

Middle School

November 10-11, 2012



Title: A Journey Home: Week 6 (Remain at Home)

Series: A Journey Home

Series Description: Something incredible happens when we feel at home. We know we belong. We let our guard down and put up our feet. We know we're loved and we are brave—terrifically brave. But home doesn't come from a street address, kind group of friends or even a good family. The direct source of home is God—the perfect dad who treasures his children. Because no matter our history or family of origin, we can all feel abandoned and alone. So we can either default to living as emotional and spiritual orphans or live in our true identity as sons and daughters.

Objectives:

Know: Everybody in our family forgets that we are God's treasured children, so we have to be intentional about living like sons and daughters.

Do: Learn and practice tangible ways to remember that God is a loving Father who has created a family and home for us.

Where to find it: Matthew 3:13-17 (Pg. 950 LIVE), John 15 (Pg. 1065 LIVE)

Schedule for all Sites:

Hang time	(10 minutes before service begins)
Worship and Teaching	(at the start of the service hour, 25-30 minutes)
Small Groups	(last 35 minutes of the service)

Leader Notes: Today is the last week we'll be doing the journey together. We will NOT be meeting next weekend. Instead, students will attend service where we'll be celebrating baptism as a community. If you'd like to attend service with your small group, arrange that today—where you'll meet and when. Connect with your site's leader to determine the specific plan for your site and let your group know. We will resume our regular schedule the following weekend, November 24-25.

Large Group Teaching Script

Kids enter large group with “Home” playing in the background. (It’s in the Keynote)

Video: *Phillip Phillips’ “Home”* youtube.com/watch?v=HoRkntoHkIE

Songs

Welcome

Welcome to Middle School! We’re on the last week of a journey we’ve been taking together—A Journey Home. (**Show Slide**) We’ve been exploring what it means to live as if we’re God’s treasured child (instead of living like an orphan, without a Father), who loves us without end. For some of us, we may have had some breakthroughs in how we see God and the way he really sees us and today we’re going to talk about what to do from this point forward. Where do we go from here? How do we keep walking as God’s treasured child and not revert continually back to our orphan ways?

The Morning After the Party

We’ve been looking at the story of the Prodigal Son the past couple of weeks and we’re going to start there today. I want you to imagine you’re the younger son (or daughter) in the story. In the past 24 hours, you’ve finally made your way back home to your Father’s house. Previously, you had asked your father for your share of the inheritance. This was basically telling your dad that you wished he was dead, because you’d rather have his money instead of him. Surprisingly, your dad gave you the money and soon after you took off for the bright lights of the city. You blew through your money, wasting it on God knows what. You end up feeding pigs on a farm, wishing you could eat the food the pigs were eating because you were so hungry. You had fallen hard and fast. While slopping around with the pigs, you have an epiphany—what if you went back to your dad’s house and asked to be one of the house servants. At least then, you could have three meals a day. This was a good idea, so you made your way back home, practicing your speech on the way. But that’s when something happened you definitely didn’t expect. Your dad ran towards you, gave you a big hug and then started showering you with gifts. Instead of being a house servant, your dad reinstated your place as a son. He had forgiven everything and on top of that, he threw a massive party for you.

Now it’s the morning after the party. You wake up, stretch your arms and look around. Is this really happening? Are you sleeping in your dad’s house? Did he really just throw a huge party for you last night? Was he messing with you? What’s going to happen today? Is he going to let the other shoe drop and are you about to pay the price you deserve?

Working for Your Dad’s Approval?

That’s where we start today. How do you act now? Do you start working hard for your dad so you can prove yourself? Do you have to keep working hard so you can earn your Dad’s love and approval? Do you feel like a treasured child? What happens when someone reminds you of your past? How do you honestly start living like a treasured child after what you’ve done?

Anchor

Today is about creating an anchor—a place to keep us rooted to our Father when we start to doubt or return to old habits and patterns. Because, make no doubt, we will still live like orphans at times. All followers of Jesus struggle with this and it's really a life long process of learning to live from the Approval of our Father instead of living for the approval of our father. Understand the difference? We want to begin living knowing that God already approves of us rather than working to earn God's approval.

Jesus Lives from His Father's Approval

Jesus modeled this for us perfectly and one place this is easy to see is when he was baptized. Let's read that together really quickly: **(SLIDE)**

Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from Heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." Matthew 3:13-17 NLT

This had to be one of the most amazing days in Jesus' life. Look at what God says about him: "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." Here's what a couple other translations say: **(SLIDE)**

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (NIV)

"This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life." (The Message)

Imagine hearing that from God: I'm proud of you. I love you. You bring me great joy. You are chosen. I am pleased with you. You are the Delight of my life.

For many of us, we can't begin to imagine God saying those things about us. Or, maybe for some of us, we can't begin to even imagine our earthly parents saying these things to us—or anyone else for that matter. Maybe we've never heard any of those words spoken to us before. But listen closely—God speaks those words over you and me. Let me say that again: God says those very same things about you. But will we really believe them and receive them? That's the question.

Notice that Jesus was a son who was living from his Father's approval and not trying to earn his Father's approval by doing all the right things. God said these things before Jesus healed anyone or taught anything. He had done nothing at this point. So all the things Jesus does after this are from a place of living in his Father's approval, not trying to earn his father's approval. Make sense? There really is a big difference between these two.

Practical Steps Moving Forward

So let's look at some practical things God might want us to do as we move forward. (NOTE: The highlighted phrases will be on a slide and will appear one bullet at a time)

1. **Identify with Your Father.** If you've never taken the first step and received your Heavenly Father's love and forgiveness, do that. Repent—turn away from living as your own boss—and begin following your King—Jesus. Receive God's forgiveness for the wrong things in your life. A way to symbolize that is to be baptized—just like we saw earlier with Jesus. We're actually having Baptism next weekend and you can hear more about that in small group in a few minutes.
2. **Spend time with the Father.** If we're going to live from our Father's approval, we have to spend time with our Father. Whatever that looks like—reading and living out the words in the Bible, talking to God through praying, taking walks in the woods. Whatever we can do to spend time getting to know God—let's do that. Let's create regular rhythms where we connect with God.
3. **Spend time with God's Family.** We need to be around other Followers of Jesus—other spiritual siblings. God gave us the church partly as a way to help us know who we really are. We're supposed to help each other by reminding each other of the way God sees us. Because left on our own, it's hard for us to know that. So invest time in your small group.
4. **Keep moving forward.** You're going to keep struggling to live with the identity as a son or daughter of God. Everyone struggles. But when you find yourself acting like an orphan instead of a treasured child, just repent. Don't see it as a failure. Instead, turn the other direction. Believe that God really does love you and is pleased with you—even if you don't feel like it.
5. **Hold onto Reminders.** Memorize a verse or two. Write stuff down so you can go back and read it when it gets tough. Text a friend when you need a reminder of how God sees you. Look for reminders around you.

I want to encourage you to keep seeking to live as a treasured child and not as an abandoned orphan. God your Father really is pleased with you! You are the one he loves. We're going to close by watching a video together. What I want you to do is to get into a place where you can hear from God. As you watch, receive these words and talk to God in your head. Tell him what you want him to remind you of. If there's a place you feel unloved and not his treasured child, tell him. Then believe that YOU ARE THE ONE HE LOVES.

Video: Remind Me Who I Am (Jason Gray)

To see this video, follow this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSIVjjY8Ou8>

Pray

Let's pray together and then we're going to head to small groups.

Dismissal to Small Groups

Small Group:

Instructions:

Small group will likely be shorter than usual this week (it might not either, depending on how large group goes).

Large Group Recap

- What do you think the younger son was thinking the morning after the party? What would you have been thinking?
- Do you think the younger son ever doubted that his Father loved him once he came home?
- Do you think it was hard for the son to adjust to life as a member of the family? How so?
- What do you think Jesus was thinking and feeling when he was baptized?
- Do you feel like God is pleased with you? That you bring God great joy? Why or Why not?
- What's the difference between living for God's approval and living from God's approval?
 - This may not be clear to a lot of your students, so park here and help them understand this important concept
 - What are the differences in the ways Orphans approach God versus Treasured Kids?
 - What are examples of how an orphan might act versus a treasured child?
- What are ways you can remind yourself that you are God's treasured child?

Remaining in your Identity as a Treasured Child

SAY: As we get to our challenge this week, we need to spend some time exploring ideas we can use to keep moving forward—to keep remaining in a place of living from God's approval instead of living for God's approval.

(CONTINUED)

DO: **Give each student a copy of pages 86-87 from the guide.** Lead everyone to identify 3 ways that they are going to do to remember they are God's treasured child. Circle the top 3 ideas (or brainstorm other ideas together). Then pray together, asking God to help you keep moving forward.

Baptism

NOTE: Determine with your site leaders (and your group) how you want to handle next weekend. Do you want kids to just go to service on their own or meet in your space before service starts or to go as a small group? Decide and then communicate accordingly.

SAY: Just a reminder, we WON'T be having Middle School next weekend. Instead, we'll be attending service together so we can celebrate baptism with our community. Let's talk about Baptism for a couple of minutes.

ASK: (NOTE: for some tips, see the **baptism packet** included in your small group supplies)

- How do you think being baptized identifies us with our Father?
- What's the purpose of Baptism?
- Who should be baptized?

- What does baptism picture? Why is it important?
- Is baptism magical—does it mean that God loves us more?
- If anyone is interested in being baptized next weekend, let's talk. I also want to give you a packet so you know what to expect and so you can walk through some really important information with your parents.

Pray

Spend the remaining time praying together as a group, asking God to remind us of his love and to help us believe that we are his treasured kids.

Prep Needs

Small Group

- Baptism Packets (have some available at each site if students are interested in following Jesus in Baptism next weekend. Make sure there is at least one packet in each small group so leaders can use to teach)
- 1 copy of Pages 86-87 of the Adult Guide PDF version per kid (can copy two-sided)

Large Group

- LIVE Bible

AV/Tech

- Phillip Phillips' "Home" video (In KC Tech Multimedia Folder already)
- A Journey Home Series Slide
- Verse: Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." Matthew 3:13-17 NLT
- Verse: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (NIV) "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life." (The Message) (NOTE: These should appear on same slide and should appear at the same time. Put space in between them, though.)
- The following phrases on the same slide, built to appear one at a time on a click:
 - Identify with your Father
 - Spend time with the Father
 - Spend time with God's family
 - Keep moving forward
 - Hold onto reminders
- Video: Remind Me Who I Am (Jason Gray) (In KC Tech Multimedia Folder already) (Can be downloaded in iTunes)