
Prodigal God: The True Elder Brother
March 20-21, 2010 – Week 5
Luke 15:1-6

“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” Luke 15:7

Notes:

“...forgiveness always involves a price – someone has to pay. There was no way for the younger brother to return to the family unless the older brother... paid our debt, on the cross, in our place.” “The Prodigal God,” pg 85

Quick Review

The message took another look at the parable of the lost sheep and lost coin and revealed that we have a true elder brother who sacrifices everything to bring us back to the father. In the parable of the two lost sons, the elder brother should have gone after the younger brother to bring him home, at great expense. He would have wanted the family reunited because of his love for the father. Jesus is our true elder brother and he has brought us to the Father. As you reflect on this weekend’s message, what one principle or insight stands out as being helpful or difficult to grasp?

Small Groups

Getting to Know Each Other

1. If you were an animal, which one would you be and why?
2. Have you ever been stranded somewhere when you needed someone to come and pick you up? How did that make you feel?
3. Does your family hold annual family get-togethers or family reunions? Do you enjoy these times together? If you could change something about them, what would it be?

Into the Bible

1. It was the responsibility of the elder brother to keep his family intact. Read Genesis 37:17-22 and note Reuben’s response to the other brothers who wanted to kill Joseph. Was Reuben acting as the true elder brother of the family? Ultimately, what should have been the way he handled it?
2. We gave up our rights as sons and daughters because of sin. Read Galatians 4:1-7. How did we get reinstated as sons/daughters of God, instead of being a hired hand? What does this reinstatement mean for our lives?
3. Read Philippians 2:4-10. We sometimes believe that God had to come here to save us and we fail to recognize what Jesus gave up to become a man. What was Jesus willing to give up, to become our true elder brother?

Application

1. Keller writes, “We must learn how to repent of the sin under all our other sins and under all our righteousness – the sin of seeking to be our own Savior and Lord.” *“The Prodigal God,”* pg 78. Throughout this series we have talked about being lost and in need of a Savior. Have you discovered a self-righteousness within yourself? What have you discovered about your own struggle with trying to be your own savior?
2. “The point of the parable is that forgiveness always involves a price – someone has to pay. There was no way for the younger brother to return to the family unless the older brother bore the cost himself. Our true elder brother paid our debt, on the cross, in our place.” *“The Prodigal God,”* pg. 85. Do you agree that forgiveness always comes at a cost? If it does, what price does it cost you to forgive a friend, family member or acquaintance?
3. We know that the lost can’t come to God. What is one way in which God seeks after them? Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. How comfortable are you with that task? How does this message affect the way that we view going out after our lost brothers?
4. If you had a chance to read pages 73-104, did you read anything that you questioned or wanted to discuss with the group?

Prayer

In your prayer time, ask that God guides your group to see those who are lost and in need of his love. Share with the group one way that they can pray for you or something going on in your life.

Family Groups

Into the Bible

Read *Zephaniah 3:17* and *1 Timothy 1:15-16*

Application

Ages 2-11

1. When you have to look for something that is lost, what do you have to give up in order to find it? Does anyone help you find the item that was lost? What did they give up to help you?
2. God loves you and wants you to love him. What are some ways that we can show God that we love him?

Ages 12-18

1. We have spent the last five weeks learning about the parable of the lost sons. Explain why the father is the real hero and focus of this parable. What does this parable teach us about God?
2. Discuss with your family one new idea that you have learned from studying this parable. Are there any questions, from this series of messages that you wanted to ask?
3. “Forgiveness always involves a price – someone has to pay.” Think of times when you had to forgive someone in your life. What does it mean that forgiveness isn’t free? What did you have to sacrifice to forgive?

For Families of all ages

Think of some ways your family can serve God. It might be something big or there might be some small ways. How might this be used as a way to show others that you love God? Read *Matthew 5:14-16* and see if this might help you out.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus as our true elder brother. He gave up the riches of heaven to come and suffer, die and be buried. But that’s not the end of the story, Jesus rose from the dead giving us the victory that was his. Give us your eyes and heart for the people of our world, that we might love others the way that you love us. Amen.