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House to House Heart to Heart

2024 SV-1

Come
Home
to the
God Who Runs

Allen Webster

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on youtube



Jewish men never ran. To run in Jesus' day, a man had to hitch up his robe to avoid tripping. Pulling up his robe would show his bare legs, which was shameful in that culture.

Yet Jesus' prodigal son story features a running father. Why would a Jewish father shame himself by running down a road to hug and kiss a returning prodigal boy? Because a father's love is eager; it is consuming; it is insistent. It cares not for its reputation, only for its recipient. A father's love trumps all.

Jesus does not dwell on the painful parting when the boy left for the far country. Losing one of a hundred sheep (Luke 15:4) was a one percent loss; losing one coin of ten (15:8) was a ten percent loss; but losing one of two sons was not a fifty percent loss—it was incalculable. Knowing the mindset of the boy and the temptations of the far country, the father must have wept as he watched his son's figure grow small in the distance. We do not know how long the boy was gone, but it was longer for the father than for anyone else. At every meal he saw the vacant chair; every night he laid awake wondering if his son were alive

or dead; every day he stacked more tear-soaked prayers toward heaven.

This passage is called the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but the son is not the hero. The father is the hero. And to be more accurate, the *Father* is the hero, for it tells far more of God's love than any sinner's sin. It teaches about God's love *because* of a sinner's sin—in spite of sin, in answer to sin, to overcome sin. The Father's love is at the heart of the gospel.

What kind of father did the prodigal son have? What kind of God does Jesus show?

A God Who Looks Long and Longingly (Luke 15:17–20)

What went through the boy's mind as he walked that long road home? Would his father accept him back? Would his brother ridicule him? Would his rehearsed confession come out right? As he drew near the homestead, imagine the memories that flooded his mind.

From the other end of that driveway, at long last, the father saw what he longed to see. He likely had looked out the window for that familiar silhouette against the sky every day since his boy left (cf.

Isaiah 49:15; Jeremiah 31:20). He had glanced down that road a thousand times a week. The father—not the brother or a servant—was the first to see the boy’s approach because love’s eyes see far.

Like that father, our Father looks long (no matter how many years it has been) and longingly down your street, waiting for a prodigal (Psalm 86:5, 15; 103:10–13; Isaiah 55:6–7; Micah 7:18–19; Romans 2:4). Whenever any prodigal, anytime, anywhere, turns around, he is face to face with a smiling God. It is a short trip home because God halves the distance.

A God Who Hugs Tight and Forgives Eagerly (Luke 15:20)

Perhaps they saw each other at the same time. The boy’s heart throbbed within him; the father’s leaped into his throat. Rather than rushing into the house and locking the door, as the boy may have feared, the father took off running down the road toward him. The boy may have thought, “I’ve never seen Dad run before.” Arriving shortly, likely panting, the father ignored his son’s tattered clothes and the smell of his unwashed body. He put his arms around the boy, pulled him in tightly, and kissed him over and again. When the boy saw his father’s smile, felt his embrace, and heard his voice, the tears must have flowed freely. When his father kissed him, he must have wondered what he ever did to deserve such a wonderful father.

A God with Spare Bread (Luke 15:17) and Extravagant Gifts (Luke 15:22)

Thinking of the food back home brought the starving boy with the pigs to his senses. He remembered there were leftovers (spare bread) after the meals growing up. When he arrived at home, the father showed grace. He forgave him. He showed no contempt and held no grudge. He made no recriminations. He gave no lecture. He put no asterisk by his name in the family records.

The father interrupted the boy’s humble confession, commanding the servants to get the boy clothes and shoes; prepare food; put a ring on his hand. These rapid-fire gifts represent some wonderful things the Father grants to all returning prodigals.

The father gave him the robe of honor. The best robe was not just something from

the boy’s old closet; it was a long, embroidered garment worn on special occasions (Psalm 45:13). The One who washed His disciples’ feet now sits at God’s right hand, girded with a towel, ready to cleanse sinners (John 13:1–13; Revelation 1:5–6; Acts 22:16). A sinner’s baptism puts him into Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27), whereupon he receives a place at the Father’s (Lord’s) supper table. When a returning prodigal confesses sin, God cleanses all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7). He clothes with salvation and righteousness (Revelation 3:4–5, 18; Ephesians 4:22–24). In heaven, white robes await (Revelation 6:11; 7:9, 13–14; 19:8).

The father gave him a son’s ring. The boy was restored to his original position in the family (cf. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5–6). A signet ring gave the bearer the power of attorney (Esther 3:10; 8:2). Forgiveness grants justification—meaning “just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned” (Ephesians 2:13, 17)—and makes us sons in God’s family (Galatians 4:7).

The father gave him shoes. Slaves went barefoot (Isaiah 20:1–2), as the returning prodigal must have been. God frees Satan’s slaves when He saves sinners (2 Chronicles 28:15). A Christian’s feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel (Ephesians 6:15).

The father killed the fatted calf, representing satisfaction. A calf was kept ready for special occasions (Genesis 18:7). This signifies that all needs are fully satisfied when a prodigal comes home (Psalm 63:5). God fills His children’s lives with blessings (Matthew 7:11; 22:4; John 10:10). Grace includes all the provisions God has to correct everything that is wrong in a sinner’s life. The feast that began on earth will continue in heaven (Revelation 2:17; 19:9).

There was (and is) grace enough—and to spare—in God’s cupboard (Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 2:11–14). This parable illustrates justice, mercy, and grace.

- The returning prodigal deserved—but did not want—justice. Justice would have turned him away at the door (Psalm 143:2). In the big picture, justice leaves sinners in line for hell.
- He desired mercy (Luke 15:19). Mercy would have allowed him to work with

the servants. In the big picture, mercy says to sinners, “No hell for you.”

- He received grace. Grace restored him as a son instead of making him a servant. Grace says to sinners, not only “not hell,” but instead “heaven.”

The God of a Merry Heaven (Luke 15:23)

How could heaven be anything but happy? In God’s presence are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). Heaven does not celebrate earth’s holidays—no fireworks on July 4, no turkey in November, no angel food birthday cakes—but it does host celebrations. Every time a sinner is saved, heaven gets excited.

Have you considered that if you return to your first love (Revelation 2:4–5), you will start a party in heaven today? I do not know how long it will last (perhaps until the next person is baptized or restored), but it will surely start up again when you set foot in that city. Upon arrival, you will be recognized, accepted, loved, praised, and congratulated (2 Timothy 2:19; Jeremiah 31:3; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Matthew 25:23, 46).

From where we stand right now, there are two roads. We are free to take either. One dips and descends until it gets lost in a distant lake that glows fiery red on the horizon (listen closely and you can almost hear weeping). The other road climbs to a bright city of songs and laughter. It lights up the distant horizon brighter than the nuclear explosion.

The prodigal’s story is Jesus’ way of saying that anybody can get right with God. Publicans, sinners, Pharisees, prostitutes, regular people, you, me. If you used to attend the church of Christ, but have stopped for whatever reason, the welcome mat is out.

This young man is our inspiration. His father is our hope. The boy dared to think he could go home, and the father dared to think that he would. Jesus gives us power to become His children (John 1:12)—and power to return. If you have no desire to come home, God will never make you, but if you want to, He will let nobody on earth or in hell prevent you.

May we be the first ones to say, “Welcome home.”

How Do I Choose a Church?

One radio station in Nashville does nothing but talk radio. As an avid talk radio listener, I am always interested in the questions and comments of those who call in. On one show, the host deals exclusively with emails that listeners have sent in. One that caught my attention the other day was a lady who asked, “How do I choose a church?”

The host suggested she consider looking at churches as communities, and that she simply needed to find one that had people who most suited her needs for friendship. While friendliness in a church is important, this approach lacks much in the area of content.

“How do I choose a church?” is a fair question. The only way to answer it adequately is to appeal to Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16).

One needs to find the church that was founded by Jesus (Matthew 16:18). Jesus told Peter that He would build His church. Thus, the church is the possession of Christ. It is not man-made; it is the bride of Christ (Romans 7:4).

One needs to find the church that has only Christ as its head (Colossians 1:18). Many man-made denominations have men who serve as living heads of the church. Jesus (through His Scripture) is the only authority (Matthew 28:18–20) to which a church can appeal for an answer about its work, function, and membership.

One needs to find the church that offers the biblical method for membership. The New Testament church did not vote on whether a person was allowed membership. The Bible teaches that when one puts Christ on through faith (Hebrews 11:6), repentance (Luke 13:3), and baptism (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26–27), the Lord adds him to the church that Jesus died to establish (Acts 2:47). One must be in fellowship with God before he can be in fellowship with other Christians (1 John 1:6–10). It

would be wrong to fellowship one who is in rebellion to God’s commands (3 John 1:9–11).

One needs to find the church that wears a biblical name (Ephesians 3:14–16; cf. Romans 16:16). When a church wears a name that cannot be found in the Holy Writ, it is an offense to God. The “whole family in heaven and earth is named” for the Lord.

One needs to find the church that has the proper mission (Ephesians 3:10). The church is a worshiping society; it has a teaching mandate (Matthew 28:19). Many churches have forgotten their work. While fellowships and friendships with other Christians are good, they are not the best reasons to attend church. The church should be engaged in benevolence, evangelism, and edification, but teaching Christ and His gospel is paramount (cf. Romans 1:16).

One needs to find the church that teaches sound doctrine (1 Peter 4:11). The only means to teaching sound doctrine is directly appealing to Scripture in a “thus saith the Lord” manner (2 Timothy 3:16–17). If a church teaches things contrary to God’s Word, one needs to find another church!

One must find the church that worships God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). God desires our worship, and we need to be certain that we worship in the way that pleases Him.

There are many ways one could choose a church—from throwing darts at church listings to asking a radio talk show host. There is only one right way—opening up God’s Word and examining what God desires of the church, and then seeking that church, becoming a member, and attending regularly. —Johnny O. Trail

A list of those in the Bible who did it on their own:



No one.

We might be tempted to say Jesus did it on His own, but right before His temptation in the wilderness He was baptized by John the Baptist and received the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:13–18). As soon as the wilderness temptation was over, He was ministered to by angels (Matthew 4:11) and called His first disciples (4:18–22). Jesus sought support from others during a time of great temptation.

Could Jesus not do it alone? That is a hypothetical question that is not profitable to discuss; He chose not to.

In our baptism, we give up control, both physically and spiritually, and let someone immerse us in water while God does the work (Colossians 2:12). This is a divine precedent for the rest of our Christian walk: We will need God and other people.

It is not weak to need other people. It is by God’s design. You need us, and we need you.

—Matt Wallin



“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

GALATIANS 6:2

God’s Plan for Saving Man

Divine Love: John 3:16

God’s Grace: Ephesians 2:8

Christ’s Blood: Romans 5:9

Holy Spirit’s Word: 1 Corinthians 2:12–13

Sinner’s Faith: Acts 16:31

Sinner’s Repentance: Luke 13:3

Sinner’s Confession: Romans 10:10

Sinner’s Baptism: Acts 22:16

Christian’s Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian’s Work: James 2:24

Christian’s Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian’s Endurance: Revelation 2:10

Watch
on youtube



Champions Get up One More Time than They Fall (JOSHUA 8:19–21)

Championship seasons are rarely undefeated seasons. The NFL has had one team with an undefeated season. The NBA and MLB have had none. Tiger Woods is considered by many as the greatest golfer of all time; he does not always win.

Every Christian makes mistakes. Peter made some serious blunders (Luke 22:45–61), but he bounced back (Acts 2). So can we. If you have forsaken the Lord, do not give up. You can return and live the Christian life. If you have lost your fervor for Christ, you can find it again. If the devil has led you down sin's road, you can return—as the prodigal did (Luke 15).

There can be victory in breaking bad habits. Many Christians have finally conquered smoking, bad language, procrastination, gossip, and alcohol addiction by saying, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:4–5). Jesus promised, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Our souls are too valuable to give up (Matthew 16:26). Love keeps on keeping on. If you have fallen, get up. God and this church are here to help.

"A righteous man may fall seven times and rise again."

PROVERBS 24:16

BEFORE WE THROW STONES



Dear God,

Help us to understand that the woman who cut us off to take an exit on the interstate might be a single mom rushing to pick up her baby from daycare. After a long day of work, she is in a hurry to be with her baby, fix dinner, wash clothes, and relax before starting over in the morning.

Encourage us to see beyond the piercings and tattoos of the young man in the drive-thru, who seems indifferent and struggles to get the order right. He might be a 19-year-old university student who should be studying for finals because he needs a higher grade point average to keep his financial aid.

Lord, may we recognize that the intimidating guy who asks for money at the street corner every day is probably battling addictions beyond our comprehension.

Remind us, when we grow impatient with an elderly couple blocking the grocery aisle, that they might have just come from a doctor's visit where they learned his days are numbered. They are in shock and valuing even this simple errand together.

Heavenly Father, remind us every day that love is the greatest gift among the many blessings you provide. Sharing that love should never be confined only to those close to us. Help us to extend our compassion to everybody we meet. Teach us to hold back quick judgments, forgive easily, show empathy, and love generously.

—Anonymous

"Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise."

LUKE 6:31

Is It Safe to Come Home?

A nervous young man bit his fingernails as he paced the aisle in the coach of a train. A preacher said to him, "I know that you are in trouble, and I would like to help you." The young man said that he had left home against his parents' will, but now he wanted to return. He had written to his parents two weeks ago, but he had not received an answer from them.

He had asked his mother to tie a white rag on the old crab apple tree in the front yard if he was welcome to come home. He would see the tree as the train passed

by his house, but he was afraid to look. The preacher said, "Close your eyes; I will tell you if the white rag is there." As the train went around the curve, the preacher looked carefully at the crab apple tree. He told the boy, "A white rag is tied to every limb."

—adapted from "Warmest Fuzzies That Ever Wuz (Words that could change your child's life!)" Dr. Roger Allen and Ron Rose. *Christian Parenting*; August, 1989.

Jesus, and this congregation, have tied a white rag to every limb for you (cf. Daniel 9:9; John 3:16–17; Colossians 3:12–13).



To watch videos, read articles, answer Bible questions, and more, go to house-to-house.com.

Father, Forgive Them

The greatest sinners may, through Christ, find mercy. For His murderers, He prayed, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). On Pentecost some of these very people were forgiven by this very God (Acts 2:22, 37-38, 41).

Jesus' words of forgiveness were directed toward the Roman soldiers who had beaten Him so badly that someone else carried His cross to Calvary. Jesus had the power to stop those who beat, tortured, and crucified Him (John 10:17-19). Surely this Jesus who, with just the sound of His voice, made a dead man come alive, could make a live man dead. But He did not punish them nor stop the proceedings. He allowed the soldiers to mock Him with a scarlet robe and a reed and a crown of thorns (Matthew 27:28-30). While He was blindfolded, He let the soldiers strike His face and did not answer when they asked, "Prophesy! Who is the one who struck you?" (Luke 22:64).

Little did they know that He could tell them who hit Him. They beat Him; He blessed them. There was no blindfold when they nailed Him to the cross. Jesus did not respond as others they had crucified. Others spewed vile profanity or wept for pity. The soldiers thought Jesus' life was in their hands; they did not know He held their lives in His.

Jesus illustrated Mark Twain's definition of forgiveness: "Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it."

How could anyone reject such a Savior? —Matthew Henry

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

MATTHEW 11:28



Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.



Bible Quiz

2024 SV1

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We will grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Facing Trials" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State: _____
Phone: _____



We would love for you to learn more about the Bible!

- ☐ Please send me a free Bible Course
- ☐ I would be interested in a personal Bible study
- ☐ I would like to receive a DVD Bible Study



The Bible and Hope

Directions: Find your answers in Psalm 16:9; 42:5; 71:14; 119:114; Romans 5:3-4; 8:25; 12:12; 15:4, 13; Philippians 1:20; 1 Timothy 6:17; Hebrews 6:11; 10:23. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

1. "We also glory in _____, knowing that tribulation produces _____."
2. "I will hope _____, and will praise You yet _____ and more."
3. "If we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly _____ for it with _____."
4. "With all _____, as always, so now also Christ will be _____ in my body, whether by life or by death."
5. "Why are you _____ down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? _____ in God, for I shall yet praise Him."
6. "Rejoicing in hope, patient in _____, continuing steadfastly in _____."
7. "Let us _____ the confession of our hope without wavering."
8. "We through the patience and _____ of the Scriptures might have _____."
9. "May the God of hope fill you with all _____ and _____ in believing."
10. "My heart is _____, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will _____ in hope."
11. Tribulation produces _____; character produces _____.
12. "He who promised is _____."
13. "Nor to _____ in _____ riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy."
14. "Show the same diligence to the _____ of hope until the end."
15. "You are my hiding place and my _____; I hope in Your _____."

Membership Has Its Privileges

“Don’t leave home without it.”

Your trusty plastic card is indispensable, to hear the company tell it. With it, you can do anything from taking your wife to lunch to vacationing in a foreign country. If you lose your card or cash, you can get a new card and a cash advance right away—your vacation will not be interrupted, and you will not be stuck in the middle of nowhere. Yes, membership has its privileges!

Membership in the Lord’s church has infinitely greater privileges than a credit card. The church is God’s family, and members have the privilege of calling upon the Father in prayer (Matthew 6:9). We have the privilege of wor-

shipping Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24). Wherever we go in the world, we carry the assurance of salvation (Hebrews 10:22). Should we become lost, we can confess to God with a penitent heart, confident that He will lovingly forgive and restore us to His favor (1 John 1:6–10).

Does this sound inviting to you? Here’s how to apply: Read the Word of God until you develop a sincere, confident trust in Jesus Christ as God’s Son; that is faith (Romans 10:17; John 8:24). Then let that faith motivate you to determine to turn from sin; that is repentance (Acts 2:38). Next, state your belief that Jesus is God’s Son; that is confession (Romans 10:9–

10). Finally, be immersed in water in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of your sins; that is baptism (Acts 2:38).

When you meet these conditions, you will not be turned down. The Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:47). No one will run a credit check, and you will not receive a monthly bill. All who apply for membership are hopelessly in debt. That is why they want membership—because Jesus paid the penalty for them when He died on Calvary. Through Him, the debt of sin can be forgiven.

If you are not a member of Jesus’ church, become one today! Membership has its privileges.



Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



Where is the Creator in times of crisis? How do pain and suffering in our world reflect on God’s goodness? In this online video program, these topics will be presented, addressed, and considered in light of what the Bible has to say.
video.wvbs.org/crisis

I want to learn more about the Bible!

If you knew for sure that the religious path you are on would not get you to heaven, would you change? If there was the possibility of a doubt, would you investigate? Why not request a personal Bible study today?

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Prayer requests or comments: _____

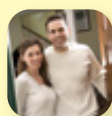
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☐ A Bible Correspondence Course



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Featured Tracts!

- ☐ Can God Really Forgive Me?
- ☐ What Does the Church Have to Offer Me?
- ☐ Does It Make Any Difference Which Church I Attend?
- ☐ Church, Why Bother?



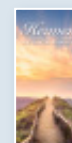
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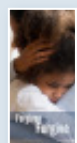
☐ Where to Turn When There's Nowhere to Turn



☐ The God of Second Chances



☐ Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All



☐ Forgiven to Forgive



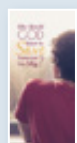
☐ What Jesus Told Me to Tell You



☐ If People Knew What I've Done, They'd Never Let Me in Church



☐ Do I Really Matter?



☐ Why Would God Want to Save Someone Like Me?



☐ What God Did for Just One Soul



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God is there in times of trouble.

"Man who is born of woman is of few days
and full of trouble" (Job 14:1).

Job knew by personal experience that "there was a day" when his life changed forever (Job 1:13). We never know "what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

Consider these verses that tell how to handle our day of trouble:

"May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble" (Psalm 20:1).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).

"Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble" (Psalm 59:16).

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7).

Jesus promised, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

God is there
in times of trouble.

He was there
for Joseph
(GENESIS 39:2-3, 21, 23).



He was there
for David
(1 SAMUEL 18:12, 14).



He was there
for Daniel
(DANIEL 6:22).



He was there
for Paul
(ACTS 23:11).



He was there
for Joshua
(JOSHUA 6:27).



He was there
for Shadrach,
Meshach, and
Abed-Nego
(DANIEL 3:25).



He was there
for Peter
(ACTS 12:7-9).



And He can be
there for you
(1 PETER 5:7).



ARE YOU COVERED?

It does no good to cover one's sins so that others do not know of them. Children may hide things from their parents; husbands and wives may hide things from each other; and workers may hide things from employers; but no one hides anything from God (Hebrews 4:13). "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

The only real way to cover one's sins is to have them erased from God's mind (Hebrews 8:12). For sinners this is done through faith (John 3:16), turning from sinful behavior (Luke 13:3), confession of faith (Romans 10:9-10), and immersion in water to have sins blotted out (Acts 2:38). For erring Christians, sins are covered by repentance, confession, and prayer (Acts 8:22).

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

PSALM 32:1



"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end" (Matthew 28:20). Trust God!



This HTH Issue Is a *Love Letter to You*



If you have not been to church services in a while, we want you to know that the church misses you. We need you. We want you to come back. In fact, this entire issue is a love letter to you. It is our appeal to you to come back to church.

There are a lot of reasons people leave. Sometimes people leave because we have not treated them the right way. If that is your reason, we apologize. We beg you to forgive us. We want to make it right.

Sometimes people feel that they have gone too far to come home. Paul (Saul) consented to murder (Acts 7:58). Peter publicly denied Jesus when He needed him most (Luke 22:54–62). When they repented, they were forgiven, and God used them again for His purposes. None of us has gone that far.

You will not be alone. When you come home, you will find that other members know how you feel. Each of us has sinned (Romans 3:23). This church is a family that can relate to where you have been. We offer you our love and support.

Each church member is like a part of a body (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). Without you, we are limping along, doing the best we can. We will never be whole without you. We are a better congregation with you.

God never gives up on people—even if we give up on ourselves. He is eternally optimistic that we will come back. Take to heart His promise: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

Not all of God’s success stories are told in Scripture. God takes people from unusual failures to amazing successes all the time. Could He right now be making a space for you? It is not too late . . . yet. But one day it will be.

We love you. If there is anything we can do to bring you back to Jesus, we stand ready to do it. Do not wait until Sunday. Call today and let us help you make it right.

What would you do with a second chance? We are about to find out.

Please, come home.

—Matt Wallin



An Invitation
Song



Please recycle House to House by giving this copy to your family or friends.

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How to Come Home

1. Ponder the joys awaiting you in heaven if you return (Psalm 16:11; Revelation 21–22).
2. Think of the warm welcome that awaits from church members (Acts 21:17).
3. Consider what a return means—come all the way back (be an active part of the congregation, participate in worship, attend all services, use your time and talents for Jesus) (Luke 14:28–32; 15:21–27).
4. Make a firm decision to return to the next church service (better yet, call the number on the front right now) and do not allow your-
5. Follow through by repenting of sins (Acts 8:22), confessing them (Revelation 3:17–18), and praying with the church about them (James 5:16).
6. Rejoice in forgiveness! (Acts 8:39). Forgive yourself; God has (Hebrews 8:12). Forget all past sins (Philippians 3:12–14).
7. Live the abundant life (John 10:10).

self to back out (Luke 9:62). We are praying for this, and for you.