

THE PRODIGAL'S BROTHER

“But What About ME?”

What a blessing it is that Jesus did not end His parable about the lost son before giving us a picture of his equally self-centered brother:

THE PRODIGAL'S BROTHER

LUKE 15:25-31 NIV

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field.

*When he came near the house,
he heard music and dancing.*

*²⁶So he called one of the servants
and asked him what was going on.*

*²⁷‘Your brother has come,’ he replied,
‘and your father has killed the fattened calf
because he has him back safe and sound.’*

*²⁸The older brother became angry
and refused to go in.*

So his father went out and pleaded with him.

²⁹But he answered his father,

*‘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.*

*³⁰But when this son of yours who has squandered
your property with prostitutes comes home,
you kill the fattened calf for him!’*

³¹‘My son,’ the father said,

*‘you are always with me,
and everything I have is yours.’”*

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It seems it was impossible for the older brother to accept his younger brother when he returned. It is just as difficult to accept *younger brothers* today.

Today, husbands who repent after leading notoriously sinful lives are often held in suspicion by their wives.

Today, some churches have congregants struggling with addictions sitting in the pews on Sunday who could discover *God’s forgiveness* and freedom in Jesus in a church-sponsored Bible-based drug and alcohol discipleship ministry.

Today, *adult children* blame their own failures and sins on their parents’ sinful behavior during their childhood.

In Jesus’ parable, *the brother* represents the Pharisees, who were angry and resentful that sinners were being welcomed into God’s kingdom. Their haughty “holier-than-thou” attitude toward sinners rendered them just as lost as those they condemned.

In Jesus’ parable, the father’s response is contrasted with the older brother’s. The father forgave because he was filled with love. The brother refused to forgive because he was bitter about the injustice of it all. His resentment rendered him just as lost as his younger brother had been.

Is there someone in your life you just cannot forgive because of their past sinful life? Your husband? Your wife? Your father? Your mother? Your sister or brother? Your son or daughter? Is someone in your life getting more TLC after a life of sinning than you believe he/she deserves?

Don’t allow anything to keep you from loving and forgiving others – especially those closest to you in your family, church and ministry.

When we refuse to forgive someone, we are missing a wonderful opportunity to experience the joy of the Lord.

The truth is: *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* If we are self-righteous, we are stumbling down the steps toward *spiritual* starvation. We are no more righteous than the Prodigal. We need to repent just as he did.

Make your joy grow! Forgive someone who has hurt you. Rejoice with the angels in heaven when someone close to you repents and turns to Jesus.

Like the prodigal's father, accept repentant sinners with love, just as your Heavenly Father has accepted you.

A young woman came to our Family/Friends Support Meeting because her boy friend was in the Dependent Meeting. We encouraged her to focus on *her* relationship with the Lord, *her* own spiritual growth—trust the Lord to take care of him. When he did accept Jesus, become free of his addiction, and continued to attend the meetings to learn Biblical principles for his new life, she then complained: "All he does now is read the Bible. He still doesn't pay any attention to me!"

The "what about me?" attitude is very difficult to overcome. Why? *SELF* is on the throne of life — the throne Jesus should be occupying.

Jesus has rescued *all* of us from eternal death, whether we were extremely wicked or conventionally good. Only those who realize the depth of their sin can appreciate the complete forgiveness God offers.

Jesus said:
*"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins,
which are many, are forgiven;
for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven,
the same loveth little."
Luke 7:47 KJV*

Overflowing love for the Lord and others is the *spiritual* response to receiving forgiveness. It is the appropriate *fruit* of the spiritual gift of faith.

Let us help others to appreciate the width and depth of God's mercy, and encourage gratitude for His forgiveness. May we *grow up* more *in* Jesus so He will love the "unlovable" through us?



"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh.

Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;

old things have passed away;

behold, all things have become new.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:14-20 NKJV



Jesus said to him,

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

³⁸*This is the first and great commandment.*

³⁹*And the second is like it:*

'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 22:37-39 NKJV