

This Love Includes YOU

God loves us where we're at, but His desire is for us to be in close relationship with Him.

Text: Luke 15:11-32

1. The Runaways (Luke 15:11-16)

The story begins with the younger son asking for his share of the inheritance. Since his father was in good health, this brought incredible shame to his father. In essence he was telling him, "I wish you were dead." Soon after in the story, Jesus states, "*the younger son got together all that he had*" (v. 13), which means that he liquidated the properties and possessions he was given, turning them into cash. Going to a "*distant country*" means that he went to a Gentile land to party and live "the good life". In verse 14 two disasters happen simultaneously to the younger son: he ran out of money and there was a famine in the land. In this desperate condition he conceded to working for a Gentile farmer raising pigs. Both these things were considered unclean in Jewish society. In a sense, the younger son now becomes a Jewish man on "skid row". There is no job more disgraceful to him and his family. But it gets worse. The absolute lowest point comes when the younger son finds himself wanting to eat the pig's food in verse 16.

2. The Transformed (Luke 15:17-24)

"*When he came to his senses*" is the turning point for the younger son. In Jewish culture, this phrase was the equivalent of saying that one has repented from their wrong doing. At this point the son realized that his life was immeasurably better at his father's house. He makes the decision to go back even if it means he will be a servant. The younger son shows sadness, not for what he lost, but for his sin. He returns to his father's house and asks for forgiveness. Verse 20 says, "*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.*" This demonstrates the father's heart for the runaway. This shows us that in order to see his son a long ways off, he must have been frequently watching for him in case he would return. He also ran towards him (against the social norm) and hugged and kissed him, actions which both illustrate forgiveness and reconciliation. The younger son then tries to give his apology speech, but is cut off by his father's announcement that they are having a party. The father brings the son a number of gifts including the best robe which was typically only worn by notable guests. He also brings his son a ring representing authority and shoes which symbolize that a person was free (only slaves went barefoot) and also that a person has authority because usually only the host would wear their shoes in the house. Finally, the father asks that a fattened calf be killed. A fattened calf was not usually eaten at meals, but rather only on special occasions.

3. The Deservers (Luke 15:25-32)

When the eldest son learns what is going on, his reaction is the opposite of his father's. The son refuses to come in for the evening meal; a move that was culturally taboo. The father again displays unconditional love for his children and abandons cultural norms and his reputation by leaving the party he is hosting to go plead with his oldest son. However, the older son responds harshly, stating that he had been "*slaving for [his father] and never disobeyed orders.*" In other words he feels a sense of entitlement. He goes on to explain that he hasn't received even so much as a goat. Then he highlights the wild life of his brother (without calling him his brother) and wonders why there is a celebration for his return. The father explains that his elder son is always with him and everything he has is his (meaning his inheritance). The father says, "*But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.*"