptly titled the parable of *The Loving Father*.

The youngest son asked his father to give him his share of the estate before the father died, and **before** his older brother received his share. Did I say this young man seemed to be entitled, feeling his father owed him a living? When he received the money, the young man could not leave his father’s house fast enough. He went, says Jesus in this parable, to “a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living” (Luke 15:13).

He closed the door, and walked to his car in the driveway. His mother was watching the kids (six and eight years of age) and Jennifer, his wife, the mother of their children, was at work. Jimmy had become restless—bored and tired of his life... he wanted excitement and adventure.

Jimmy had just turned 29—when he and Jennifer married they were barely out of their teens. Now the spark and fire of their relationship was gone. Jennifer had her own job, she cared for the home and their children, and he worked hard at his job as well. But Jimmy was tired of the monotony of having too much month left at the end of their combined incomes.

Jimmy was “looking for love in all the wrong places” when he found his old high school flame on social media. She was recently divorced and living only 100 miles away. Following online flirting, Jimmy felt he had found his “soul mate” and decided to abandon his family and move in with his former girl-friend.

Jimmy wanted (lusted for) someone who would rock his world—someone with whom he could live in the fast lane. After Jimmy left, Jennifer continuously sent him notes, texts, letters and voice mails. Jennifer never gave up on him. Months went by—he never answered.

*Then, after about a year, Jimmy, like the younger son in *The Prodigal/Lost Son*, or *The Loving Father*, “came to his senses” (Luke 15:17). Jimmy came to realize what a fool he had been. He decided to make the two-hour drive home. During the drive there were times when he thought he should turn around and go back—he was humiliated. He couldn’t believe how self-absorbed he had been, and he worried if Jennifer and his family could ever welcome him back.*

Jimmy drove up the driveway—it was late in the afternoon. He could hear the kids playing in the back yard. He

rang the doorbell and Jennifer opened the door. She was shocked because she had no idea he was coming home. Jimmy said, "I want to come home, if you will have me."

This is one true story that ends well—the wronged party forgives, accepts the person who caused them incredible pain back home, and they start to rebuild their family. It took many months of tears and of hard work, but Jimmy and Jennifer slowly started their lives together all over again.

The Prodigal Son/Lost Son was aware of what awaited him if he went home to his *Loving Father*. In the culture at that time when someone snubbed their family, heritage and home, and then tried to come home, the community at large would often gather and tell the person who had run away for greener pastures they were not welcome. The community would have a ceremony, breaking a pot in the presence of the person who wanted to come home, with the broken pot being a symbol to the person they were irrevocably broken, never to be forgiven or restored.

That's only a part of the less-than-glorious reception the Prodigal Son/Lost Son expected for his homecoming. When he asked his father to hire him as a hired hand, he probably expected his father to make him pay back all the money he had wasted and sign a contract promising never to do something that stupid again.

Incredibly, *The Loving Father* saw his son coming home, walking down the road to the family home. *The Loving Father* was filled with joy, and knowing the harsh treatment to which the community at large would subject his son, he ran to welcome his son. *The Loving Father* showered him with forgiveness, shielding his son from the vengeance and condemnation of the community.

The son started to deliver a rehearsed speech about how he really no longer deserved to be the son of his Father (Luke 15:21) but he was interrupted. *The Loving Father* told his son he had no need to earn his way back into the family. *Love is never fully deserved—and in particular, God's love can never be earned. It is given. It is grace.*

His father embraced his son, giving instructions to his employees to bring the best clothing, placing his own expensive ring, symbolic of family and acceptance, on his son's hand. A barbecue of all barbecues was prepared with music, dancing, drinking (and not just iced tea) and a grand celebration. "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24).

In his book *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, Philip Yancey tells another story about forgiveness in the chapter titled, appropriately enough, to the topic of this letter, "The Lovesick Father." The following is my abbreviated excerpt of that story:

A young girl grows up on an Illinois farm. Her parents don't like her music and her clothing styles and she doesn't like their church. They argue all the time. She resolves to run away. She likes what she has heard about California, where it seems everything and anything goes.

When she gets off the bus in California she has no idea what to do, but then she meets a man with a fancy car and lots of money. He gives her pills to make her feel good. The man she calls "Boss" takes her to parties—she's living the life she dreamed of.

But then the dream becomes a nightmare. "Boss" becomes abusive and "turns her out" into street prostitution. Life is no longer exciting, it is dangerous—she is alone—she is addicted to drugs—she is afraid, very afraid. Her clothes are rags. Her stomach is empty. She realizes "my dog at home on the farm eats better and is treated better than I am now."

She calls home—no answer, just the answering machine. On the third call she tells her parents she is coming home—her bus will stop in their little town about midnight if they want to see her. If not, she tells them she will just get back on the bus and keep on going to New York. All during her bus trip back home to Illinois she keeps rehearsing her speech to her parents—how sorry she is—how stupid she was—begging for forgiveness.

A little later than scheduled the bus pulls into her home town for a 15-minute stop. She walks into the little bus terminal at one o'clock in the morning. And then she sees it—or rather them—sitting on plastic chairs in a little waiting room built of concrete blocks. Her mom and dad, with a group of 40 brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents and her dog. They're all wearing goofy party hats and holding hand-painted signs saying "welcome home." Her dad walks up to her and embraces her. She says, "Dad, I'm so sorry. It's all my fault."

He puts his hands on her face, laughing and crying at the same time, and says, "I know. I know. No need for another word. Let's go. We're going to miss the party!"

When we read the **Parable of The Loving Father** we are reading about our heavenly Father whose love is without boundaries or limitations, whose forgiveness is forever and ever—a **Father who always says to us "Come on home."**

In the parable the older brother/older son would not attend the celebration for his younger sibling. He felt like his younger brother didn't deserve a party while he, on the other hand, had worked hard in his father's fields. He skipped the party, because he felt his brother didn't deserve to be forgiven. **The older brother didn't seem to realize he didn't deserve a party either!**

Don't miss the party! Come home—our Father is always waiting! Fall into his open arms. Embrace the offer of God's kingdom—the kingdom of heaven. Come home!

God's kingdom of heaven is being in the presence of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, not to mention the angelic host and a huge crowd of others who are forgiven and accepted by God's grace. God's kingdom of heaven means being in perfect peace and harmony forever and ever, living in God's house and eating at his table, without ever again being subjected to long winded sermons or church services... or letters like this that never seem to end.

With thanksgiving for your faithful support of this ministry, with gratitude we can be of service to you.

Your brother in Christ,



Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

CWR/PTM Prayer List—March 2024

These requests for prayer represent just a few of the thousands we receive and pray for. We invite you to join us in praying for these and the others that space does not permit us to include here. Thanks for joining with us as a CWR/PTM Prayer Partner.

Please remember me and my family in your prayers. Our oldest son recently died, and it was a hard blow to our entire family.—Kentucky

I'm suffering with diverticulitis, and I would appreciate your prayers for my healing.—New York

Please pray for my healing—my foot is infected and I have trouble walking.—Texas

Please pray for so many friends who've recently had tragedies, sickness or death of loved ones.—Wisconsin

I'm having issues with a kidney stone, and I would really appreciate your prayers for healing.—Georgia

Please pray for an end to the wars in the Ukraine and the Middle East.—Maine

Please pray for my husband. He recently had a mild stroke, and the medical bills are overwhelming. He is terribly depressed about the whole situation, and I'm concerned about him.—North Carolina

I appreciate the ministry of CWR/PTM very much, and I pray for God's blessings on all of you.—Indiana

Please pray for my son—he recently contracted pneumonia and his condition is serious.—New York

Please pray for my niece—she has colon cancer. Thank you in advance for your prayers.—Tennessee

Please pray for me—it's so hard living alone at age 83 with heart and nerve problems.—Louisiana

I'm suffering with several health issues, including degenerative disc disease with back and neck pain.—Texas

Please pray for all who are in pain and suffering, that God will give them healing and comfort.—Massachusetts

I'm going to be a complete "empty nester" and I would appreciate your prayers about this transition.—Arizona

Thank you for your prayers for me. I'm almost back to who God created me to be more than I have ever been. Thank you for never giving up on me.—Kentucky

Please pray for me—my husband recently passed away and I'm still grieving.—Iowa

Please pray for my friend who is the only caregiver for her sister, who has Alzheimer's.—Michigan

Please pray for God's peace to come to all those with angry hearts.—Oregon

I recently had open heart surgery. Please pray for my complete recovery and healing.—New York

Please pray for my two sons who are ill, and pray for all the little children who are ill or in danger.—Texas

Please pray that the doctors can find out why I'm having intestinal problems and figure out the best course of treatment to take care of it.—Maine

Please pray that God will help us be able to get out of debt and improve our financial situation.—Ohio

Please pray for my wife who is suffering with severe complications from long Covid.—California

Our Father in Heaven: We thank you for your grace, mercy and love. You love each of these individuals, and we thank you in advance for the answers you will provide for each request. With thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our suffering servant who heals us, in whose name we pray—Amen.