

the hug

that says it all

by Paul Adams and Maria Lush

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Design by Ben Desmond

Illustrations by Andy Patching

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hugs matter

because you matter

Hugs can say: '**respect**', '**love**', and '**welcome home**'.

Jesus told a story with a hug in the middle and a home at the end.

Some people live without a settled heart – others without a settled home. Each has their own story.

Many feel that the people they used to trust have let them down; some are angry with their parents.

But, deep down, everybody wants to be respected and loved.

a story about a young man who thought nobody cared about him

He was the younger son. In those days, he had no independent future – one day, his other brother would inherit the family home and take over the business.

As the younger lad, he would work for his dad and then his older brother. He could never create his own future.

Ok, he had a home and food, but what else? He felt he had no personal identity and might never be recognised for all he could bring to the table.

When his dad was dead, he would get an allowance from his estate, but he would still have to work under his brother. He could never be more than a spare part. If only he could be free to be himself.



It got too much for him – he could not wait.

His father was fit and strong, certainly not going to die any time soon.

Finally, he demanded his allowance as a lump sum. Perhaps to his surprise, his dad gave him the cash ... and watched sadly as the young man walked out.

Far away from home, he got the independence he had longed for. At last, he could take responsibility for his own life, away from the hurts of always being second and never feeling valued.

The party guy with cash attracted many others who helped him spend it, and nobody had taught him the money-skills to know when to stop.

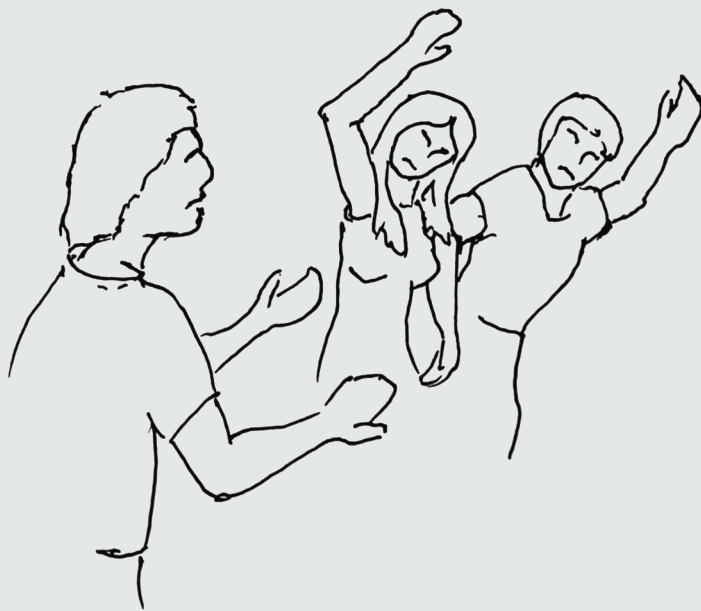
There's no need to describe the 'wild living', the guy was clearly having lots of reckless pleasure with his new friends.



Of course, when the money ran out, the friends drifted off. Excitement now turned to fear as he realised that he was all alone; and nobody cared. With blame against his family now burning inside him, he felt more determined than ever to fix this himself. Simple – just get a job and make some more money.

An unexpected twist made his situation desperate. The country was crippled by a severe famine, and the only work he could get was feeding pigs. But they were getting more to eat than him. *"Am I worth less than a pig?"* His thoughts were bitter and desperate.

Reality forced him to ask serious questions. Where could he go? How would he eat? There was no point in going home to get the blame and suffer the shame. His father would not want to know.



Then, an unwelcome thought popped into his head - *"Is it my fault, have I done wrong?"* Despite all the hurt he felt his dad and brother had inflicted on him, he uneasily remembered how he wished his dad dead by asking for his inheritance. It started to make him feel sad; how he had walked out and drunk it away with others who had only left him with the pigs.

Perhaps he had some part to play in all this grief ... but to admit it felt so uncomfortable, so unjust, as if he'd let his family off the hook.

Tired and hungry, friendless and hopeless; deep down he knew that he had got it wrong. He had believed that his dad was the cause of his problems ... but could it be the other way around?

Either way, his part of the inheritance had gone; there was nothing left for him, and no home to go to.

Desperate circumstances, but they made him think. If he stayed where he was, he would die from starvation. Doing nothing would be the end. He had to do something.



Another thought came to him. His dad was still alive, and he was a kind man. Would he help?

The young man, stained with pig muck and shame, could not expect his father to welcome him back into the family. But would he, out of pity, take him on as a worker? It would break his pride to admit any fault and be demoted; but it was worth a try.

He didn't know what to expect, although he knew what he deserved. Would the door be slammed in his face? Would he be ridiculed and rejected?

But the moment he decided to talk to his father, plucking up the courage to admit his mistakes, his future started to change.

He felt utterly worthless, but he turned round and walked back the way he came ... in the direction of his father's home.



Step by step, the young man practised what he was going to say: about his guilt, his apology, his request to be accepted as a servant. His emotions journeyed too – first, the knot of anxiety twisting in his stomach, then, the heat of shame spreading across his face.

But as he came towards his father's house, something slammed into his body, nearly knocking him off his feet. What was this? A different warmth now wrapped tightly around him.

Then, looking up, he realised. It was his father. This man, always held in utmost respect in the village, had run through the street, with tears running down his face – *"It's my very dear son: he has come back home"*, he sobbed with joy.

He had flung his body around his son.

It was the hug that said it all.



Despite everything, that hug said 'respect', 'love' and 'welcome home'.

He expected to be kicked out, but instead he was overwhelmed by being kissed and welcomed in.

He said, *"I really am sorry. I've got it wrong about you. And I got it wrong about God. I'm sorry."*

As the two of them walked home together, the father sent a message to his servants to prepare a banquet.

His son's return had to be celebrated.

It was a wonderful party, full of joy and love.



Jesus told a story like this for everybody!

We might not have a family who accepts, values or respects us, but we all have a Heavenly Father who is waiting, longing for us to turn around to Him.

He's never forgotten us.

He is waiting, full of love, ready to forgive us.

He sees us for who we are and simply wants us to return to Him.

He is waiting now.

We may not have walked out on our dad, grabbing the money as we went but, like the frustrated, hurt and angry son, we have all tried to get what we wanted.

Some fathers bring joy, others bring pain; some have never known their child. But in the story which Jesus told, the father represents God who is perfect.

Father God never forces us to love Him or do what is right - He respects us too much for that.

He is full of kindness ... especially when we are hurting, lonely and lost.

Our rebellion and wrong decisions make us all liable for God's judgement. But God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to take the punishment we deserve, when He was crucified.

That is why everybody who cries out to Him in repentance and faith will be welcomed with open arms.

Father God is longing to welcome you into His family.

Even if nobody else loves and respects you - God does. The Bible says, **"Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me."** (Psalm 27 verse 10 NIVUK)

God wants to welcome you as His much loved child.

You may ask, 'So, how do I get in with God? Do I have to do something good, or religious?'

No, just talk to God - in your thoughts or out loud if you want. It is all very straightforward.

- Tell Him that you cannot sort out the mess, and that you are sorry for when you got it wrong.
- Believe that Jesus died for you, taking your place.
- Receive God's forgiveness.
- Welcome Jesus to walk with you through whatever, as you learn to live a new life.
- And thank Him for loving you!

As His child, God will give you His special peace and the promise of everlasting life.

Until then ... He will be with you and help you to learn to live a new life without shame.

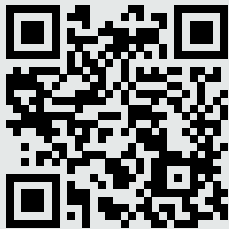
You can read Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son in the Bible: Luke chapter 15 verses 11-32.

If you would like to know more, please speak to the person who gave you this booklet.

If you can, scan the QR code and watch the CrossCheck video. Find someone who really loves Jesus and talk about it together.



CrossCheck



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and 'welcome home'.**

This is a little story of hope,
with a hug in the middle
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BeaconLight
biblical truth to share



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