



# Rooted

IN HIS WORD



July





# PARABLES

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# Rooted In His Word: Parables

## Luke 8:4-15 – The Parable of the Sower

July 11, 2021

### FOR THE LEADER

Parables are simple stories told by Jesus to teach a spiritual truth. Jesus used parables to explain spiritual truths in a way that people could understand. He was taking the Old Testament Law that was expounded on by the religious leaders in Israel and showing them the true heart behind God's Commands because the intent of them was often lost. The Law was often misinterpreted and focused on the physical, earthly-minded point of the Command instead of getting to the heart of the Command.

In Luke 8:9-10 we see that Jesus explains to the disciples why He taught in parables. He told them that He taught in parables for those who had spiritual eyes, ears, and hearts to hear His words then they would understand. Those who didn't listen in the appropriate way would not understand. His point was that we need to be open to hearing from God and receiving His instruction. This wasn't something new. This is the same throughout the whole Bible. Those whose hearts are in tune with God hear His voice.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus focuses on the perspective of the seed and the soil on which it falls. They had a great crowd of people who had come out to hear Him teach so there would be many there to hear. Jesus knew that not all there were ready for His teaching. The main truth for today is that "My heart must be cultivated to receive the word of God and bear fruit". This stands true for all people. We must take responsibility for the condition of our heart and rely on God to do the work of changing it. For the disciples, this would also help them in their ministry of sharing the gospel. He was teaching them that not all would hear the Word and receive it, but that doesn't mean there is any less value placed on that person. As disciples, we are to spread the gospel to all because God is in control of the results.

**MAIN GOAL:** My heart must be cultivated to receive the word of God and bear fruit.

### TODAY'S TRUTHS:

**TRUTH #1:** The devil can steal only that which you let him steal.

**TRUTH #2:** Get God's perspective quickly and let testing develop your character.

**TRUTH #3:** To follow Jesus, we must lay down our own desires and dreams and let Him give us His desires and dreams.

**TRUTH #4:** A heart submitted to God is fruitful.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever planted a garden or flowers from seeds? What was one thing you learned about planting them that made it successful or unsuccessful?

Jesus is telling a parable about one who is sowing seed for a harvest. They didn't plow fields and plant the way we do today with tractors. The modern way of planting/sowing is very intentional to yield the best crop possible. The method used in Jesus' day was one that was less productive because of the lack of intentionality. This is what would speak to the people.

## II. GET FOCUSED

### Read Luke 8:4-15

*And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, <sup>5</sup>"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. <sup>6</sup>And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. <sup>7</sup>And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. <sup>8</sup>And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*<sup>9</sup>And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, <sup>10</sup>he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' <sup>11</sup>Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup>The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. <sup>13</sup>And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. <sup>14</sup>And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. <sup>15</sup>As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience."*

In this passage, what is the seed?

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We need to first recognize the seed is the word of God (verse 11). The seed isn't our own opinions and theological leanings. It is God's word, the eternal and unchanging word of God. There are many ways to share the gospel with others but there is one gospel, and belief in it is needed for salvation. There are four kinds of soil that Jesus addresses and the issues that come with each soil. **We are responsible for our soil quality.** The soil is the element in this parable that can change. The Sower is unchanging. The Word of God is unchanging. But the Soil can change. Hard, rocky, thorny soil can be changed to be fertile. It has to be cultivated but it can change.

We have to keep in mind that Jesus is using this parable about the Sower and the soils in order to teach a spiritual lesson. Jesus is always cutting through the surface and worldly mentality to get to the real spiritual issue, the heart. We have to keep in mind that we are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-20). The things that we really battle are not people; we are in a battle *"against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."* (Ephesians 6:12) With this in mind, let's look at the four soils.



## SOIL 1: THE HARD PATH – LUKE 8:5 & 12

### TRUTH #1: THE DEVIL CAN STEAL ONLY THAT WHICH YOU LET HIM STEAL.

If you've ever been hiking or walked on a trail, what is soil on the path like?

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The soil on a path is hard due to the fact that it is a place where people and/or animals walk. Grass doesn't grow on the path. Weeds don't grow on the path. It is hard. Jesus says that when the word of God falls on these hearts, the Devil comes along and steals it away so they may not believe and be saved. This heart is hard just like a path. It is not accepting of the word of God. It is the heart that rejects all things related to God. It is the heart that allows the Devil to steal the one thing it needs most, God's word. But there is still hope for the hard-hearted. Let's look at the Devil's role in this situation as well as how to overcome a hard heart.

#### The Devil

The Devil, in our culture, is seen as a fictitious spiritual being much like the Boogie Man or the Tooth Fairy. Scripture shows us that the Devil is a fallen/cursed angel that was kicked out of heaven before the fall of man because of his desire to have the beauty, power, and authority of God. He makes his first appearance in the garden in the form of a serpent that led Adam and Eve into sin. In John 10:10, Jesus says, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* This verse sums up the difference between Jesus and the Devil. Jesus brings life. The Devil brings destruction. Just because someone is hard-hearted does not mean that there is no hope.

Have you ever known someone who seemed as far from God as a person could possibly be but then God changed their entire lives through the power of the gospel? Tell that story briefly.

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We do not stop sharing God's Word with those who are hard-hearted. God desires for everyone to come to know Him, so it's our calling to continue to share the word and love those who are far from Him. Here are some ways we can help others overcome a hard heart and that we can cultivate our hearts to prevent hardness of heart.

#### HOW TO OVERCOME HARD-HEARTEDNESS IN SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE:

1. Pray for their heart to soften to God.
2. Pray for them to receive God's Word.
3. Pray for protection from the enemy and his schemes.
4. Show the love of Christ to them consistently.
5. Share your story of how God has touched your life.

**HOW TO OVERCOME HARDNESS IN YOUR HEART:**

1. Pray.
2. Seek and submit to God - His word, His way, His life.
3. Accept His word and don't reject it; don't be skeptical.
4. Resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7).

Do you feel that there was a time in your life when your heart was hard?

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Is there a trigger in your life that causes your heart to harden towards God?

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**YOUR VIEWPOINT**

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**SOIL 2: THE ROCKS – LUKE 8:6 & 13**

**TRUTH #2: GET GOD'S PERSPECTIVE QUICKLY AND LET TESTING DEVELOP YOUR CHARACTER.**

You've heard the phrase, "Perspective is reality." What do you think that means?

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Can peoples' perspectives change?

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Rocky soil is deceiving. It may seem like it supports plant life but over time it proves to only support life for a short time because roots cannot break through to receive the water and nutrients needed for sustained life.

Jesus says that the person with a heart that is like rocky soil quickly finds joy in the message but when trials come there is no root system to support it. The rocky heart is one that sees God as too small to overcome its circumstances. Have you ever heard the saying, "Don't tell God how big your problems are, tell your problems how big your God is"? Perspective is crucial in the life of a believer because walking by faith means that we believe in God's eternal perspective instead of our temporal circumstances. Abraham believed God's promise that he would be the father of a great nation. He believed God even though he had no children. He believed God even when he only had one son, Isaac, and God told him to go up on the mountain and sacrifice him. Abraham had loaded Isaac up with the wood for the sacrifice, had the knife and fire in his hand and was beginning to walk up the mountain. In Genesis 22:7-8, Isaac asks his father where the sacrificial animal is. Abraham responds that God will provide His own lamb for the sacrifice. This shows the faith of Abraham. He believed that God's promise to be a father of a great nation was still there. One can only assume that Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead if Abraham was to sacrifice his son. But we see later in that passage that God stops Abraham and finds a ram caught in a bush nearby. Abraham had God's perspective.

**We also see this perspective in other men and women in the Bible whose circumstances didn't line up with God's call on their lives:**

- **Peter in prison**
- **Paul being beaten for the gospel**
- **Hannah who was barren**
- **Esther who had to confront the Emperor to save her people**
- **The Prophets, etc.**

Everyone will face tests and trials in life. It is a given in this fallen world. You've probably even known someone who accepts the Gospel quickly with joy but fell away shortly after. This is a tragedy. This shows the need for discipleship in our lives because without it, we don't always grasp God's perspective in times of testing and trial. Jesus said that those whose hearts are like rocky soil will fall away when times of testing and trials come. However, testing and trials don't have to make us rocky, they can develop our character.

### **HOW DO YOU OVERCOME A ROCKY HEART?**

1. Study His word and believe God's promises.
2. Find someone to disciple you.
3. Find Godly friends that will encourage you in your faith.
4. Get involved in what God is doing in church and in your life.

How can you implement the study of God's word into your daily life this week?

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Have you had someone disciple you or have you discipled someone else? Explain.

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Name some Godly friends that can/do encourage you? Write them down and seek them out.

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How can you get involved in what God is doing in church and wanting to do in your life?

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**YOUR VIEWPOINT**

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### **SOIL #3: THORNY SOIL – LUKE 8:7 & 14**

**TRUTH #3: TO FOLLOW JESUS, WE MUST LAY DOWN OUR OWN DESIRES AND DREAMS AND LET HIM GIVE US HIS DESIRES AND DREAMS.**

As a kid, what did you dream about becoming when you grew up?

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How have your desires changed?

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Jesus is teaching His disciples that we must lay down our own desires and concerns and let Him give us His desires and dreams for our lives. The word "thorns" is the same word in the Old Testament used in reference to idols in Jeremiah 4:3-4. *"For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: 'Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. <sup>4</sup>Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.'"* God has always seen where we tend to turn to 'idols'. He constantly attacks the idols in our lives to rid our hearts of trust and worship of anything other than Himself. Jesus addressed this often when confronting the Pharisees and other religious leaders. He called it out in the life of the rich young ruler in Mark 10 as well.

### Read Mark 10:17-31

*And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'"* <sup>20</sup>*And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth."* <sup>21</sup>*And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* <sup>22</sup>*Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

<sup>23</sup>*And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup>And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* <sup>26</sup>*And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup>Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." <sup>28</sup>Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." <sup>29</sup>Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, <sup>30</sup>who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup>But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

Thorns (idols) always choke our worship of Jesus. Jesus told the rich young ruler to go and sell everything he has and give it to the poor then he would have treasure in heaven. It seems harsh, but Jesus knew the young man couldn't follow Him and live for his own concerns at the same time. He is saying that we can't set our own path for life. We must submit all of our desires and concerns (wealth, social status, career, vacations, hobbies, sports/activities for our kids, etc.) to His authority and follow what He has for our lives. Jesus was looking at the condition of this young ruler's heart not at his actions. The young ruler had kept many of the commandments of God, but Jesus knew the one thing that hindered the young ruler was his love of money and position in life. Jesus knew this was an idol in his life.

Wealth and social status don't have to keep us from God when they are put in the proper relationship to Jesus as our Lord. However, wealth and position are big deterrents in following Jesus because we often default to trusting in our wealth and position in times of testing instead of trusting in God. If we put more trust in our wealth and position than we do in God, we are worshiping that instead of Him.

**HOW DO YOU OVERCOME?**

1. Pray and lay all of your desires at His feet and allow Him to change what your heart trusts most.
2. Steward your wealth and possessions as gifts given by God to build His Kingdom.
3. Order your life around your worship of God instead of around wealth, idols, and your own desires

What things compete for your attention?

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Are the things you give attention to idols in your life?

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How do our idols reveal our heart's desire? (Matthew 6:21- *for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*)

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**YOUR VIEWPOINT**


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**SOIL #4: GOOD SOIL – LUKE 8:8 & 15****TRUTH #4: A HEART SUBMITTED TO GOD IS FRUITFUL.**

Jesus points out the fruitfulness of good soil as being able to produce even a hundred times more than any other soil. Jesus' main measurement of our heart is the fruit that is produced from our life. Only God can see into the heart of people, but we can see the fruit that comes from the heart. Over time and through trials the true heart of a person is seen. Jesus tells us that we cannot bear fruit unless we are in Him.

**Read John 15:1-5**

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*

What does it mean to abide in Jesus?

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What fruit is seen in the life of a true believer?

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The one who remains in Jesus will bear fruit. There will be personal fruit that comes out in their attitude, speech, and actions. There will also be external fruit, the fruit of multiplication. Not the multiplication of having children, but the multiplication of discipling 'spiritual children'.

**Read Galatians 5:22-24**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Paul speaks of and lists the fruit that comes out of the life of someone who is submitted to God and led by the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit, here in Galatians 5:22, has been said to be the litmus test of a believer. A litmus test is used to determine the pH of a liquid. If there was a spiritual litmus test, this would be it. When you test the life of a believer, does it show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

What fruit do other people see in your life?

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In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives His disciples the Great Commission. He commissions them to *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...."* This is the external fruit of the believer. If our heart is good and we believe in Jesus, then we are to bear fruit by making disciples. Making disciples is something that we have often reduced to Bible study. While that is part of it, it's not the totality of it. Jesus shared His time and life with the disciples, teaching them through everyday situations. Discipleship is walking through life with someone who is pointing you to Jesus and training you to show others how to point others to Jesus.



What fruit of discipleship do others see in your life?

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How do you think God wants you to bear fruit in the area of making disciples?

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### YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## III. CONCLUSION

Through Luke 8, we have seen that **"My heart must be cultivated to receive the word of God and bear fruit"**. There are many things that can keep us from Jesus. There are many things that can keep someone from coming to Jesus, but we don't have to allow those things to keep us from Him. We will be held accountable for our own hearts when we stand before God. He is the one who will judge our hearts. Then, Jesus will judge believers for the way they have lived their lives.

If God were to judge your heart today, how do you think He would judge you?

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If Jesus were to judge your fruit, as a believer, how do you think He would judge the way you've lived your life and the fruit of it?

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## **IV. PRAYER**

Pray for your group to be people whose hearts are good, fertile soil for the Lord to work in and through.

Pray for your group to have hearts that seek Him first, bear inward fruit of the Spirit, and the fruit of disciples made.

## **V. MEMORY VERSE**

Luke 8:17

# Rooted In His Word: Parables

## Luke 10:25-37 – The Good Samaritan

July 18, 2021

### FOR THE LEADER

As we mentioned last week, parables are simple stories told by Jesus to teach a spiritual truth. Jesus used parables to explain spiritual truths in a way that people could understand if they had a heart open to hearing His message. This week we will look at the story of the Good Samaritan to see the truths Jesus is trying to teach us through this story. Our culture has become so self-centered and distant from godly values that this story will fit right into our daily lives. The Main Truth for today is: **Love your neighbor: compassion and Godly love shown to others is greater than your own desires.** Superficial Religious piety should not come before loving others. Truth faith looks to help others even when it's inconvenient. Outward religious actions must come from a heart that is humble before God and more concerned with what God thinks than what men think.

**MAIN GOAL:** Love your neighbor: compassion and Godly love shown to others is greater than your own desires

#### TODAY'S TRUTHS:

**TRUTH #1:** Knowing the way to eternal life isn't enough.

**TRUTH #2:** True godliness comes from a changed heart.

**TRUTH #3:** You go, and do.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Have you ever gone back and watched some of the TV shows you grew up watching as a kid? What is one of your favorite TV shows from your childhood?

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Did you notice things like inuendo and jokes that you didn't remember being in the show as a kid? Why do you think that is?

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As children, we notice what we understand. I was shocked when I went back and watched one of the TV shows I grew up watching. There was much inuendo between the husband and wife that I never noticed as a kid. I then understood why my parents were laughing at things I didn't think were funny.

That's why Jesus taught in parables. He knew that the people didn't understand the true heart behind God's Law. He was trying to teach them spiritual truths in a way that they could understand. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan we will see Jesus teaching them spiritual truths that had been lost over the years of focusing on the outward appearance of piety. Their image had become more important than their godliness.

## II. GET FOCUSED

### Read Luke 10:25-37

*And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup>He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" <sup>27</sup>And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." <sup>28</sup>And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." <sup>29</sup>But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup>Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' <sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" <sup>37</sup>He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

The lawyer was seeking to trap Jesus and make Him say something that could be used against Him. The opening question of "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" was meant to get Jesus to speak directly to His being God, but Jesus didn't fall for it. Jesus turned the question back on him and asked the lawyer what the Law says about it. Jesus wants him to speak about his understanding of the Law. This is brilliant. Sometimes the best way to handle critics and cynics is to ask questions.

The lawyer replies with the correct response, but Jesus seeks to take it a step deeper. See, the lawyer knew that the way to inherit eternal life was through loving God and loving your neighbor. Jesus even told him that he answered it correctly, and that if he did these things then he would live eternally. It's the same for us today just as it has been since God created Adam and Eve. The problem in this is sin. Because of sin, there is a great divide between man and God. Sin made it impossible for us to know God without forgiveness for our sin. That's where Jesus fits in. He is our eternal sacrifice to atone for our eternal problem, sin. Our belief in Jesus makes right our relationship with God. The lawyer was convicted by this response of Jesus because, deep down, he knew he was not living this way.

In verse 29, the lawyer seeks to justify his insufficiency. Engaging with Jesus illuminates our lack of righteousness that leads to eternal life with God. Jesus' simple response brought conviction to the lawyer which brings us to our first truth today.



## TRUTH #1: KNOWING THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE ISN'T ENOUGH

### Read James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup>So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. <sup>18</sup>But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! <sup>20</sup>Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; <sup>23</sup>and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. <sup>24</sup>You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup>For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

What is the relationship between faith and works? Can you have one without the other?

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James isn't saying that we are saved by our works. Other religions are built upon being good enough by the works we do in order to reach one's eternal destination. In Christ, faith and works are bound together. Yes, one could do good works without faith but that will not save you. James makes the argument that belief isn't enough because faith without works isn't real faith, it's dead. This is the same point that Jesus is bringing out here with the lawyer. Jesus is showing him that true faith is followed by works because true faith changes your heart. When a heart is changed, good works pour from it. It is unstoppable.

How did your works change when Jesus changed your heart?

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### Read Luke 10:29

*But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

Of all the questions he could have asked, why do you think the lawyer asked this question?

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As we mentioned, the lawyer was trying to justify his actions towards his 'neighbor'. In Leviticus 19:18, the scripture tells us to love your neighbor as yourself. The neighbor in this context is fellow Israelites. Then in Leviticus 19:33-34, the 'love your neighbor' is extended to the sojourner who is traveling in your midst. This brought about much division for the people of Israel. There were those who believed that only the Jews were their neighbors. Others believed that all who lived near them (Romans, foreigners, Samaritans, etc.) were their neighbors.

How do you attempt to justify yourself before Jesus when you don't measure up to His standard? Why?

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Who is your neighbor?

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Based on this passage, has your view of who your neighbor is changed?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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### Refer to Luke 10:30-37

*Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' <sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" <sup>37</sup>He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

Now we get into the actual parable that Jesus used to teach His point. Notice that a man was going "down" the road. Jerusalem is located about 2,500 feet above sea level, while Jericho is about 800 feet below sea level. In the South, we often say "down the road" which doesn't give it any real significance as to the actual direction you are traveling. Here it is important to notice that the man was traveling down the road, as were the Levite and the priest. Some interpreters of this passage have brought out the possible reason these two men walked on by the man was because of their need for religious purity and their roles at the Temple. This is unlikely because both were travelling away from Jerusalem. They were leaving the Temple area. The point that Jesus seems to be making, then, is more about the position the priest and the Levite would have in society. At this time in history, the priests and Levites were looked upon as having a high social standing. The reason for their standing was because of their family lineage, not necessarily their actions. These weren't roles that one aspired to or felt called to. They were roles you were born into. This goes to strengthen the point Jesus is making here.

## TRUTH #2: TRUE GODLINESS COMES FROM A CHANGED HEART

Jesus was beginning to shed light onto the false piety the lawyer was portraying. He was trying to justify his lack of concern for others because of his prejudice against certain people. Jesus was demolishing the lawyer's understanding of neighbor. The priest and the Levite both came, saw him, and passed by on the other side. They did nothing for him.

Then comes the Samaritan man along the road. Notice that he came, saw him, and had compassion on him. This is something that Jesus did numerous times in His ministry. (Examples of Jesus having compassion: Matthew 14:14-21, 15:32, 9:36, 20:34, 23:23; Mark 1:41, 6:34-42, 8:2; Luke 7:13; John 6:5-13) Jesus is drawing a clear line between being religious and having saving faith that overflows in action. The Good Samaritan goes the extra mile too. He doesn't just help him by finding someone to help. He takes care of him, puts him on his own donkey, takes him to the inn, pays for his stay and care and comes back to check on him to make sure he gets well. When we have compassion like Jesus, we will go the extra mile to care for people because people are God's greatest pursuit. We should always choose people over projects/tasks/preferences.

**James and Paul speak to this kind of heart. It is a heart after God's own heart.**

### Read James 1:27

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

### Read Philippians 2:3

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

How does true godliness show itself in light of these verses?

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How do your actions align with these verses?

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**Read Luke 10:36-37a**

*Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" <sup>37</sup>He said, "The one who showed him mercy."*

We see that Jesus was painting a clear picture of what loving your neighbor looks like. Then He asks the lawyer, "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" Jesus is pressing deeper and deeper into this lawyer's thoughts and beliefs and is challenging them because He cares for people. Jesus is teaching the lawyer an important spiritual truth here but He's also teaching His disciples that are surrounding Him.

What does the lawyer's response show about the condition of his heart now?

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**YOUR VIEWPOINT**

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**Read Luke 10:37b**

*And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

Jesus' close to this conversation is profound. He simply says, "You go, and do likewise." Jesus sends this man out into the world to live a changed life, to live a life with new neighbors, to live a life of mercy and compassion instead of prejudice. That's what Jesus does, isn't it? He calls, He teaches, He sends out, and one day He will come back. This leads us to the last truth for today:

**TRUTH #3: YOU GO, AND DO**

Jesus never demands action without heart change. Jesus focuses on the heart and commissions the action to flow from the changed heart. Too often we fall into seeking the action thinking it will change the heart. But action without the heart behind it will fade over time. It has to be rooted deep down in your being for action to last.

**Read Micah 6:8**

*He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (or steadfast love; mercy in NIV), and to walk humbly with your God?*



This passage simplifies the actions we have studied today and that we are to have as believers.

What does it mean to “do justice”?

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What does it mean to “love kindness” (or steadfast love; mercy in NIV)?

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What does it look like to “walk humbly with your God”?

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#### YOUR VIEWPOINT

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### III. CONCLUSION

We come back to the Main Truth for today: **Love your neighbor: compassion and Godly love shown to others is greater than your own desires.** We’ve seen how Jesus showed the lawyer that:

**TRUTH #1:** Knowing the way to eternal life isn’t enough.

**TRUTH #2:** True godliness comes from a changed heart.

**TRUTH #3:** You go, and do.

So, what holds you back from loving your neighbor like this?

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What needs to change in your heart to show Christ-like compassion?

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How will "You go, and do" this week?

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## **IV. PRAYER**

Pray for each member of your group to love their neighbors as Christ Jesus has shown us in this parable.

## **V. MEMORY VERSE**

Luke 10:22

# Rooted In His Word: Parables

## Luke 15:11-32 – The Prodigal Son

July 25, 2021

### FOR THE LEADER

As we continue in the parables, we will study one of the most famous of all the parables. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one that has a storyline that is still used in movies and novels today. It is a story of a son who goes off and ruins his life then returns to his roots and finds forgiveness, unconditional love, and redemption.

This parable is the third parable in Luke 15 about the lost. Jesus tells this series of parables because of His interaction with the Pharisees in Luke 15:1-2, *"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'*" The indictment of the Pharisees is that Jesus is spending time with sinners instead of with holy, devout Jews. This statement brings to light the differing worldviews and missions of Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus sees a foundational issue in the thinking and belief of the Pharisees when they speak down to Him about hanging out with sinners. So Jesus tells three parables to help them understand His heart and desire that drives what He does.

The first parable Jesus tells to show them God's heart and desire is the Parable of the Lost Sheep where Jesus tells of a shepherd who leaves the 99 to pursue the one lost sheep and rejoices when it is found. The second is the Parable of the Lost Coin where a woman with 10 silver coins loses one and cleans her house until she finds it. The point of these is that heaven rejoices greatly when the one lost person comes to faith, even more than over the 99 who are in no need of repentance. It also points out the heart of God to relentlessly pursue the lost. These first two parables focus on the role that God plays in our coming to salvation, but the Prodigal Son shows a different aspect because this parable hits closer to home. The value of a sheep when there are 99 others shows that the Shepherd puts amazing value on each sheep. The Shepherd could easily say, "I've got 99 still with me. I'm not going to worry over one sheep." The woman with 10 coins heightens the urgency of the pursuer because she only has 10 coins. To lose one means she loses 10% of her wealth. These show us that God views every person with the same value. He wants everyone to know Him. The parable of the Prodigal Son takes it a step further and shows us a more emotionally charged situation because this is a father with only two sons. We will see the heart of God explained more deeply as we study this parable. One of the key things we see in this parable comes in the life of the lost son. In the first two parables we do not see any kind of response from the one that is lost, but here we see surrender. The one who is lost must surrender to Him when we have the revelation that He is drawing us to Himself. The Prodigal Son shows how we are to respond to the revelation of God's love for us. It also shows us a different form of pursuit from God. In the first two parables, the pursuer actively seeks out the lost. In the Prodigal Son, we will see a pursuit from the father that seems more passive but in reality, is not passive at all.

The Prodigal Son is a multifaceted story, and we will look at the actions of the sons and the response of the father.

**MAIN GOAL:** God's relentless pursuit of our hearts leads us to return to Him.

**TODAY'S TRUTHS:**

**TRUTH about Us:** We all waste our lives until we are true sons/daughters of God.

**TRUTH about God:** God loves unconditionally and it is by His grace that He gives us what we want.

**TRUTH about Us:** Repentance is turning from our way and choosing God because He is best.

**TRUTH about God:** God wants sons not servants.

**TRUTH about Us:** Entitlement in the believer reveals our heart's misunderstanding of God's mission in the gospel.

**TRUTH about God:** Spiritual maturity is marked by the firm belief that God is and has more than enough for all believers.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Prodigal Son is a parable, on the surface, about the relationship between a father and his two sons. Dictionary.com defines 'prodigal' as "spending money or resources freely and recklessly; wastefully extravagant." The younger son becomes the Prodigal Son because of his actions that were wastefully extravagant. This story Jesus told has a much deeper spiritual meaning than one between a father and two sons. Jesus was telling this parable to teach the Pharisees and His disciples about God's love for all people. It is a painful look into the nature of sinful man and how it contrasts with the love of our Father.

Have you ever bought something you wanted against the advice of others? Explain.

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How did it work out when you got it?

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## II. GET FOCUSED

### THE YOUNGER SON

**Read Luke 15:11-16**

*And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup>And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.*



The request made by the younger son is one that breaks all lines of appropriateness. Imagine your son coming to you before you are dead and asking you for his portion of his inheritance. That is a slap in the face. It is probably one of the most insulting things that the younger son could have done, and then to take his inheritance and waste it all on extravagant living and parties. He really lived it up, but the money soon dried up and a famine hit the country he was in. It got so bad for him that he took a job feeding pigs. Pigs are one of the animals deemed unclean in the Old Testament. So, this job would have been a very humiliating and religiously destructive job to take. To add to the humiliation and religious desecration, he found himself wanting to eat the pods the pigs ate. The younger son went from having it all to hitting rock bottom. He was bringing shame to his father and his family by requesting the inheritance and by having to take a job feeding the pigs. The job of pig feeder is one that would have been deplorable to the Jews. The fact that the younger son even wanted to eat the pods the pigs fed upon adds to the insult and humiliation he was facing.

How does this request of the younger son make you feel?

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What do you think the younger son's motivation was in asking for his portion of the inheritance?

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How did the younger son waste his money?

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The spiritual truth in this passage is that we all are like the younger brother from birth. We all take everything the Lord has given us and squander it. God creates each one of us to worship Him and live for Him from conception in the womb. He gives us the family, home, and life that we have, including the clothes we have, the food we eat, and everything we own. It all comes from Him, yet we live for ourselves.

How can you relate to the younger son?

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**TRUTH ABOUT US: WE ALL WASTE OUR LIVES UNTIL WE ARE TRUE SONS/DAUGHTERS OF GOD**

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How have you lived like the younger son? In what ways have you squandered all God gave you from birth?

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### THE FATHER'S RESPONSE

There is no mention of the father's response to the younger son in the passage, but it does tell us the father *"divided his property between them."* (Luke 15:12) Then in Luke 15:13 the younger son packs up his stuff and takes off on his journey.

What does this action of the father show us about the love he has for his sons?

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How do you think the father felt when his son left?

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## TRUTH ABOUT GOD: GOD LOVES UNCONDITIONALLY AND IT IS BY HIS GRACE THAT HE GIVES US WHAT WE WANT

The father's response of giving his younger son the inheritance asked for is ultimately his grace in action. The father knows the son's heart is for something else, a different life than he has. The father also knows that he cannot change his son's desires. While the father probably hopes for the best for his son, he knows that he will not make it on his own because his heart is in the wrong place. God does this with us as well. He does not force us to stay with Him. That would make us servants, not sons/daughters. Sons/daughters stay because they are family.

### Read Romans 2:4

*Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

It is by the grace and mercy of God that He does not destroy us for our sinfulness. It is through His kindness that He allows us to choose to go into sin knowing that we will hit rock bottom and see the love He has for us. It is through this running away from God that we come to the end of ourselves and see that only He is good, just, gracious, and merciful. It is a hard lesson to learn but it is learned best by those who have fallen the hardest. It is better to be with Him in hardship than to be without Him in paradise.

How does the father show kindness to his son considering Romans 2:4?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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# TRUTH ABOUT US: REPENTANCE IS TURNING FROM OUR WAY AND CHOOSING GOD BECAUSE HE IS BEST

### Read Luke 15:17-24

*But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' <sup>20</sup>And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.*

How do you think the younger son's job feeding pigs helped bring him to the revelation of his father?

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What is the younger son's view of his father now? Why is this significant?

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The younger son finally came to his senses (15:17) and realized that he would be better off as a servant of his father than he was right then. He realized that the path he had chosen led to destruction. This is his revelation moment. He has not come to the point of repentance yet, but the realization that his life would be better with the father has now come.

Luke 15:20a says, "And he arose and came to his father." This is the moment of repentance. Repentance is turning from our old ways and turning back to God. This is a critical step in our journey of faith because revelation is only impactful when we act on it.

What do you think the younger son was feeling as he returned home?

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## TRUTH ABOUT GOD: GOD WANTS SONS NOT SERVANTS

What was the initial reaction of the father when he saw his son returning from a long way off?

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Why is it significant that the father ran and embraced his son?

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In Jewish culture it was shameful for grown men to run. The father threw off all cultural standards out of love for his son and the celebration began.

What did the father give his son and why is it significant?

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What did the father order to be done to celebrate the return of his son?

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The father makes it clear to the younger brother that he is his son, not a servant. This is the desire of God. Servants are not family. Sons are. Servants follow orders. Sons act out of an inward compulsion. Servants treat people, property, and things the way their master tells them to. Sons treat people, property, and things the way they should because of who they are raised to be. Being a son brings the benefit and blessing of family. God is not looking for people to follow Him because they must. God is calling people into family with Him, so they want to follow Him and live with Him.

How is your life different as a son/daughter of God rather than a servant of God?

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Why do you think the father said, "my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found"?

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## YOUR VIEWPOINT

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## THE OLDER BROTHER

The narrative of the story shifts its focus from the younger brother to the older brother. We get to see the reaction of the older brother in light of the return of the younger and the celebration that has ensued. His reaction is likened to the 99 sheep whom the shepherd left to find the lost one.

## TRUTH ABOUT US: ENTITLEMENT IN THE BELIEVER REVEALS OUR HEART'S MISUNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S MISSION IN THE GOSPEL

### Read Luke 15:25-32

Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup>And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup>But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup>but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' <sup>31</sup>And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup>It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'

What is your initial reaction to the older son's response?

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Who does the older brother represent today?

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The entitlement of the older brother is gross. He lost sight of the most important thing: his brother was lost and now he is found; he was dead but now he is alive. When we put our own selfishness before others' salvation, we have lost sight of the gospel and God Himself. Our insecurity in who we are as God's sons/daughters is caused by our distrust in God. It shows a misbelief that God is too small and too limited in provisions to provide for everyone. If we trust that God rewards the faithful and is more than enough for everyone, then we have no reason to be entitled because everything that God has is ours because we are all family. In the end, our entitlement robs us of the joy of celebrating with God when the lost are saved. Entitlement only hurts the entitled.

#### THE FATHER'S RESPONSE

**TRUTH ABOUT GOD: SPIRITUAL MATURITY IS MARKED BY THE FIRM BELIEF THAT GOD IS AND HAS MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR ALL BELIEVERS**

How does the father respond to the older son?

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Do you think the older son joined the party after his father refocused his perspective? Why or why not?

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The father refocuses the older son's entitlement and his feeling that this celebration is unfair. He does this by reminding his older son that everything they have belongs to the older son. He divided their inheritance in verse 12 and has already given everything that remains to the older son. The father is not limited in his ability to provide. We need to see that our life-long, faithful following of God will be rewarded. We also need to see that God rejoices over those who come to Him on their deathbed. God will reward all believers with salvation that leads to living with Him for eternity. Jesus will also reward each believer based upon their work in fulfilling His mission to reach the lost and make disciples.

Do you believe that God is big enough and has enough provision to reward every single believer?

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In what areas of your life do you feel entitled? (worship style, being a consumer at church instead of serving, finances/not tithing, etc.)

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### III. CONCLUSION

We have seen the gracious, loving, kind, patient, and joyful nature of our Heavenly Father through the parable of the Prodigal Son today. We have seen how we can wander from the Father and waste our lives. We have seen how we can stay near God physically but be far from His heart/mission through entitlement. The reality is we have to stay close to God and constantly realign our hearts with His gospel for us to be the men and women He has called us to be. We do this by having a teachable heart when we read our Bible and pray. We do this by being engaged in His mission of reaching the lost and making disciples. If we fail in these areas, we will stray far from God while His graciousness allows us to wander and fail in order to draw us back to Himself.

On a scale from 1-5 (1=I'm far from God, 5=I'm as close to God as I have ever been), how would you rate your spiritual closeness to God?

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On a scale from 1-5 (1=I am not involved, 5=I am involved daily), how would you rate your involvement in God's mission to reach the lost and make disciples?

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### IV. PRAYER

Pray for your group to be sons/daughters of God who are focused on God and engaged in His mission to reach the lost and make disciples.

### V. EXTRA TIME

#### Romans 1:18-2:4

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup>For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup>For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

<sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup>because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. <sup>26</sup>For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup>and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. <sup>28</sup>And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

**2** Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. <sup>2</sup>We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup>Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? <sup>4</sup>Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Why does God allow people to sin?

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Why does God not force everyone to follow His way?

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How does this show you God's kindness and lead you to repentance?

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How do you struggle with being judgmental?

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## VI. MEMORY VERSE

Luke 15:10

## NOTES

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## NOTES

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