

HOW TO GET CLOSER TO GOD

Transformed
Rick Warren

The further away you get from God, the more your life is *troubled*.

The closer you get to God, the more your life is *transformed*.

THE LOST SON & LOVING FATHER

Jesus told this story: "A man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, 'Give me my share of the property.' So the father divided the property between his two sons. Then the younger son gathered up all that was his and traveled far away to another country. There he wasted his money in foolish living.

After he had spent everything, a time came when there was no food anywhere in the country, and the son was poor and hungry. So he got a job with one of the citizens there who sent the son into the fields to feed pigs. The son was so hungry that he wanted to eat the pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he realized what he was doing, he thought, 'All of my father's servants have plenty of food. But I am here, almost dying with hunger. I will leave and return to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, but let me be like one of your servants.' So the son left and went to his father. While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for his son. So the father ran to him and hugged and kissed him. The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Hurry! Bring the best clothes and put them on him. Also, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get our fat calf and kill it so we can have a feast and celebrate. My son was dead, but now he is alive again! He was lost, but now he is found!' So they began to celebrate." Luke 15:11-24 (NCV)

1.

"He wasted everything . . . He had nothing left . . . He was so hungry . . . Finally, he came to his senses." Luke 15:13-17 (GW)

God: "You'll find me. Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else." Jeremiah 29:13 (MSG)

2.

"When he finally came to his senses, he said . . . 'I have sinned against both heaven and you.'" Luke 15:17-18 (NLT)

"Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you." Isaiah 59:2 (ESV)

"Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins! Wash away all my evil and make me clean from my sin! I recognize my faults; I am always conscious of my sins. I have sinned against you." Psalm 51:1-4 (GNT)

"Says the Lord; no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow." Isaiah 1:18 (NLT)

THE HABIT OF A REGULAR SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP:

"Test yourself to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don't drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourself regular checkups . . . If you fail the test, do something about it." 2 Corinthians 13:5 (MSG)

"Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup." 1 Corinthians 11:28 (NIV)

3.

The son drifted away saying, "Give me my share." Luke 15:12 (NIV)
He returned to the Father saying, "Make me like one of your hired servants." Luke 15:19 (NIV)

"Because of God's great mercy to us . . . Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind." Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

THE FATHER'S RESPONSE

"Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him . . . Bring the finest." Luke 15:20-22 (NLT)

4.

"Let us celebrate with a feast . . . He was lost, but now he's found. And so the feasting began." Luke 15:23-24 (GNT)

"Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him . . . his name is the Lord." Psalm 68:4 (ESV)

"I will sing to the Lord because he is good to me." Psalm 13:6 (NLT)

"On the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread and spoke a prayer of thanksgiving. He broke the bread and said, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.'" 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 (GW)