

CANCELLED

5 Week series on FORGIVENESS

Week 2 - Luke 15:11-32

English Standard Version

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 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. 13 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. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to[a] one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "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! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 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. 21 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.'[b] 22 But the father said to his servants,[c] 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 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.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 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. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

BELONG (8 minutes)

Forgiveness - is a promise not to keep a record of wrongs against someone.

This week we are focusing on the Older Brother.

Ask this Ice Breaker Question: Do you have any siblings? Are you the oldest, middle or youngest child? Do you fit your stereotype? Why or why not?

Oldest child: Perfectionist, ruler follower, leader, achiever, bossy, responsible, cautious

Middle Child: Forgotten, adaptable, independent, people pleaser, rebellious, peace maker, social

Youngest: Gets everything they want, charming, outgoing, manipulative, social, fun, uncomplicated

Only Child: Conscientious, center of attention, mature for their age, sensitive, confident, lonely

BELIEVE (25 minutes)

Have someone in your group read aloud: Luke 15:11-32 (4 minutes)

Ask these questions to prompt group discussion: (Allow for 6-7 minutes for each question)

1. This week we are focusing on the older brother. The older brother is hard working, responsible, and loyal. And yet, he is also filled with bitterness and behaves in a petty manner. Have you ever felt similarly in certain situations and relationships?

- a. When have you ever experienced someone demonstrate “good characteristics”, but actually have bad motives? How did this make you feel?
- b. What is a moment in your life where anger or bitterness overpowered your attempts at “being good”?

Leader Context:

- *Keep in mind people might have different perspectives or views on this.*

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- *Following the rules is a double edged sword. We think it will always lead to peace and contentment. When we don't extend grace, rule-following can turn into bitterness.*
 - *Rule-followers are sometimes seen as judgmental people.*
2. **When the younger brother returns home the older brother pouts. His main gripe seems to be the injustice of the father's gracious attitude towards the prodigal. Why do you think justice often feels incompatible with grace?**
- a. When you feel something in your life is unfair, what is your natural response? What helps you make sense of the injustice?
 - b. What are "healthy" ways that you navigate things when they seem unfair?

Leader Context:

- *Justice and grace are not necessarily incompatible. It just seems this way.*
 - *If Justice is about restoring things to right standing, then grace is an important part of the process.*
 - *Rule-following, if done without grace, becomes an environment for self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is incompatible with grace.*
3. **Even though the father pleads with the older brother to come into the party, he declines. What do you think the older brother must personally sacrifice in order to reconcile with the younger brother? How could the older brother best redeem these relationships with the Father and the Younger Brother?**
- a. Repairing relationships is certainly not easy, what have you learned from an experience you've had in redeeming a relationship?
 - b. When in your life have you experienced a relationship being redeemed or restored? What about that experience felt hopeful or encouraging?

Leader Context:

- *The older brother likely needs to lay down his record of wrongs. He must lay down his pride. He must lay down his bitterness.*
- *The older brother likely needs to extend grace and gratitude for the opportunity to bring healing and redemption.*
- *It is clear that the older brother prioritizes bitterness and pride over grace and redemption.*

BECOME (5 minutes)

What was your big takeaway from today's discussion? What will you be thinking about for the coming week? This could also be something someone shared at your table that really stuck with you.

Prayer: *Lord, where in my life do I struggle to forgive? Help me to reveal if I have bitterness towards others, anger towards you, and shame or guilt towards myself. Amen*

Next Step: *Spend some time this week praying and writing down the names of those you need to forgive from past or present relationships.*