



Part 5 –A Tale of 2 Sons...The  
Older Brother

Luke 15:11-32

June 6, 2010

*Last week we looked at the first part of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. But the story is really about 2 sons. What about the self righteous older son? Are we more like the older son than we think? What parenting principles from this passage can we apply?*

**I. A RUDE REJECTION (v. 11-19)...A Son's Rebellion**

- A. His Problem: **Restlessness** fostered by selfishness. (v.11-12)
- B. His pursuits: **Recklessness** fueled by sensuality (v. 13-16)
- C. His Plan: **Restoration** followed by surrender (v. 17-19).
  - 1. **Awareness...** “*Came to his senses*”... Lit – “to himself” (v.17)
    - He came to the end of himself. He finally wised up. He gets his wake up call! Nothing he had done to that point made any rational sense! Solitude with the pigs caused him to reflect on his life.
    - Accurate assessment leads us to acknowledge of where we really are. **Repentance leads to consciousness of sin!** True repentance always leads to a change
    - *His dad's own servants (hired men) had it better than he did. He was willing to be a “day laborer”...the lowest of 3 classes. The work no one else wanted to do. At least they had bread to eat.”* **Jesus is the bread of life. He is the only one who will ultimately satisfy your hunger.**
    - **Sin always taints our perspective. “A moment of gratification can produce a lifetime of misery and regret!”** It promises freedom but produces slavery.

- ILLUST: High School kids far away from God...drinking, pot smoking, Aids, pregnancy, abortions, etc.
  - Some of us aren't desperate enough!
2. **Acknowledgement...** (v. 18-19)
- **Conviction**: *"I will get up"* – When we are serious about action we make changes. He got moving. He wanted to go back to his father, not just home. I can imagine he begins to rehearse his speech. Wonder what dad was going to say? **How many of us need to get right with Dad? Or our Heavenly Father?**
  - **Confession**: *"I have sinned against Heaven"*. This is a Hebraism for "against God". He took responsibility and began to see things clearly. Sin is always a vertical problem with horizontal implications ("and in your sight"). All true repentance begins here. **Are you willing to admit you've blown it?**
  - **Illustration**: Jim Joyce blowing a call at first base that blew a perfect game for Detroit pitcher Armando Galarraga. He admitted his failure and even apologized.
  - **Contrition**: *"I am no longer worthy"*. He shows genuine humility. This is no superficial confession! It is heartfelt! The Lord loves a contrite heart. (Psalm 51).  
His grief was real. He is feeling bad about blowing all the money. (A good Jewish son would have saved some to take care of his father in his old age!)  
Feeling overall conviction for his attitude? He knew he had disappointed his Father who had done nothing but shown him unconditional love.  
**Principle**: don't let Satan trick you into believing that you've got to get better to be forgiven. He will make you feel unworthy!

## II. A RIGHTEOUS RECEPTION ...A Father's Love (v. 20-24)

### A. The Reunion...A Father's Acceptance (v. 20)

#### 1. *While he was a long way off, his father saw him:*

- He may have come and sat at the edge of his property, scanning the horizon, looking and longing for his son to come home. We can imagine how his heart ached to see his son. He may have even sat up at night praying and hoping that this was the night he'd come home. And yet his son never came! The Father must have been "*waiting*" for this moment because he saw him a long way away. This father had waited for some time, maybe more than a year. He had never given up.
- APP: Some of you are aching, don't give up. Don't give up. It's worth the wait.

#### 2. *Felt compassion*: He knew what a mess his son had made of his life; He still accepted him unconditionally.

#### 3. *Ran...embraced and kissed*:

- The Pharisees saw this as a shameful breach of decorum. They wanted a pound of flesh!
- What an emotional scene, as the two are reunited! The elderly father ran and bear hugged him (which was not the usual dignified custom). He ran, embraced and he kissed him. The text implies again and again. Illustration: This was no guy hug!
- Physical touch is so important to the healing process. Some of you long for the loving touch of your father and have never received it.
- By running to his son first, he was also preempting the scorn of the townspeople who would undoubtedly heard about his return. It protected him!

### B. The Recognition...A Son's Apology (v. 21)

1. It is a repeat of what he had previously rehearsed in his mind! He felt that he should be treated as dead!
2. 19 words are spoken before the Father interrupts the son's apology speech. He doesn't want to hear it. He has turned the corner.
3. This is no time for retribution or punishment. He is ready for restoration and a party!
4. The religious leaders had no concept of instant forgiveness...especially since he hadn't done anything to deserve it. They wanted him to grovel.

### C. The rejoicing...A Father's Party (v. 22-24)

#### 1. The Requirements (v. 22-23)

He cranks up the party. He sends the slaves scurrying to get a number of items. Each item was a symbol of position and acceptance (Gen. 41:42 – Pharaoh's treatment of Joseph).

- **Robe:** Represents **distinction**. Lit. – Long, flowing white robe; festive; called a talar or stola – the garment of the upper classes. *Eph. 2:10 We are his workmanship.*
- **Ring:** Represents **authority**. Insignia of the full-grown son – rights; restored back to original position. God has the authority to forgive! *1 John 1:9 – we are clean!*
- **Sandals:** Represents **sonship**. Mark of a free man. Slaves went barefoot. APP: Isn't God gracious to us by offering full forgiveness because we are his sons! *John 1:12*
- **Fatted Calf/Feast:** Represents **acceptance** and redemption. That one; the one set apart. A special dinner to be prepared for someone of respect and honor. The father had prepared all along to welcome him back! "Be Merry" – he was throwing a party!

#### 2. The Reason (v.24)

- We learn something about forgiveness. There is a time and place for consequences, but not now is not the time to discuss them.
- **Application:** The Lord is holding out his arms. He wants to forgive you! Parents are you holding out? Have your kids lied one too many times? Having a hard time forgiving?

### III. A SELF RIGHTEOUS RESENTMENT: The older brother's attitude

#### A. A Brother's Anger (v. 25-30)

##### 1. **Felt neglected and taken for granted.**

*“Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders”*

- “Squeaky wheel gets the oil”. When will dad ever give up on him? How can I please him? All he cares about is junior.
- **Principle:** Don't spend so much time on the wayward child that you neglect the “good child”. (v. 29)

##### 2. **Bitterness:** v.29

- “Never even gave me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends”. You give him steak and a party; and you haven't even given me a “burger bash”.
- That fatted calf was a constant reminder that his faithfulness had gone unrewarded! He might have been upset with his brother for leaving him with the total management of the estate.
- He may have never forgiven him. He wanted him to grovel more. Don't take him back so easy. He really hoped to treat brother as a stranger!
- Bottom-line: The older brother wasn't ready to forgive. He held a grudge!

##### 3. **Self-Righteous:** (v. 28, 30)

- His refusal to come in is in direct opposition to dad’s request. (Maybe he isn’t as righteous as he thinks!) His dad had to go out after him. Literally begging him. Didn’t want anything to do with his wayward brother.
- The older brother adds to the prodigal’s offense. He exaggerates what happened by accusing him of “*squandering the property with prostitutes*”.
- The older brother represents the Pharisees of Jesus day! Also (v. 30) – “this son of yours” rather than brother.
- This brother was equally disrespectful!

4. **Selfishness:** (v.31)

- He thought his younger brother might want to ask for a “do over”. He thought the younger brother might want to ask for his estate.
- “*Everything I have is yours*”

5. **Secretly Jealous:** Maybe he had wanted to leave to, but never had the guts.

- He was “inwardly rebelling”; He was passive aggressive. Claiming a kind of “pseudo spirituality”! He was like us!

B. **A Father’s answer (v. 31-32)**

1. **Reassures:** Notice he doesn’t let older brother rain on the parade; nor does he get angry but rather lovingly reassures his son, reminding him of his inheritance and his position. **God reassures us!**
2. **Recounts:** gives him a different perspective on his brother; from death to life and from lost to found!

**IV. The Danger of Raising Religious (Nice) Kids**

- A. Be wary of kids who outwardly conform, but whose heart attitude is actually hardened or insensitive. **Principle: be careful of the child who outwardly conforms but inwardly defies.**

- B. Religious conformity places an emphasis on “sin management” rather than a “heart transformation”.
- C. Perfectionism often leads to a performance mentality resulting in legalism. We don’t become righteous; Jesus makes us righteous.
- D. Don’t become like the Pharisees who trusted in themselves and despised others. [Luke 18:9](#)

### **Family Time Table Talk:**

Well this week moves into our 5<sup>th</sup> week of our special Family Time Table Talks. Cheryl and I have prayed for each of you by name that God would use these Family Times to grow you closer as a family and help create a spiritual climate in the home. Don’t forget to have Rich or Yanina “check off” your progress, so you can collect your “awards” on June 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Review:** Last week you read the story of the *Tale of 2 Sons* from Luke 15:11-32. Read it again this week and we will look at the older son.

1. What is the “big idea” of the parable? What is the message to us as families?
2. Why was the older brother upset? Do you think he was justified? Why or why not?
3. **For the Kids:** In the story both brothers were ungrateful to their father. Take the time to tell your parents at least 5 things you appreciate about them. If there are multiple kids in your family, no one can give the same answer! Be creative.
4. **For the Parents:**
  - In what ways do you spoil your kids?
  - How do you avoid showing favoritism to one child vs. another?
  - Were you more like the younger or older son as a kid growing up?

**Wrap up:** Take the time to share prayer requests together and pray for each other. Don't rush this. If you have never prayed out loud, don't be afraid. Remember: Your kids see Jesus through your example!

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