

THE SHINDIG

by Patrick Rainville Dorn



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**CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS
EDUCATIONAL SERIES**

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Parable: The Prodigal Son

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SYNOPSIS: Cowboy Clem, who lived large and recklessly, returns home penniless and afraid. Meanwhile back at the ranch, his hardworking brother questions why there's a celebration for irresponsible Clem's homecoming.

BIBLE VERSE: Luke 15:11-32

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 3 males)

CONCHITA (f)..... A servant. *(13 lines)*

ZEKE (m)..... Eldest son and ranch foreman. *(45 lines)*

JAKE (m)..... Wealthy rancher and father. *(12 lines)*

CLEM (m)..... Youngest son, recently returned. *(22 lines)*

DURATION: 10 minutes.

SETTING: Outside the main house on the Cloudy Acres Ranch, Texas.

TIME: The 1880s.

COSTUMES

JAKE is dressed like a wealthy rancher. ZEKE wears western wear. CLEM wears rags and a fancy new cowboy hat. CONCHITA wears a dress.

PROPS

- ☐ Basket
- ☐ Platter

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Parables are earthly stories intended to reveal a heavenly meaning. They are by nature stories that people could relate to and which would inspire questions and discussion, thus providing the opportunity for revelation of the truth. We have brought these parables into present time where the listener can relate and once again ask questions, which will reveal the true meaning.

SCRIPTURE: Taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™. Used by permission of Zondervan.

PARABLE: ¹¹Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. ²⁵"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' ²⁸"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' ³¹"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'" (Luke 15:11-32).



AT START: ZEKE is onstage, listening. CONCHITA enters with basket.

ZEKE: Hey, Conchita. What's all the ruckus coming from the main house?

CONCHITA: You haven't heard?

ZEKE: Just rode back from the upper pasture, rounding up some strays.

CONCHITA: It's your brother, Clem.

ZEKE: Finally up and died, did he? Don't sound much like a funeral's going on in there.

CONCHITA: No, he's back.

ZEKE: Shot in the back? Yeah, it figures that polecat would wind up back shot and dead in a ditch somewheres.

CONCHITA: No, Señor Zeke. He has come home.

ZEKE: Here? To Cloudy Acres?

CONCHITA: It's a miracle. Your father, he never gave up hope.

ZEKE: And Clem just came riding in like nothing happened?

CONCHITA: He was on foot. And had no hat. Your father, Señor Jake, he ran out to meet him on the road.

ZEKE: Ranchers don't run. Our boots ain't conducive to foot races. And the old man's so bowlegged, he couldn't have gotten fifty yards without pulling up lame. I don't believe it.

CONCHITA: He did. He was crying and kissing your little brother. He started singing and dancing, right there in the road.

ZEKE: Pa must have gone plum loco. Or senile. Are you sure it was Clem who came back?

CONCHITA: Sí, Señor Zeke. Your brother.

ZEKE: He ain't no brother of mine. Not anymore. So they're in there, celebrating?

CONCHITA: Sí. And I am bringing onions and peppers to go with the veal steaks.

ZEKE: Veal? Pa killed the fatted calf?

CONCHITA: Sí. Maybe you should come inside and see for yourself.

ZEKE: A team of wild horses couldn't drag me in there.

CONCHITA: But Señor Zeke—

ZEKE: You go ahead, Conchita. Thanks for the heads-up. Go on, now.

Veal steaks ain't nothin' without onions and peppers—or so I'm told.

CONCHITA: I'll tell Señor Jake you're here.

ZEKE: You do that.

CONCHITA exits.

ZEKE: Little Clem, back from the dead. Hatless and afoot, and chowing down on veal steaks. It just ain't right.

JAKE: (*Enters.*) Zeke, my boy! Back from the north pasture already?

ZEKE: Rounded up forty head.

JAKE: That's fine. Did you hear the good news?

ZEKE: About Clem?

JAKE: Yes! Alive and kicking. Ain't that the grandest thing?

ZEKE: (*Unenthusiastically.*) Sure. It's grand, all right.

JAKE: You got to go in and see him.

ZEKE: No, I don't.

JAKE: Come on. Wash up and come inside.

ZEKE: I'm not going to, and you can't make me.

JAKE: But, Zeke—he's your brother.

ZEKE: I ain't got no brother. Not after what he did to us. To you. As far as I'm concerned, he's dead and gone and best forgotten.

JAKE: He was dead to us. But now he's back. He's blood, Zeke. Family. You know what that means.

ZEKE: I'm not setting foot in that house until he's gone from here. It's either him or me on this spread. So you choose.

JAKE: You know I can't do that.

ZEKE: Well, that pretty much says it all, don't it? 'Cause he's in there and I'm out here. I'll pack my kit and be off your land come sunrise.

JAKE: Cloudy Acres is as much yours as it is mine. I claimed and tamed and shaped this whole spread for you... and for Clem. You can't go, Zeke. I can't lose you. Not after just getting Clem back. My heart couldn't take it.

ZEKE: Did you ever once stop to think about my heart? All these years, and I never once sided against you, Pa. Never crossed you in any way. I've worked this ranch my whole life. Mending the fences, calving, branding... I even led the cattle drives to Dodge City every summer, living on nothing but beans and fry bread for weeks at a time.

JAKE: I know that, Zeke. You work hard, and I know I can depend on you.

ZEKE: And in all these years, never once did you throw me a shindig like the one you're putting on for Clem. Never once did you invite my friends over and serve up even lamb chops, much less veal steaks with onions and peppers. But Little Clem goes running off to Deadwood like a coyote in heat, squandering a fortune at the faro tables and prancing around with shady ladies, and you give him a hero's return! It ain't fair, Pa. I can't abide it. I just can't. *(Long uncomfortable pause.)*

CLEM: *(Enters.)* Hey, Pa. Conchita says the veal steaks are ready. Come on in and let's eat. *(Pause.)* Howdy, Zeke.

ZEKE: Clem.

JAKE: *(Looks at them.)* I reckon you two have some catching up to do. *(To ZEKE.)* Do what you have to do. But you can't leave until you've had a palaver with your brother. *(To CLEM.)* The veal steaks can wait. Don't come back inside until you two are reconciled. *(To BOTH.)* You hear me?

CLEM: Yes sir.

ZEKE: I hear you.

JAKE: Good. Blood. That's what we are, and that's how it is. *(Exits.)*

ZEKE: *(Pause.)* Nice hat.

CLEM: Yeah. Pa gave it to me just now. *(Pause. Crosses to ZEKE, arms open.)* Long time no see, Zeke.

ZEKE punches CLEM in the stomach. CLEM doubles over.

CLEM: Ooof! *(Catches breath.)* I guess I had that coming. And a whole lot more to boot. *(Offers his cheek.)* If you want to slug me again, do it here.

ZEKE: You want me to punch you?

CLEM: Brother, I've been beaten up so many times and in so many ways, one more thrashing won't make a lick of difference. I've learned that if I keep turning the other cheek, it spreads the damage around my body. That way I heal faster than if I keep getting hit in the same spot over and over again. So you go ahead. Get it out of your system.

ZEKE: You're not going to fight back?

CLEM: You've got the grudge, not me. I deserve worse.

ZEKE: You're just going to stand there and let me pummel you?

CLEM: Eventually I'll sink to my knees, then all fours. When I'm finally on the ground, you can kick me in the ribs a few times. It's old hat for me by now.

ZEKE: What's happened to you?

CLEM: I've been cheated, robbed, and whipped by professionals. If you think you can top what they've done to me, you're welcome to give it your best shot. But I don't think your heart's fully in it.

ZEKE: What do you know about my heart?

CLEM: You're a chip off the old block, Zeke. You are your father's son. Same as me.

ZEKE: I'm nothing like you. I could never have done what you did to Pa.

CLEM: Maybe. Maybe not. 'Cept didn't I just hear that you plan to light out at sunrise? And without a plan? You won't fare any better than I did, I can tell you. It's a hard trail outside Cloudy Acres.

ZEKE: You should know.

CLEM: I should, and I do. You want to know what it was like?

ZEKE: Spare me your bragging.

CLEM: It was nothing like what you imagine. Not after the first couple of weeks, anyways. After Pa gave me my inheritance, I took off and never looked back. I lost my head. That's what happens when you walk away from family, from the ranch, and from civilized society, and cross the tracks onto the wild side.

ZEKE: Nobody forced you to go.

CLEM: I was restless. I just had to go and buck the tiger. Well, the tiger bites back, believe you me. It was fine and dandy while the money held out. Everybody wanted to be my friend. I had a filly on each arm. Even dressed like a dude. But when the cash dried up, all my fair-weather friends deserted me. I hired on with other ranches, but there's no place that can hold a candle to Cloudy Acres. I got all spun around and ended up slopping for a hog farmer. For a spell I even tied in with a sheepherder.

ZEKE: Cattlemen don't truck with sheepherders. I don't care how bad things get.

CLEM: Brother, with all due respect, all you know is this spread. You have no idea what it's like outside of Pa's protection. What desperation can do to a man. I fell about as far as a body can. Until one day I woke up. It's like for the first time since I left home, I had a clear thought in my head. It occurred to me that even the hired hands at Cloudy Acres get three squares a day and a bunkhouse to sleep in. I had no pride left to swallow, so I climbed out of the hog wallow and got back on the road home.

ZEKE: And he took you back without saying a word.

CLEM: I told him how sorry and ashamed I was, and all I hoped for was to work the herd for wages and to sleep in the bunkhouse. You know him. He wouldn't have it.

ZEKE: 'Cause you're his favorite. Always were.

CLEM: You know that ain't so. Zeke, I got to tell you something.

ZEKE: I think I've heard enough.

CLEM: You need to hear this. Don't be jealous of me. The trail I took cost me dearly. I'm not the spoiled pup I once was. I've been taken down several notches. What I did to Pa will stick in my craw for the rest of my life. But now I realize I hurt you too, and I'm sorry.

ZEKE: You brought your own self to wreck and ruin. You've done nothing to me.

CLEM: You resent me for taking the money and doing what I did. But I always coveted your life, Zeke.

ZEKE: Me? Why?

CLEM: You're the firstborn. A hard worker. Never been tempted to stray. Got yourself some real friends. You're at home on the ranch. Pa trusts you because you're reliable. Solid as a scrub oak. Not me. I've always been a tumbleweed.



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