

RUNAWAY!

He was a guy you might know.

He wanted answers to life.

He was looking for excitement, adventure.

He felt he didn't fit in anywhere, especially at home.

His brother bugged him with his "goody-goody" ways. Their family seemed so tame.

He was bored stiff, restless and eaten up inside with dissatisfaction.

He wanted to be free.

He wanted more than anything else in the world to be wanted.

One day he got some money off his Dad.

Then he just packed some things and walked out of the house.

He headed out on foot for a place he had heard others talk about. It was a long, long way from home.

As he walked down the road, he drew a deep breath. The sun was gold in the sky, and the day was lazy with summer.

At last! At last, he was free!

(This is the Voice of your Conscience. Enjoy the walk, friend. It will be one of the few good memories you will ever have of this trip. The road to freedom is a different road.)

He went all the way.

It was easy, once he was away from home.

He met others who had thrown off their parents' restraints. They were free too.

Sometimes he felt old memories stir. Funny little things. So different from this new life. Little things his Dad had done for him. Something his mother had said once.

It was then that he felt ashamed.

But it was simple to bury the ghosts of the past, as long as things were happening. When they were not, he made them happen. He could do what he liked, and no-one really cared. But somehow it bothered him. He longed for love, but it slipped out of his reach. Somehow, something was always missing. No kick lasted.

The thing that scared him most was silence. Secret fingers pointed at him from the past. At night, the loneliness closed in like a cloud of darkness. The more he tried to forget the worse it became! His memories made him afraid. He was scared to think, because he had an awful suspicion that he had been wrong. He pushed and punished his body and mind, looking for escape. He did everything he could think of, trying to shake off his thoughts, longing to forget, forget...

One day he came to himself.

It was like waking up out of a very long and very bad dream. He picked up the few rags he had left and started walking. The Prodigal Son was going home.

"No Place Like HOME?"

"No Place Like Home," has a bitterly opposite meaning to a lot of kids today. "Home" for thousands of young people is a living Hell where they stay until they get old enough or mad enough to leave.

Nobody really knows what goes on in your home as well as God. His eye is in every place, seeing the evil and the good. Every wall is transparent to Him. Whatever is hidden carefully from the prying eye of the world is not hidden from His sight. He knows all about your family. Most of all, He cares how you feel. He really understands what makes you hurt and sad, afraid and alone. (Deut. 5:29; Ps. 11:4; Jer. 17:19-21; Prov. 15:3; 1 Pet. 5:5-7)

If Satan wrecks your home he can ruin your life. From a thousand secret ambushes, he springs traps on your family. He worries at the love-ties that bind a happy home together. He works on your parents when they are tired, ill, or bound

by habits, hoping to slash apart their love and split your family in two. He tries to turn brother and sister against each other over stupid little differences that grow into explosions of hate and bitterness. And too often he has done it!

A nation is only as strong as its homes. When the family is ruined, the nation is finished. It is the foundation of law and order in society. When homes begin to crumble, riot, rebellion and anarchy will stalk the streets with murder in their hearts. Civilization ends when the home does.

How do you think *God* feels when He sees *your* family? He first planned the home-life for happiness. He began the first marriage, blessed the first home. From the beginning He chose to direct us through the structure of a home that loved and obeyed Him. His basic home laws are:

1. *Parents* should love Him with their *lives* as well as their lips. They should be *real* people all through, who can teach their children to work and play and love and laugh. God wants them to be a source of strength and guidance. Home should be a place of peace, love and security. God longs for your parents to be like this even more than you do. *Are you helping* Him to change their lives by doing your part? "Honor your father and your mother," He commanded. Are you doing that? (Deut.5:16; Matt.15:4-6; 19:16-19; Eph. 6:2)

2. The LORD JESUS is to be First "Boss" in your family. DAD and MOTHER are to be next, IN THAT ORDER; the rest of the family subject to their authority. DAD is to LEAD the LIS home under God and provide for all its needs, both physical, mental and spiritual; MOTHER is to be the INSPIRER. She should stand behind Dad in love and encourage him on in his work and leadership; be there when she is needed for comfort or advice. (Eph.5:22-23; Col.3:18-19; I Pet. 3:1,2; Tit.2:4,5)

If this is not true of your family, do you want it to be? If so, are you willing to *obey* God?

3. *You are to love, honor and obey* your parents as you would obey the Lord. He wants to work *through* your parents to use them to teach you how to live rightly. God has set up this chain of command so He, by using them, can direct your life. "My son, hear the instruction of your father and forsake not the law of your mother," His Word commands. (Prov. 1:8-9) The question is not: "Are one or both of my parents unsaved?"; "Are they doing things that make me ashamed of them or hurt?" The question is: "Have I done what they asked me to do?" (I Sam. 15:22; Prov.6:20-23; 10:17; 13:8; 15:5,31,32; Eph. 6:1). Loving them means swallowing your hurt or pride and doing *right* even when it is hardest to. Honoring them means respecting their God-given authority on your life, even when you think you know better. Obeying them means *doing what they tell you* even when you would most like to do something else! God has a way of dealing with problems. But as long as you keep fighting and struggling and rebelling against your parents, you are fighting *Him* too! He hates trouble a lot more than you do. He *will* do something about it in your home. But get on His side. Nobody ever fought God and won in the end. That fight is for ultimate losers only.

4. Trouble in the family is to be taken *immediately* to God. If someone is in the wrong, He will deal with that one. If your parents ask you to do anything that you do not like, you must take it to God and ask Him to change their hearts. (Prov. 21:1) You have *no right* to disobey *any* of your parents' instructions *except* when they command you *specifically* to break the law of God. All else *must* be done, and you must trust the Lord to straighten out problems. If they are wrong, God will help you. (Ps. 27:10) But if you refuse to obey them, God has no choice but to take sides against you as well.

Do you think you can fix up your life without His help? Then this message is not for you. Do you imagine that running away is the way out of your problems? Then you had better be ready to keep running all your life, for you will always take your real problem with you.

And that will be, of course, yourself.

seed of HELL

Forgive - Rom. 12:20-21

Hate - Prov. 30:11-12; 14:12

"Follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord...looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." (Hebrews 12 :14-15)

THE CURSE AND THE CAUSE OF BITTERNESS

Bitterness, (a "wounded spirit"), is a deep disappointment or hurt from someone. It can begin from a whole lot of little things, or one big thing... be real or just a thing of the imagination. It is natural to feel hurt when we are wronged by another, but no-one can afford to let bitterness take root and grow.

God has promised us special grace if we are hurt. We can claim it, and spare our lives from being corroded by the poison of bitterness. Jesus commanded us to *forgive*, despite our hurt. This forgiveness is a CHOICE, not a good feeling. It is impossible to "feel good" about being hurt, especially if we are hurt deeply. But if we forgive them, we will not only spare our own lives, but begin a great force for good in their own. (Col.3:12-13 Matt.6:12; Heb.12:15; Rom.12:20-21; Matt.18:21-22)

Have you been bitter? God longs to help you wash away the hurt, if you will let Him. You must be honest with yourself. Have you harbored resentment against someone? Is the "Seed of Hell" sown in your life? These are some signs of bitterness:

- (1) Hard face - a tight jaw; your eyes are deep-set, and you don't smile with your lips.
- (2) Show little concern for others - very sensitive or touchy; little gratitude.
- (3) Very possessive with just a few friends; you're afraid to lose them.
- (4) You don't care to meet new people; you've got to mask your hurt with them.
- (5) Some people get flattered too, too much from you; the rest may get chopped.
- (6) You may put up a smiling front, but God knows how hurt you are inside.

PLANTED HELL IN PRACTICE

This chart shows what happens when someone is bitter and will not forgive

YOU CAN SEE	GOD CAN SEE	THE BIBLE SAYS
Unshared thoughts by word or attitude. An un-seen barrier goes up.	A "root of bitterness"; deeply wronged, hurt; real or imagined.	"A wounded spirit who can bear?" (Prov. 18:14)
Ungratefulness; no sign of appreciation.	Broken regard; love is alienated, cut off.	"Men will be...ungrateful." Sign of last days.(2 Tim.12)
Stubborn, sulky attitude, appearance.	Rejects authority of persons "over" him.	"Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." (2 Sam. 15:23)
Openly rebels; now refuses to obey authority.	Takes own authority, becomes own "boss".	"I will exalt my throne..." "Satan's sin. (Is. 14:12-14)
Gets into bad company. Wrong friends associate.	Needs other "rebels" for encouragement.	"Taking pride in what should cause shame." (Phil. 3:19)
Defends wrong. Asks: "What's. wrong with...?"	Carries out secret desires for wrong.	Bring results of a selfish life. Fruit of sin. (Gal. 5:19-21)
Starts to condemn others to try to shift guilt.	Deep guilt, conviction from broken moral law.	"...Wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself." (Rom 2:1)
Alternate mood extremes; ecstasy, depression.	Sees no way out. Begins to think about suicide.	"My soul is weary of life..." Wants to end it all. (Job.10:1)

Face It... Forgive...

Worse - you are changing into the one you despise. Little by little, as you have held your grudge in your heart, you have altered, becoming what you think about. Already you are doing the very things you were hurt most by. Your mind has made excuses, and you've said, "At least I don't do the things they do", when you have recognized for a brief moment some of the same ways you hated beginning to happen in your life.

If the seed of Hell has flowered in your heart, you have already seen the results. Your bitterness is destroying you! You have forgotten what it feels like to be clean and free inside. Your eyes are blinded to the vision of true Christianity. Jesus is less real every day, and you are becoming proud and unreal ... pretending that your sin is excusable by blaming everyone else.

You *must* Forgive! How much you are hurting God by your sin! How can you expect Him to be merciful and willing to forgive YOU if you are not willing to forgive *them*? Jesus Christ the Lord bore the most awful agony for you. He was hung naked before a jeering crowd, hands torn with iron stakes, back bloody and raw. He was hurt inside and He was hurt inside far more than you have ever been. And as they shouted and spat in His face, screamed taunts and curses at His broken body, He prayed.

"Father, forgive them." What will *you* say?

"For *if you forgive* men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive *you*, but if you forgive not ... *neither* will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses".

ROOTING OUT THE SEED OF DESTRUCTION

(1) Make a list of all those who have wronged you. Under each name, list the things they have done to hurt you.

(2) Using Parents as an example, you might list some of these:

- (a) Promised, but didn't keep their promise;
- (b) Set a poor example for me;
- (c) Gave more love and attention to other members of the family;
- (d) Told me not to do things I saw *them* doing;
- (e) Tried to make me into something I just wasn't;
- (f) Took out their bad tempers on me;
- (g) Weren't there when I needed them;
- (h) Were too strict in punishing me for things I did wrong ... etc.

(3) List all YOUR wrong actions that could have hurt THEM! Just in case you have a sudden memory lapse, here are a few reminders...

- (a) Laziness - How neat have you been? How often have you wasted time just lazing around, watching T.V., listening to the radio, not doing what you should?
- (b) Ungratefulness - When did YOU last thank your parents for the ordinary little things they do every day? (Like dishes, clothes - Mother needs the practice?)
- (c) Stubbornness - What do you say when asked to do something? "I'll do it later"? "Why can't somebody else do it?" "Why does it need to be done?" "I won't!"
- (d) Untruthfulness - What have you done behind their backs to make them distrust you? Have you "sold them a line" to get or do something you knew they wouldn't like?
- (e) Bitterness - Have you refused to respond to their authority, and nursed the seed of Hell in your heart?

(4) Ask God to *forgive* you for the things on your list. Quit making excuses. Get it as clean as you would want it to show God on the Day of Judgment. Your own hurt is nothing near the hurt your selfishness and rebellion has caused God.

(5) *Purpose* in your heart to ask *their* forgiveness. This is going to be tough, but God will give you the strength. This must be done *humbly*, honestly and sincerely. When you have really asked *their* forgiveness, you will find it easier to forgive them for their wrongs. Just decide; give your will to the Lord; He will help you. Let God take care of all their wrongs in His time. (Rom.12:20-21; Matt.5:43-48)