Adventist Heritage

From: creativeministry@creativeministry.org
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To: Adventist Heritage
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Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] The Prodigal's New Clothes
[Text] Genesis 4:1-8; Genesis 25:25-34; Luke 15:4-32; John 11:9, 10; Romans 5:12-20
[Use] June 4, 2011

Author Phillip Yancey disagrees with the saying, “You can’t go home again.” In his book What’s So Amazing About Grace, he retells a story familiar to many of us. It sounds familiar not just because we’ve heard it before, but also because many of us have lived it.

A young girl grew up on a cherry orchard near Travis City, Michigan. As she got older, she made some choices that were a bit hard for her “old-fashion” parents to accept: a nose ring, rock music and short skirts led to being grounded. Anger built up inside her. “I hate you!” she screamed at her father. And that night, she ran away.

On her second day in downtown Detroit, she met a man named “Boss” who offered to buy her lunch and even arranged for a place for her to stay. He also provided her with some pills that made her feel better than she’d ever felt before. Soon she was living in a penthouse, ordering room service. She knew her parents had been keeping her from having fun, and now she had the independence she’d longed for.

Just when she thought she was invincible, she became ill, and Boss turned on her. Before she knew it, she was on the street without a penny to her name. She did what it took to get money to support her drug habit and spent sleepless winter nights on metal grates outside the big department stores.

One particular night, she realized that she no longer felt like a woman of the world. She felt like a little girl lost in a big city. She was cold, even though she had newspapers piled on top of her coat. And she was hungry and needed a fix. Suddenly she remembered a warm May day among the cherry blossoms back home, running and playing with her golden retriever.

“Why did I leave?” she cried to herself. “My dog back home eats better than I do now.” She was so homesick she began to sob. More than anything else in the world she just wanted to go home.

The girl must have known that her parents loved her, because she knew she could call them—even after all she’d done. When no one answered, she left this message: “Dad, Mom, it’s me. I was wondering about maybe coming home. I’m catching a bus up your way, and it’ll get there about midnight tomorrow. If you’re not there, well, I guess I’ll just stay on the bus until it hits Canada.”

On the seven-hour bus drive home she tried to prepare a speech. Over and over she rehearsed these words: “Dad, I’m sorry. I know I was wrong. It’s not your fault, it’s all mine. Dad, can you forgive me?”

When the bus finally rolled into the station, she looked at herself in her compact mirror. She looked sick, her hair needed smoothing, there was lipstick on her teeth and tobacco stains on her fingertips. She was a different girl than the one who ran away—both inside and out.
Not knowing what to expect and fearing the worst, she walked into the Travis City, Michigan bus terminal. Taped across the entire wall of the terminal was a banner that read, “Welcome home!” And under the banner stood 40-members of her family! Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and grandmas were all there dressed as if they were going to a party.

Her dad broke through the crowd and as he rushed toward her she began her speech, “Dad, I’m sorry. I know....”

But before she could finish, her father interrupted her. “Hush, child. We’ve got no time for that. No time for apologies. You’ll be late for the party. A banquet’s waiting for you at home.”

So you CAN go home again! The Bible makes this very clear in the story of the Prodigal Son. Jesus told this story because our Savior knew we would need to be saved from ourselves—from our lack of judgment and from our wandering ways. The beauty of the story isn’t only that the father let his son come home, but that he celebrated his return! And in a symbol of restoration, he took not just any robe, but his best robe to cover his son’s filthiness. We, too, have a best robe waiting to cover us. We just need to take the first step and head back home—head back to Jesus.

~nc

1. Phillip Yancey, What's So Amazing About Grace (Zondervan, 1997)

Additional Resources: The Prodigal Son

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Thanks so much,

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