



LESSON 1 // IT'S TIME!

Restoration is one of the central themes of the Bible. Throughout Scripture we see God restoring all kinds of people from all kinds of burdens and bondages.

This work of restoration begins with an awareness of our need for it. Until we understand our need to be restored, we will not seek this wonderful gift and experience from the Lord. Jesus told us a great story in the New Testament to illustrate this principle:

Luke 15:11-24 (NIV) *Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."*

Let's look at three lessons from this parable that will help us begin our journey to restoration.

1. We all need restoration.

The restoration of the rebellious son didn't happen until he "came to his senses" and saw how broken he really was. *We all need to be restored because we are all broken.* All of us have spiritual and emotional disabilities—scars and pains that limit us, trouble us and trip us up.

The brokenness and bondage in our lives are the results of living in a broken world, sinful personal choices and Satan's activity. Bad things happen in our world because it's a broken place that has largely rejected God. We also make ungodly choices and the devil works as a thief, murderer, accuser and liar to entice us into sin (John 8:44; 10:10; Revelation 12:9-10).

2. An unrestored life is a limited life.

We all are good at some things and not so good at others. The "not so good" parts are limitations that actually allow us to lean on others and contribute to others.

These personal limitations should be accepted, and in some ways, celebrated. They are part of the way God made us—part of His will for us. But there are other limitations in our personalities, thinking and approach to life that are not of God. These include a dysfunctional brokenness, bondage, bitterness, blindness, and even blandness.

The evidence of these limitations can be seen in certain symptoms in our lives. These include aimlessness and restlessness; spiritual, mental and emotional weariness; oversensitivity and overreactions to circumstances; difficulty maintaining spiritual and emotional commitments; and sinful and destructive habits that have a strong hold on us.

3. God offers us a pathway to restoration.

The good news is that we don't have to continue to live with these symptoms and limitations. Restoration is available and possible with God!

The Lord is there for us, but we must take some steps toward Him if we're going to experience the restoration He promises (James 4:8). What steps do you need to take to get the restoration process started?

- *Acknowledge your need.*
- *Repent of the sinful things you are responsible for.*
- *Invite God to do His restorative work in your life.*
- *Believe that He will do it for you!*

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NIV) *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

God has a pathway of restoration for you. Acknowledging your need and opening your life to His restorative work is the beginning of this journey. Now is the time to start!

Discussion questions

1. Read Luke 15:11-24. What does it mean in verse 17 that the rebellious son “came to his senses”? How does this speak to you about acknowledging your own need for restoration?
2. Look again at the symptoms of our limitations under section #2 above. Which of these do you see in your life and what might that tell you about some brokenness that needs to be restored?
3. Why is it so important that you “invite God to do His restorative work in your life” and “believe that He will do it”?