



Unit .25

Session .02

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Sons

Scripture



Luke 15:11-13,17-32

11 He also said: “A man had two sons. **12** The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.’ So he distributed the assets to them. **13** Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. ... **17** When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! **18** I’ll get up, go to my father, and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. **19** I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.”’ **20** So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. **21** The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son.’ **22** “But the father told his servants, ‘Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Then bring

the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let’s celebrate with a feast, **24** because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ So they began to celebrate. **25** “Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he summoned one of the servants, questioning what these things meant. **27** ‘Your brother is here,’ he told him, ‘and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ **28** “Then he became angry and didn’t want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. **29** But he replied to his father, ‘Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’ **31** “‘Son,’ he said to him, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Think of when you got something you'd wanted for a long time only to find it didn't satisfy. Why didn't it deliver on the promise?

Like the prodigal son, have you come to the realization that the things of this world are unable to give us lasting fulfillment, and that lasting fulfillment can only be found in Jesus? If so, what were the circumstances surrounding that realization?



99 Essential Doctrines

God is Gracious

God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation—all of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). However, instead of leaving people in their sins, God has demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

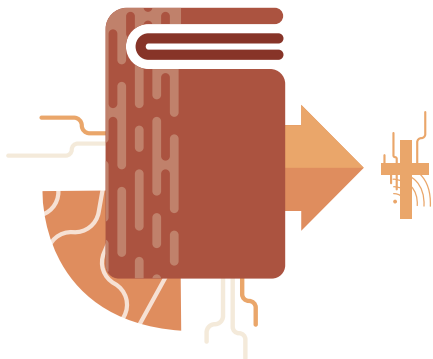
Main Point

God's love and forgiveness extends to any who repents of their sin and self-righteousness.

Make a list of several characteristics communicated by the father's actions in this parable. How are these characteristics also true of God?

How does it make you feel knowing that God graciously forgives when you repent from your sin?

How can our “good deeds” be a way of walling ourselves off from a relationship with God?



Christ Connection

The Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus for welcoming sinners and dining with them. In response, Jesus told a story of a father longing for and celebrating his wayward son's return. This story illustrates God's joy over sinners coming to repentance and trusting in Jesus, the Savior, who came to seek and save the lost.

Our Mission



Head

If you were to summarize the essence of the story in your own words, what would you say?

Why is it important to emphasize the Father's desire to restore the relationship with both of his sons?



Heart

Why do you think the story of the prodigal son is so relevant for today?

What does the prodigal's story teach us about pursuing a pleasure-seeking lifestyle?

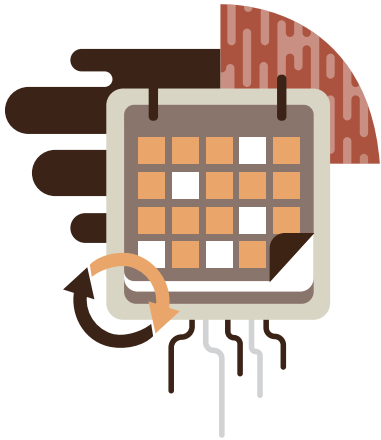


Hands

Like the prodigal son, what are some ways we might waste God's good gifts in our own lives?

What are some ways we can better utilize His gifts beginning this week?

Daily Devotions



Day 1

Luke 15:1-7

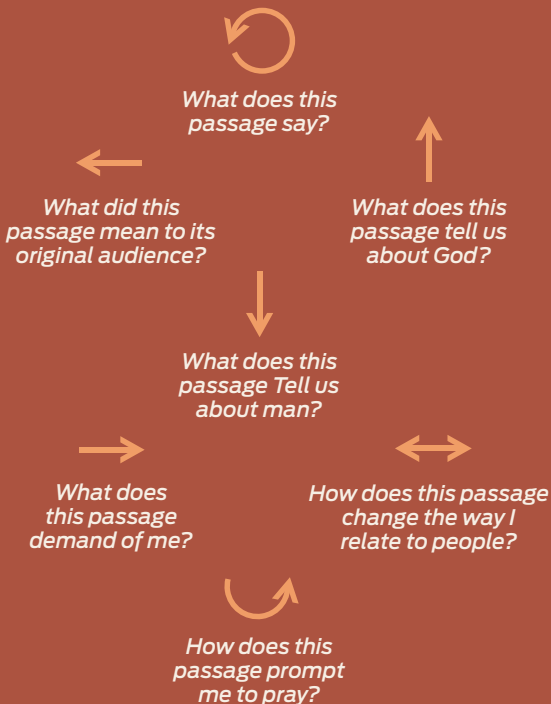
Jesus responds to the accusatory insults about His “welcoming sinners” with a story about a shepherd who prioritizes the lost sheep. This turns our spiritual meritocracy on its head. In the economy of the kingdom of God, there are no “good people” and “bad people.” There are just sinners (all people), and then there’s Jesus.

So the next time you’re tempted to be outraged because lost people do indeed act like lost people, remember your Savior—who was not repulsed by you, who did not hold you at arm’s length or rail against you and your unholy transgressions—rushed to embrace you. Remember that Christ sees the lost not as gross or untouchable but as those who are “like sheep without a shepherd.”

When He saw sinners, He had compassion for them. This is not just good news for those offensive sinners “out there.” It’s good news for you too.

How can you cultivate the mindset in yourself of the apostle Paul, who considered himself the “worst of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15)?

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day 2

Luke 15:8-10

How much is one person worth to Jesus? In Luke 15, Jesus gave us the image of a woman who has cleared everything out and lit everything up in order to find one lost coin. The woman acted like this one lost coin makes all the difference in the world.

In the same way, the Lord and His heavenly hosts celebrate the salvation of one sinner as if that one makes all the difference. Every time a lost person gets saved, every time a stranger comes into the fellowship of the church, we should act like we didn't know how incomplete we were without them until they finally appeared. We treat every found person as if they were the missing piece.

That's how much one person is worth to Jesus. They are valuable, necessary, and important to the kingdom.

Based on your attitude and behavior, how much is a lost person worth to you?

Day 3

Luke 15:11-16

The younger son's request for an early inheritance was obviously driven by his sense that something was missing from his life. Maybe he was bored. Maybe he felt stifled by life on his father's estate. Maybe he wanted to experience the world and indulge himself. In any event, he imagined that the money and what that money could buy would bring him a satisfaction he didn't have.

In the end, of course, he learned this was a fruitless pursuit. He ended up more empty than when he began, even less satisfied than he was before he had the inheritance. After all, he was staring at pig food with hungry eyes.

Sadly, it often takes getting to the end of our fruitless pursuits for us to learn that Jesus has always been more than enough. The truth is, Christ is more than enough, and if we have Him, we can suffer any loss or stifled pleasure because in Him we have everything we need.

When was a time that you learned, maybe even the hard way, that Jesus is more than satisfying?

Luke 15:17-24

Do you realize there isn't a day in your life when the Lord is surprised by your flaws and failures? He's not even surprised by your sin. He is God, and therefore, He has seen it all coming. If you're a Christian, He knew what He was "signing up for" when He saved you.

This is something that is often very difficult for believers to apprehend. However, you do not get into the kingdom by His grace only to be kept in by your own goodness. It is grace all the way through.

We see a picture of this in the father's reception of the repentant son. When the lost son was found, the father wasn't shaking his head, crossing his arms, and "tsk-tsk"ing from his porch. No, he ran to him. He embraced him with joy. And he threw a party.

Similarly, the disposition of the heavenly Father over you is one of great joy. He's glad you're His. He's never sad to see you. He loves you and rejoices over you (Zeph. 3:17).

What difference does it make for you today as a Christian in knowing you woke up under the Lord's approval of you and will finish your day in the same?

Luke 15:25-32

The older son in the parable of the prodigal son was very busy measuring, namely, the younger son against himself. This is often how legalism works. The legalist doesn't really measure other people against the holiness of God but against the perceived holiness of himself.

From an outside perspective, the younger son may have looked like the only one of the two brothers who needed forgiveness. But the older son had also sinned against his father and needed just as much forgiveness as his younger brother needed.

We need to take care in realizing that all fall short of God's glory, including ourselves. This will help us have compassion for others who aren't as put together as we think we are, not to mention to express awe and praise for the God who has loved and forgiven even us.

What can you do to point others to the grace of God over the next few days?