

A study of Jesus' Parables

COMPASSION

Check out the QR code's one-minute clip.

After almost losing her hijab, the soccer player stops abruptly to re-cover her head. The hijab is used by women in Islam as a head covering for "modesty, to preserve honor, and to be a symbol of their true faith." Quickly recognizing the situation, the opposing team surrounds the young woman as she goes to her knees to fix her cover.



Since you are sitting in a Christian Bible study, it's no surprise to hear that we disagree with the teachings of Islam. We also disagree with the Shari'ah (Islamic legislation) that requires a hijab for women. So why do we applaud the actions that allow for something we disagree with? Simple, the actions displayed define sportsmanship. Winning is great, but winning isn't everything. Winning should never come at the cost of our character or at the humiliation of another.

It is possible to disagree with someone and still love them where they are. In fact, that's basically the definition of sharing the Gospel. In the Gospel we see the greatest expression of God's heart for people. In today's passage, we'll see God's invitation to share his heart with others—even people with whom we disagree.

LUKE 15:25–32

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field. As he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

²⁶ So he called one of the slaves and asked what was happening. ²⁷ The slave replied, 'Your brother has returned, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he got his son back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But the older son became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and appealed to him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look! These many years I have worked like a slave for you, and I never disobeyed your commands. Yet you never gave me even a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends! ³⁰ But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹ Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and everything that belongs to me is yours. ³² It was appropriate to celebrate and be glad, for your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost and is found.'"

SCOUTING REPORT

SETTING Crowd of tax collectors & sinners w/ Pharisees & Law experts

NEED Expose heart of Pharisees and God's love for them.

STORY The father left the celebration to plead with his older son who refused to join them.

TRUTH God's people should share God's heart.

DISCUSSION

As you have thought about last Week's study, what has impacted you the most since we last met?

ICEBREAKER

1. What news did the older brother receive as he came back home? (27)

2. How did the older brother respond to that news? (28)

3. What reason did the father give for the celebration (32)

4. What were the religious leaders complaining about with Jesus? (2)

OBSERVATION

5. Read Luke 15:1-2. In what ways is Jesus comparing the religious leaders (1-2) to the older brother and how does he want them to respond?

INTERPRETATION

6. In what ways have you looked down on others? Who is someone (specifically) to whom you need to show the Father's love?

APPLICATION

Which brother do you most identify with? If we're running from God or very recently saved, we might feel like the younger son. But, if we've known the Lord for a while, it can be easy to fall into the trap of older brother. Talk to your coach today.

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STUDY NOTES PRODIGAL RECAP

Last week we saw the rudeness of the younger brother demanding his inheritance, squandering it, and returning home smelly and broken. Although he expected to return as a slave, the father restored him as a son. After the heartfelt embrace, Jesus shared in the parable that the father clothed him in *the best robe...Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet!* Then, they had a party.

As we've said about parables, they're stories designed to sprint past our brain landing firmly in our heart. Many find the younger son's story of redemption so compelling that they basically end the narrative there. For those of us in Christ, it's relatable. We had a moment coming to the end of our rope when we realized the depths of our sin. Most of us didn't fall as low as the younger brother, but we rejoice in a Father that makes us part of the family no matter how far we have fallen. In Christ, God doesn't want us as slaves, but sons and daughters.

There is an old radio broadcaster named Paul Harvey, who would say in his iconic voice, "In a minute you're going to hear *the rest of the story.*" The story of the younger son fills our hearts with the joy of remembering our own salvation. However, it falls short of the point that Jesus was making by telling the parable. And unfortunately, the younger son isn't the only person in the story with whom we often relate.

A LOST SON ILLUSTRATES LOVING LOST PEOPLE

Our passage today picks up just as the celebration hit its stride. During the events of last Week's passage, the **older son was in the field**. A while later he returned home. **As he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the slaves and asked what was happening. The slave replied, 'Your brother has returned, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he got his son back safe and sound.'**

Quickly, the older brother ran inside, embraced his brother, cried beside his father, and celebrated his younger brother's return. Not! Fuming at what he heard, **the older son became angry and refused to go in.**

Many of us, when we become angry, we rationalize our anger. The same is true for the older brother. We can imagine him stomping around in front of the house planning his words. For the second time in the story, the **father came out** of the house for his son. At his father's pleading words, the older son snapped back declaring his own righteousness,

"Look! These many years I have worked like a slave for you, and I never disobeyed your commands. Yet you never gave me even a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends!" He goes on to compare himself against the father's "other son" (note that he doesn't even call him "brother"). **"But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!"**

We can all relate to this self-righteous indignation. In many ways, the older brother was justifiably mad. The younger son had hurt their father and squandered the inheritance, damaging the family's honor and future. Not only that, he descended into depravity, living contrary to family values. However, the older son wasn't just mad, he was jealous. He wanted a party too. Like his brother, the older son wanted the father's stuff more than the father—he just didn't ask for it.

LOVING LOST PEOPLE GLORIFIES THE LORD

The father's words show his love for both sons. His words reveal his heart and discredit the words of the older brother. **"Son, you are always with me, and everything that belongs to me is yours. It was appropriate to celebrate and be glad, for your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost and is found."**

So, how does the story end? What does the older brother do? To find that answer, we need to understand to whom Jesus was telling the story. Around him were **the tax collectors and sinners** as well as **Pharisees and the experts in the law**. These religious leaders were **complaining** (literally, *grumbling*), **"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."**

Like the older brother, the Pharisees said, "We don't disobey." They looked down on those who don't uphold their values. By their statement, they challenged Jesus implying that he can't be the Messiah because he doesn't act like God. Implicitly they said, "the Messiah will look like us."

By telling this story, Jesus shared the heart of the Father and how He loves lost people. Not only that, the father had to leave the house for the older brother too. Jesus harshly tells these grumblers that you can be just as lost on the front porch in your own self-righteousness as you can be in a far-away land in squalor. Either you join the party or you don't.

The story has no ending because it's up to the audience to give the ending. Will we join the Father in the party? Will we love the lost? Will we rejoice when the lost are saved? Jesus shares the heart of the Father and we should too.