
Prodigal God: The Elder Brother
March 13-14, 2010 – Week 4
Luke 15:25-32

“...Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.” Luke 15:29

Notes:

Signs of an Elder brother:

Deep _____

Mechanical _____

Judgmental _____

Quick Review

The message identifies that over half of this parable involves the elder brother. The elder brother was just as lost as the younger. The younger brother squandered all the money and knows that he is in need of some serious reconciliation with the father, but the elder brother doesn’t realize his need. We would never say that God will bless you because you are Christian, but sometimes that’s the way we feel. Can you identify one point in the sermon that you readily agreed with or disagreed with? What was it, and why?

Small Groups

Getting to Know Each Other

1. What is one goal that you would like to accomplish in your lifetime? Do you have a “bucket” list?
2. List and discuss some common barriers to loving others. Are there people or friends in your life with whom you’ve had to overcome barriers in order to become friends?
3. When you say “I am a Christian” what does that mean to you? Create a list that reveals what being a Christian means.

Into the Bible

1. The elder brother has issues of envy, resentment and is judgmental towards the younger brother. What does Scripture warn us about with respect to these types of feelings?

Mark 7:20-23 Romans 1:28-32

Galatians 5:19-21 1 Timothy 6:3-5

2. Where does the elder brother find his self-worth and happiness? Do we find ours in the same way or place? Where should we find our self-worth and happiness?

Matthew 10:29-31 1 Peter 1:3-7

“This means that you can rebel against God and be alienated from him either by breaking his rules or by keeping all of them diligently.” ~ “The Prodigal God,” pages 36-37

Application

1. On pages 10-11 in *“The Prodigal”*, God Keller says, “Jesus is saying that both the irreligious and the religious are spiritually lost, both life paths are dead ends, and that every thought the human race has had about how to connect to God has been wrong.” Is it difficult to hear that both sides are wrong? Discuss some of the ways that both lifestyles could lead to a sense of lostness.
2. As you have discovered more about the behaviors of the brothers, discuss how they are similar and how they are different. Refer to the Weekly Word for a diagram of the two brothers. Do you see any of these traits in yourself? Are you more elder brother, younger brother or a mixture of the two?
3. Do you believe that people seek to control God by their obedience? If so, how do they go about doing it?
4. “The first sign you have an elder-brother spirit is that when your life doesn’t go as you want, you aren’t just sorrowful but deeply angry and bitter” (pg. 49). What is the source of the anger and bitterness? Have you ever felt like that in your relationship with God or witnessed it first hand?
5. Do you think that the elder brother’s attitude had anything to do with why the younger brother wanted to leave home in the first place? Did his attitude keep him from wanting to come home? How can you prevent this being the case in your life and your church?
6. Was there anything in pages 29-72 that you disagreed with, questioned or just wanted to discuss with the group?

Prayer

Ask God to reveal the ways that we have acted as the elder brother. Ask him to take away all envy, resentment and being critical of others. Share one way that the group can pray for you.

Family Groups

Into the Bible

Read *Luke 15:25-32*

Application

Ages 2-11

1. Have you ever been really good expecting to receive a present but never getting anything? How did you feel? What did you do?
2. Is there someone you know who doesn’t follow rules? Are you their friend? Can you be their friend and help them remember to follow the rules? What else can you do to be their friend?

Ages 12-18

1. Are there times when you do everything you are supposed to and aren’t recognized for it? How does this make you feel? How do you think God would want you to react or feel?
2. Do you have friends who aren’t Christians, or have strayed from their faith and their relationship with God? What have you done to witness to them? Is there anything you can do or say? Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to find out how God’s Word can help you witness to others.
3. If you were to create an invitation to the party for the elder brother in the story what might you say to convince him to come inside for the party?

For Families of all ages:

Spend time talking about how God has blessed your life. Think of some of these blessings: family, people, home, school, work, etc. Talk about specific instances in which they are blessings.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for every blessing you have given us. Help us to recognize when we are jealous or angry because we don’t get what we want or when something doesn’t go our way. Help us to grow in our relationship with you as we study your Word and learn your will for our lives. Be with us as we witness and share your love with others. Amen.