

My Lost and Found Son!

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found..." (Luke 15:24). I have humorously said, "I'm glad Sean (our youngest son) is soon to be 21, because I have spent the first half of his life looking for him." It started when Sean was just old enough to walk. We turned our back on him downstairs and he was gone. We called out for him - no response - we ran-sacked upstairs - no Sean! In a panic, I ran outside and began to cry out for Sean! After disturbing half our street, I frantically ran inside our house to call the police, when Sean crawled lazily from his hiding place under a relatively small end table. How we missed him I'm not sure, I think because I never dreamed he was hiding from us on purpose. So we hugged him, cried a little, then we disciplined him and in ever so stern tones warning him never to do this again. There were two other times that nearly caused my heart to stand still. Even now, there is a slight discomfort telling you the details. It was at our Annual Father/Son Camp-out. The first strike against us is that we are confirmed city slickers. Sean was playing with all his young friends; he must have been about eight at this time. The boys got away from the fire, but still were within sight. For one brief moment their voices were not heard. I bolted for the place they were last seen and all the boys were found just on the wood's edge, except for Sean. I asked the boys, "Where's Sean and they all pointed to the path into the woods. So here I go into the wooded acreage. If the other campers did not know Christchurch was here, they did now, at least Sean and his dad somewhere in this vast wilderness. I gave it my best voice that was completely exhausted by the time I found him wandering happily through the woods. Recently some of the pictures from the archives of Father/Son Camp-outs were being viewed and there was Dad in full embrace of his son. The look in my eye was saying, "I think this will be my last." It was not, however; we have returned many times through the years, but never without my very "not-so-fond" memories.

The most frightening of all came when our family and my wife's brother's family were at the Astrodome and something made me turn to look at our 4-year-old Sean who was sitting a few rows behind us with his siblings and cousins. When I say something made me turn, I am convinced that it was Someone who made me turn, namely our loving Lord who cares for the little sparrow and smallest child. When looked at Sean, I saw him jump out of his seat and begin running to the aisle and toward the nearest huge door. I ran as fast as I could; Sean made it through the door just as I was approaching. By the time I got to the door, he was gone. Hundreds upon hundreds of people were coming and going as my eyes combed the crowd looking for a little blond bombshell full of energy. When I realized time was of an essence, I threw away what dignity I had and hollered his name as loudly as I could. It was amazing - the entire area of the Astrodome mall stopped cold in their tracks. Then in the stillness, almost slow motion, the crowd began to part just left of me. And like the parting of the Red Sea, here emerges a rather shy little boy, walking toward me. The crowd rejoiced with my find! As the dome returned to normal, I fell to me knees and said, "Sean, where were you going?" In his inimitable innocent sounding voice, he replied, "I don't know." Well, neither did I, but I was so happy, the search had ended and my little boy who was lost was now found.

We have known what it is to temporarily lose our other kids, but not with the regularity of Sean. So my son has taught me much on how to respond to a lost son. May I make the effort to translate these thoughts from a physically lost loved one, to a spiritually and morally lost loved one?

1. Never take anything for granted.

Don't take the attitude that my child would never ___! (You may fill in the blank). Your child, my children are human, born with a nature prone to sin. The Bible says, *"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed"* (James 1:14). *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (I Corinthians

10:13). Be on the lookout!

2. Block the escape routes.

I learned whether on the wood's edge or at a public event, to think like a runaway. Since we too, were born with natures just exactly like our child's, imagine what looks good and naughty, which is enticing just because it is forbidden. If you see them take one step in that wrong direction, stop them there. Far easier to stop them in the early stages than to wait and lose sight of them. You may become unpopular when you "put your foot down" and say no. But being unpopular temporarily is much better than losing them permanently. *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee"* (I Timothy 4:16).

3. Be willing to be fanatical in your search.

When I began calling for my lost son at the camp-out or Astrodome, I was quite aware that I was going to embarrass my son and myself. But it did not matter as long as I found him. Too many times we worry about what others think when we go on a search. I have had fellow Christians ask that we send a visitation team by a lost loved one's residence, but pretend that we were not sent by them. When asked to do this, I always decline unless they give us permission to say why we came calling. We care too much that our pressure will drive them away. It is time to wake up that they are already going in the wrong direction anyway. If I know someone is going to be in harm's way, and I do nothing to stop them, that could almost be categorized as criminal. Listen to what the Bible says, *"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand"* (Ezekiel 33:8). On the positive side of it, the Bible says, *"Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins"* (James 5:20).

4. Give the credit for finding your loved one to God.

Do you remember my saying that it was more Someone (God) than something (a mere fluke) that made me look for my son who was about to discover the Astrodome's far corners? In the very same way, God imparts wisdom to the concerned, conscientious, Christian parent, spouse, or child for their loved one who needs to be found. Let God know ahead of time that you intend to give Him glory. God is more than willing to help someone who doesn't take the credit for themselves. I concur with the closing words of the book of Romans which includes the plan of God's great salvation in inspired eloquence and simplicity, *"To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen"* (Romans 16:27).

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word](http://christchurchbaptist.org/Pastors%20Word/My%20Lost%20and%20Found%20Son.htm)