

THE BIG IDEA: The Great I AM is greater than whatever I think I am.The Take-Off

All during the month of November, we're taking the time to re/member

What do we mean by that? Simply that we're doing the opposite of dismembering - we're taking members of the body - people like me and you - who feel detached and we're reattaching ourselves - re-membering ourselves - to the people and the promises of God.

If you were with us for Week 1, then you've already experienced the power of this simple act of re/membering.

As we sat in this room with the simple light of one candle and listened to the names of people who have run their race and are now in the great cloud of witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 12:1, we all sensed a growing strength with each name as it hung in the air.

Even if we didn't know every name, we could not help but know that we are never running this race alone.

Reattaching ourselves to the people of God brings us strength. That's why the enemy works so hard to keep us cut off from one another.

This morning, I want us to begin to see the power that comes from remembering the promises of God.

Turn to **Luke 15:11-32 (NLT)** and let's look at one of my favorite passages in the Scriptures and a story that you may have heard before - even if you weren't raised in a church.

It's the story of the prodigal son.

1. The story

- a. For some, this is a familiar story. For others, maybe not. Let's walk through the highlights:
 - v. 11 / Why tell it? To illustrate why He hangs out with shameful sinners
 - v. 12 / Younger son asks for inheritance (this shamed the family but was allowed)
 - v. 13 / "A few days later" - he got out of town quickly because of the way his actions would be viewed
 - v. 13 / "wasted" Greek word, lit "to scatter seed"
 - v. 14 / his money was gone
- b. Can we ask an obvious question?
- c. Why wasn't he quick to head home at this point?
- d. It's because he knew what was waiting for him.
- e. Jewish tradition called the "Kezazah"
 - It means "the cutting off"
 - If a son lost his inheritance to Gentiles and tried to return to the village, he'd be greeted at the edge of the village by the villagers
 - They would take large jars of pottery filled with burnt corn and smash them at his feet
 - It was to shame him publicly - to remind him that he was broken and useless
- f. If the son went home without the inheritance, he'd face the Kezazah
- g. So he kept trying to work his way back out of the failure
 - v. 15 / instead of going back, he tried to earn the money back
 - v. 16 / he's hungry and has nothing to eat
 - v. 17 / "When he came to his senses" is better translated "in regards to himself"
 - v. 17 / in other words, this isn't going well for ME and I have a plan to fix MY life
- h. Note that there's no sorrow here over how he treated the father or even over losing the inheritance
- i. Returning home was a last resort
- j. We could safely assume that if the famine had lifted or if others had brought him food, he might have stayed in that country far from the father
- k. He is still working the system, so to speak; manipulating the circumstances for his benefit
- l. Let's go back to the text and see how it plays out:
 - v. 20 / "A long way off" - the father had been watching and looking for his return
 - v. 20 / "he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him"
 - v. 20 / it was shameful for a man of status to run in this culture - to expose himself by raising his robe
 - v. 20 / Why did he run? He knew what was waiting - the Kezazah - he outran the accusers!
 - v. 21 / after the father's display of affection, the son can only deliver half his speech
 - v. 21 / this is where true repentance occurs; no plan, just an honest confession of sin

2. The takeaways

- a. A message titled “The God Who outran shame” sounds amazing, and the truth IS amazing, but we’re still left with the question of how do we apply it?
- b. What are the takeaways that can help us really sink our teeth into the meat of this truth?
- c. Let me offer some, although I’m sure the Lord will give you more insight as you marinate on it this week
- d. **ONE, the father dealt with overcoming the power of shame**, and we need to understand the difference between guilt and shame
- e. We feel guilt over what we do (that’s normal) but we feel shame over who we are (that’s not)
- f. God’s bigger than our guilt and shame.
- g. The guilt the son felt from getting it wrong didn’t stop the goodness of the father from making it right
- h. **TWO, the father restored identity**
- i. Isn’t amazing how much we’re like the prodigal son?
- j. We try to work our way out of our messes and earn our way into the Father’s graces
- k. Let’s talk about identity versus activity for just a minute...
- l. We tend to find our value in what we do more than who we are, but activity-based value changes because it’s based on our performance while identity-based value never changes because it’s based on our pedigree
- m. When we understand who we are, everything changes
- n. The father received the son based on who he was, not what he had - or hadn’t - done
- o. The enemy’s strategy is to wear us down by convincing us to earn through activity what is already ours through identity
- p. God’s promises are all based in who He is as the giver and who we are as the receivers
- q. The enemy knows this and always uses shame to make us feel unworthy, cut off
- r. He has pottery in hand and is ready to accuse us and to shame us over who we are: the disappointing son who never quite got it right
- s. But in Christ, we’ve been brought into a family and now we have a Father who outruns shame!
- t. His kindness leads us to repentance
- u. His goodness is greater than our failures, our sins, our wasted lives
- v. Who He is is greater than what we’ve done - it’s also greater than who we think we are
- w. **The Great I AM is greater than whatever I think I am!**

The Landing

In this month of re/membering, I think we need to remember the kind of Father we have
Our identity is based in His, and so I’ve asked Phil and Jennifer to sing a song entitled “Remember” and I want to invite you to the altar - to spend time letting the Father embrace you, kiss you, reattach you to the promise of who He is
Shame has no place here, because the Great I AM is greater than whatever I think I am
Come home. No plan to save yourself. No trying to earn what’s been given.
Just come back to a Father who has never stopped looking for you.
A Father who outruns your accusers and overcomes your shame.
Let’s pray