

PRONE



JASON DERAMO

Copyright © 2023 by Jason Deramo

Prodigal House Publishing®. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Discover more: www.prodigalhouse.net

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®) Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover Design using Canva® (“Arch Wireframe Grid Shapes Y2K” vector by *Borealis*, “Male Athlete Running Silhouette” vector by *EdvanKun*)

ISBN: 979-8-89238-095-9 (Print)

ISBN: 979-8-9869605-0-0 (eBook)

Printed in the United States of America.

PREFACE

There comes a certain point in every man's life where they want to impart some wisdom for the next generation. This is not that book. To acquire wisdom, one must simply open the Bible or have a serious conversation with a husband, father, or church pastor. You will certainly gain some perspective, if not a greater appreciation for the ordinary sacrifices common men make on behalf of others. No, this book is quite different.

I often recall my time in the Army as a soldier. One of the first assignments I was given was to read Elbert Hubbard's *A Message to Garcia* and write a one-page essay on leadership reflections¹. The exercise proved its weight in salt, since most young people scarcely read, let alone drew inspiration from a literary source. The story itself is an insightful treatise on the values of hard work, consummate professionalism, and simple obedience.

In taking a page from Mr. Hubbard, I am attempting to instill classical virtues for the modern man using a parable from Scripture about responsibility. Perhaps there's some timeless

lessons that may apply to this generation, and if Providence favors, maybe some wisdom too.

– Jason

Youth: the period between childhood and maturity²

Responsibility: being called on to answer for one's conduct and obligations; involves accountability³

PRONE

“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.”⁴

Is it any wonder why responsibility is scarcely found among our youth? One can hardly blame them for their lack of focus when technology and social media are sapping their strength. Young men, particularly, don't submit to local churches, they don't build skyscrapers, marry, or raise children; they don't fight

and die. They are largely absent from leadership and lacking in accountability among their families and society at large. So, where are they? The heart of the matter is not where you find them, but where they are found.

Young men are found where folly and entertainment converge. Where addictions climax, and where actions and character mean little. They are prone to wander, lie, cheat, blame others for their problems, and evade when called upon. They are hiding behind screens, escaping into the ether where ascendancy and fulfillment are measured by rankings and not responsibility.

However, young men are also found when challenged. They need models and tribes to pattern from. Rather than call out the woes of this ageless phenomenon, I wish to provoke and inspire. Previous generations may not have been as graceful, but these are strange times.

Who could imagine in the history of civilization where gender, identity, authority, and institution were questioned with such suspicion. The very fabric of reality is being challenged and undergirded. Countless articles, video streams, and discussions fill our airways, seeking to make sense of the culture's utter descent into madness. The world is crying out for hope and saving. Sadly, politics and academia won't cut it. What about science or artificial intelligence? Perhaps the machines will save

us? No, that will not suffice. A more costly solution has been provided: the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ.

What if more young people invested in a personal exploration and adherence to Biblical truth? What if our standards of excellence were determined by a perfect Savior, or model of righteousness, that could fulfill the criteria for a sustainable society moving forward? A closer examination of the Scriptures will need to commence for this inquiry.

The illustration mentioned at the beginning of this essay encapsulates the fatal flaw of today's generation. The issue is not merely ethical, as one would infer, but moral. Unless people, young or old, embrace the high calling of personal ownership in their lives and respective fields, they will doubtless change their ways. Let's examine the beginning passage with a keen eye on the conditions of our youth to gain some valuable wisdom for present.

The "Parable of the Two Sons" can be found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 21, verses 28-31. When appropriating the principles of the passage to our topic at hand, the fruits will be readily apparent. Let's examine:

"What do you think? A man had two sons . And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' (v. 28)

Much can be gleaned from the opening verse alone. Jesus, in rhetorical manner, draws his disciples and pharisees alike into the narrative with a simple illustration.

“What do you think?”

The question prompts us to employ simple reasoning; common-sense being a useful measure of discernment when applied appropriately.

‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’

From this verse we can gather several important themes. One, a father is present in the home. This has become a striking statistic in our culture; no less an active parent directing their children to participate in the family business. We also see the value of hard work, which time and letter do not afford for this exploration. Additionally, we see the illustrative theme of a field which Jesus often describes as the Kingdom of God or spiritual harvest tended by his saints.

Many born in urban societies have little context for the idea of agrarian living. However, a large portion of the developing world still lives out these daily realities. Simply put, without everyone pulling their weight, the family starves; as the familiar

proverb states: “*You don’t work, you don’t eat.*”⁵

And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. (v. 29)

Did you catch that? The first son immediately defies his father, thus jeopardizing his standing within the family order. Anyone who has spent significant time in the East understands the immense burdens of an honor-shame culture. Like the Prodigal Son story in Luke’s Gospel⁶, Jesus provokes his hearers by using an extreme illustration of defiance, which the Jewish hearers would’ve been all-too familiar. For sake of brevity, the actions of the first son would’ve been akin to dishonoring his entire community. A cursory glance of most social media and online platforms would suffice to prove this point. However, not all is lost.

We discover in the same passage that the son appears to have *changed his mind*. Aye, now this is worth investigating in light of the prodigal’s story. For when the young man “finally came to his senses... he returned home to his father.”⁷

What could’ve possibly changed the young man’s disposition in such short a span? The text does not permit us to read further into the matter, but a closer observation of the passage provides helpful insight.

Exploring the Greek language is appropriate when rightly studying Scripture in context. The word for ‘changed his mind’ (*metamelomai*) is properly translated to “having repented.”⁸ Ah, that’s an interesting phrase given the passage. It appears the first son took some time to consider his actions and made some much-needed corrections to his thinking and behaviors.

One could imagine the amount of pain avoided in life had a young man examined his ways before succumbing to temptation. This is a champion story indeed for the first son, having taken responsibility for his actions and committing to follow through on his word.

And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. (v. 30)

Now we have here the heart of the matter. The priests and publicans would’ve certainly had their ears perk at the story’s climax. A father’s heart breaks at the hearing, no matter if the story is a useful fiction or not.

Something inside a man stirs when his flesh and blood openly defy the commands instilled in them through lineage. Iniquities form on similar grounds if failed to be purged out. Those present would’ve resonated with a familiar proverb at this point in the narrative: *“Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”*⁹

Common to all men is hypocrisy, or double-mindedness, as the biblical writers often referred to it. The Greek renders the meaning *dipsuchos*, or “of two minds, wavering,” which is familiar to the West.¹⁰ However, the Hebrew, *seeph*, renders a fuller meaning of the word: “divided, halfhearted.”¹¹

It is evident from this vantage point; Jesus was aiming toward the religious elites of both high and low standing. A fact alluded to earlier in chapter 21, when Jesus drives out the money changers from the Temple. One Bible commentator describes the moment poignantly:

...for these persons robbed both God and man, and the temple was a sanctuary to them: here [the chief priests and the teachers of the law] under the appearance of religion and devotion, devoured widows' houses, plundered persons of their substance, and were full of extortion and excess.¹²

Returning to the second son in verse 30, the commentator concludes his reflections:

...the design of which is to show the hypocrisy and deceit of the Scribes and Pharisees, in pretending to works of righteousness, and not doing them... at first were forward to submit to his baptism, and were very inquisitive about the Messiah: yet, when he was declared in John's ministry, and by

his own doctrine, and miracles, they refused to give in to the belief of him; they would neither enter into the Gospel kingdom, embrace the doctrines, and obey the commands of it themselves, nor suffer others to enter in... They, were like some other persons, who promise fair, and talk much of doing good works, but do none; teach the people to do them, but do not perform them themselves, though they would seem to do them; make great pretensions to them, boast of them, and trust in them; and therefore, of all men, ought to be careful to maintain them, and yet do the least.¹³

Jesus spared no punches when addressing the hypocrisy in people's hearts: *"He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person."*¹⁴ When we examine the ways of the second son, it becomes crystal clear where his loyalties lie.

'I go, sir,' but did not go—This is the mantra of the sluggard. How many invitations, petitions, and pleadings are aimed at the lost. Will they answer, and if so, what is their attitude? Many a parent, church leader, and informed citizen looks at the present spiritual condition of our nation and questions the utter lack of care from our youth. The words of Christ ring true once more: *"For many are called, but few are chosen."*¹⁵

Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the

prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. (v. 31)

Here we've reached the conclusion of the parable. The simple and discerning have answered correctly. Doubtless, the proud and self-righteous looked upon the Great Rabbi as anything more than an esteemed teacher, or perhaps a prophet or Holy Man, as some disciples suggested upon Jesus's own prompting.¹⁶ But this is not the end of the matter.

A sharp rebuke awaits the high-minded teachers of the law, as they discover even the chiefest sinner who repents now receives citizenship in the heavenly Kingdom. The red letters of our Lord and Savior bear witness to this fact:

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."¹⁷

What then can be surmised by the above passages, and how can our young people be informed by this supreme and timely wisdom? Perhaps, the story conveys something deeper within ourselves worth examining. To probe further, we must return to the beginning, where sin and evil first emerged.

Adam and Eve lived in perpetual harmony with God, having succumbed to the serpent's deceptive tactics to dethrone them from their rightful dominion over the earth:

*“The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, **“Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”** “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’” **“You won’t die!”** the serpent replied to the woman. **“God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”** The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.”¹⁸*

The attempt of the enemy, his minions, and the fallen world, has always been to deceive and subvert man’s rule. This is the modus operandi of the Devil, and one that is plainly visible when examining the vast buffet of temptations offered to our youth at present.

“[The Devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies,

he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”¹⁹

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”²⁰

Even the most discerning of God’s elect must vigilantly safeguard their minds and hearts from the messages absorbed in the culture. Our churches are filled with self-help programming, which the spiritually inclined are vulnerable to receive despite the sender’s motives. The proverb often holds true: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

Where then do we go for wise counsel and instruction, and how do we direct our vulnerable youth to a straight path leading to life? One must look no further than the valuable pages of Scripture and the people of God in a healthy church. It was indeed the Lord’s perfect plan to send his Holy Spirit into flawed man to fulfill the vital relationship lost from the garden.

“And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”²¹

“So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”²²

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”²³

This is the mystery of ages from all eternity. God, in His infinite wisdom and authority, decided to create man after his own image and pattern, later breathing His Spirit into him.²⁴ When we receive this grace gift, through faith in Jesus Christ, and begin to live out of that reality, hope becomes possible. This is the true oath; the very words echoed by the Son to his disciples and those with ears willing to hear:

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”²⁵

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives

by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”²⁶

And now the decision for those willing to seek eternal life in Jesus Christ:

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.”²⁷

“These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”²⁸

PURSUIT

We've discussed the problems and cultural conditions of this generation. Principally, a lack of responsibility and stewardship with one's personal and spiritual life. It is no small matter to earn a wage and raise a family—while commendable indeed—and yet entirely another to care for the house of God. It would be irresponsible, and critical of this author not to suggest a remedy.

If you're reading this, you won't find life in any other pursuit this side of heaven besides Jesus Christ. Sure, you may find temporary joy and relief in various exploits, but the end will leave you wanting. Wealth, adventure, orgasm, and any other fleeting pleasure will eventually pass.

The solution is not found in the material world, or in hollow philosophies. Only an eternal God can fill an eternal hole inside

man. For this, we must begin with a pursuit.

Open God's Word. See for yourself what is written. This is the solution to humanity's woes. But why isn't a simple prayer enough to cover my sins and past offenses? Such is the folly of most churches, an egregious error to the Gospel. We've lowered the bar on the weightier matters of the law, like obedience and forgiveness, substituting a cheaper form of grace that lacks true repentance.

What Jesus endured at the Cross, experiencing the greatest pains imaginable so that you and I can receive forgiveness and salvation is the true cost of discipleship. Jesus saved us from the pit of hell and eternal suffering apart from God, and our response is to forgive others and invite them into that same revelation of Christ's mercy.²⁹

"He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."³⁰

The profound nature of the Cross is that it changes hearts. It starts with a confession of our sins, and declaration of loyalty and obedience to Jesus. If you haven't experienced this for yourself, I would urge that you begin by taking a moment to consider whether following Jesus is worth it. If you've counted the costs, I will ask you to repeat the following words aloud, with God, His Son, and the holy angels present:

Father, I know I have sinned against you, and fell short of your perfect standard in Christ. I ask that you come into my heart and make it right before you. I pray for forgiveness of all those I've wronged, those who've wronged me, and those who I may hurt in the future. Give me a soul that's kind and merciful, and faith that endures through life's many trials. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

This is the only way. We don't find our ultimate purpose in the world, but whether our hearts are transformed into the likeness and image of our Creator. Each moment of our lives is an opportunity to mature into sons of God and brothers to many.

When you are willing to accept His lordship, forgive others, and heal from past wounds, you are ready to walk in freedom. That's how we turn the world upside down—That's how we truly change things.

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."³¹

We've reached the end of this essay, but there are many other helps to assist you in this journey. My advice is to review the resources in the back of this book. They will assist you in living a new and purposed life in the Lord. Find a healthy church that

preaches and defends the Gospel. If there's good suffering there, you're in the right place. Lastly, rest.

Life is too wearisome and sinful to be throwing your pearls away. Take the Bible with you on a long walk and try to absorb the beauty of His Creation. If you find yourself persecuted because of your faith, disowned by your family, and ridiculed by friends and neighbors for your newfound commitment to Jesus:

"Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."³²

In closing, I'll leave you with the following piece of wisdom that I think sums up the heart of fruitful and righteous living:

Give more.

Give what you didn't get.

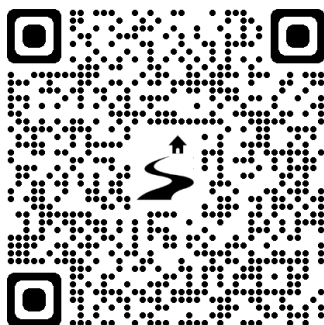
Love more.

Drop the old story.³³

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason began his writing career in 2015 as an independent author and blogger. He has contributed to several newsletters and journal articles on issues affecting youth in culture. Jason seeks to impact generations of young people to know God's heart, and to love others like Jesus.

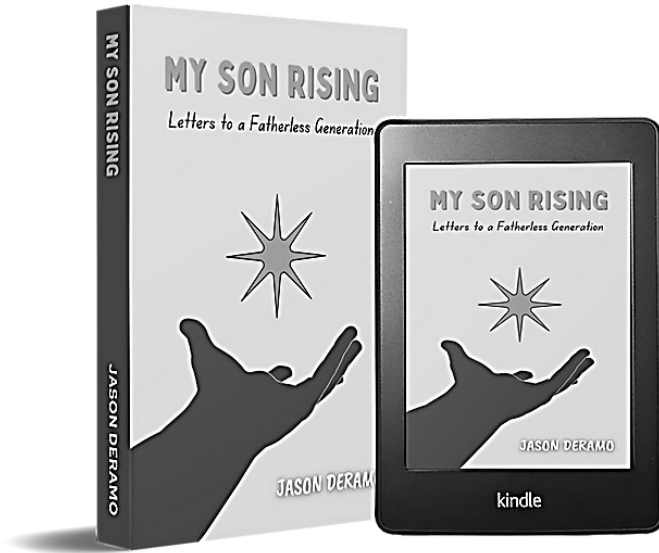
If you enjoyed this read, please **write a review** on Amazon using the QR code below. To say thanks, we're offering a complimentary Audio and Digital copy of this book. Please visit www.ProdigalHouse.net/Prone



*For bookings and inquiries, please contact
the author directly @ www.prodigalhouse.net/contact

(RECOMMENDED TITLE)

Have you ever been hurt or abused, and tired of running from the pain? Were you abandoned, wounded, or rejected by the people you loved most? Maybe you've never received grace before, like no matter how hard you try, it's just not enough.



My Son Rising is a message of hope and redemption for wandering souls desperate to know true freedom. Reclaim your rightful purpose as spiritual sons, and discover timeless wisdom and healing found within these letters.

RESOURCES

Want to learn more about identity and purpose?

(Check out the following links):



www.wildatheart.org



www.desiringgod.org

*(Wild at Heart and Desiring God are not affiliated with the author,
Prodigal House Publishing®, or its distributors)*

REFERENCES

-
- ¹ Elbert Hubbard. *A Message to Garcia*. Publisher: The Roycrofters, East Aurora, New York, 1903.
- ² *Youth*, Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/youth>
- ³ *Responsibility*, Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/responsible>
- ⁴ Matthew 21:28-31, English Standard Version.
- ⁵ 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
- ⁶ Luke 15:11-32.
- ⁷ Luke 15:17, 21, New Living Translation.
- ⁸ *Metamelomai* (3338), *Strongs Concordance*.
- ⁹ Proverbs 13:24, ESV.
- ¹⁰ *Dipsuchos* (1374). *Strongs Concordance*.
- ¹¹ *Seeph* (5588). *Strongs Concordance*.
- ¹² Matthew 21:13, *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*.
- ¹³ Matthew 21:28, *John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*.
- ¹⁴ John 2:24, New International Version.
- ¹⁵ Matthew 22:14, ESV.
- ¹⁶ Matthew 16:13-20.
- ¹⁷ Matthew 5:20, ESV.
- ¹⁸ Genesis 3:1-6.
- ¹⁹ John 8:44, NLT
- ²⁰ John 10:10, NLT.
- ²¹ Ezekiel 36:27, NIV.
- ²² Luke 11:13, NLT.
- ²³ John 14:26, ESV.
- ²⁴ Genesis 26:1-7, NLT.
- ²⁵ John 14:6, NIV.

²⁶ John 3:16-21, ESV.

²⁷ Romans 10:9-10, NLT.

²⁸ Revelation 22:6-7, ESV.

²⁹ Matthew 6:15; 12:31-32; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:14.

³⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:21, Homan Christian Standard Bible.

³¹ Galatians 2:20, ESV.

³² Matthew 5:12, NIV.

³³ Quote by Garry Shandling (from his personal diaries).