

The Father's Love

By Wendy Krow
(Discipleship Lesson)

Read the entire lesson and then answer the questions that follow.

In Luke 15:11-32, Jesus tells a parable of a father and his two sons. This father was not the traditional Eastern father; he didn't act, or react, as one would be expected to act. What stands out about this father is his love for his boys. It is an unconditional love that seems to have no bounds. It seems that Jesus is describing a father who is more than a mere man.

The story goes like this, "A certain man had two sons," and the younger son decides that he wants his part of the inheritance. His father was a wealthy landowner, with herds of goats and cattle, and a big house.

Normally an inheritance was not divided until the passing of the father, but sometimes it was done, though the money was never distributed. This father gave him the money he wanted. He loved him. He also gave him the freedom to do with it as he wanted. He didn't have to agree to spend it wisely before it was given to him. It wasn't given to him conditionally. The Bible says that he wasted it; he spent it all. He had nothing to show for his inheritance, no investments or goods.

A severe famine arose in the place where he was living, which was probably among Gentiles; we are told that it was a country far away from his home. Being very hungry and out of money, he looked for a job. He found one feeding pigs. That was a new experience for him. He'd never been around pigs before. Pigs were considered unclean animals to the people of his culture. They didn't touch them and never ate them. Now he was feeding them, and was so hungry that he wished he could have a bite of what they were eating, but nobody gave him anything.

Then he remembered home and his father. He remembered how good his father was, how he had generously provided for the household, and how they all had plenty to eat. Something was drawing him home. It was remembering this good father and how the father had loved him. Then he also remembered how he had wronged and hurt his father by his rebellious actions and lifestyle of late. It hit him, the depth of the wrong he had done to his father who had loved him. He wasn't sure if he could go back and be welcomed as a son. Normally this would not happen in this culture. So, he devised a plan to ask if he could come back and work for him, and probably pay the money back this way. This is what he had hoped he could do. He still hadn't perceived the love that his father had for him, a love that had always been offered to him, unconditionally. He thought only of himself.

The decision was made to go home. Being a servant in his father's house would be much better than feeding pigs any day! The pigs were dirty and stinky, and he'd had enough of them. He had to at least ask, give it a try. Maybe it would work. Love was drawing him home.

Meanwhile, the father was watching for him to come home, waiting and watching. Every day he looked out across the village to the road in the distance, where his son had disappeared. He hoped he would return home.

Then one day as he looked out, he saw him coming! He recognized him from far off! His love for his son welled up in his heart, and he wanted to go to him. Normally this would not be done. He should wait for the son who had wronged him to come to him first,

but he couldn't contain himself. He had to go to him! He gathered up his robe and went running down the road to meet his son. This was very undignified behavior for a distinguished man such as himself. In doing this he shamed himself before the whole village. They watched him running to this ungrateful, rebellious son to see what he would do next.

Before the son could deliver his planned speech, his father ran up to him, put his arms around him, held him tight, and kissed him. He loved him so much. It didn't matter that he smelled like pigs and was very dirty. He loved this son who belonged to him, and his love was unconditional. Finally, the father, probably with tears in his eyes, stepped back to get a good look at this son of his who has been gone for so long and whom he loved so deeply. As he did, the son begins to perceive the love his father had for him and that he had been welcomed back. He saw his opportunity to speak and said, "I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son."

Did his father hear him? If we were there we might have seen him look lovingly at his son, and if we could hear his thoughts they would be "you can't earn my love; there is nothing you can do, good or bad, that can change my love for you. You are mine. You belong to me." Then he told the servant, who had run along with him to go get the best robe and put it on him, get the family ring and put it on his finger, and put some really nice sandals on his feet. These three gifts represent restoration. The robe was restoring honor to the son. The ring restored his authority in the family, and the shoes, well, only sons wore shoes, slaves did not.

Now it's time to celebrate! Kill the fatted calf! Invite the whole village to join us, for "this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." So the preparations for a grand party were in the making. Everyone gathered for the celebration.

Now the older son was out in the field working while all this was taking place. As he arrives he heard singing and dancing and wondered what was happening; no one had told him about a party. He asked a servant about it and was told that his brother had returned, and that his father had received him "safe and sound."

Instead of rejoicing with his father, his anger begins to boil. It was the kind of anger that is described as being furious, raging with desire for revenge, very intense. He refused to go in to the party. His father heard about it. This was considered an insult to the father. This father Jesus portrays is not the traditional father, and he comes out to the son who would not go in. Though he has insulted him, he pleaded with this son to please come and join them. His love for him was greater than anything he could say or do for him. He listened as the son began to list his accomplishments and exemplary behavior as compared to this other son of his. He accused his father of never giving him even a small goat to enjoy with some of his friends. "But look what you have done for this rebellious son of yours who spent your inheritance and has nothing to show for it! You killed the fatted calf for him," the son said. Then the father's heart, filled with love for the older son said, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours." Had he not perceived his father's love for him either? Did he think he had to earn his love through his performance? He didn't seem to know that he could draw on that love without having deserved it. The father continued by saying that it was the right thing to do to be glad that his brother was home again. For "your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

The father's love was demonstrated to both of his sons. He told them "I love you" through his actions. He loved the lawbreaker, and he loved the law keeper. His love was unconditional. Jesus came to show us what His Father is like. Take a good look. How will you respond to His love for you?

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(Discipleship Questions)

Answer the following by reading the corresponding discipleship lesson and using your Bible.

Read the following verses, Luke 15:11-32, in the Contemporary English Version. Now answer the questions.

Jesus also told them another story: Once a man had two sons. ¹²The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

¹³Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat. ¹⁵He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. ¹⁶He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.

¹⁷Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! ¹⁸I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

²⁰The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

²¹The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."

²²But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. ²⁴This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate.

²⁵The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?" ²⁷The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf."

²⁸The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house. His father came out and begged him to go in. ²⁹But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. ³⁰This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

³¹His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found." (Lk. 15:11-32 CEV).

1. Read Luke 15:13. The younger son wasted all his fathers inheritance on
W _____ L _____.
2. Read Luke 15:14. The younger son spent: (underline one)
 - a. Some of the money.
 - b. Everything.
 - c. Only some change.
3. Read Luke 15:14. The younger son became destitute (in total poverty): (underline one)

True or False.
4. Read Luke 15:16. The younger son wished he could have eaten the pig slop:
(underline one).

True or False
5. Read Luke 15:17. The younger son finally: (underline one)
 - a. Came to his senses.
 - b. Wrote a letter to his father.
 - c. Used the family credit card.
6. Read Luke 15:18. The younger son repented of his wrongdoing and said he had
sinned against _____ and _____.
7. Read Luke 15:19-21. The younger son thought he wasn't good enough to be his father's
son. He asked to be treated like a _____.
8. Read Luke 15:20. His father forgave this son and showed his great love for him by:
(underline one)
 - a. Running to his son.
 - b. Hugging his son.
 - c. Kissing his son.
 - d. All of the above.
9. Read Luke 15:22-24. The father restored the younger son to full sonship (not to be a
hired man or slave). (underline one)

True or False
10. What kind of attitude is Jesus showing us that the heavenly Father has towards us when
we turn or return to God? _____

11. Read Luke 15:10. When a sinner repents and turns back to God, who do you think rejoices in heaven? (underline one)
- a. Angels.
 - b. The four and twenty elders.
 - c. God.
12. Read James 4:8. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." If we draw near unto God, what will God do? _____.
13. Read 1 John 4:19. "We love him, because he first loved us." Why should we love God?
_____.

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(Discipleship Answer Key)

Do not look at the answer key until you have completed the questions.
Compare your answers with the following answers.

1. Read Luke 15:13. The younger son wasted all his fathers inheritance on **wild living.**
2. Read Luke 15:14. The younger son spent: (underline one)
 - a. Some of the money.
 - b. Everything.**
 - c. Only some change.
3. Read Luke 15:14. The younger son became destitute (in total poverty): (underline one)
True or False.
4. Read Luke 15:16. The younger son wished he could have eaten the pig slop: (underline one).
True or False
5. Read Luke 15:17. The younger son finally: (underline one)
 - a. Came to his senses.**
 - b. Wrote a letter to his father.
 - c. Used the family credit card.
6. Read Luke 15:18. The younger son repented of his wrongdoing and said he had sinned against **God in heaven** and **his father.**
7. Read Luke 15:19-21. The younger son thought he wasn't good enough to be his father's son. He asked to be treated like a **slave or one of his father's workers or hired men.**
8. Read Luke 15:20. His father forgave this son and showed his great love for him by: (underline one)
 - a. Running to his son.
 - b. Hugging his son.
 - c. Kissing his son.
 - d. All of the above.**

9. Read Luke 15:22-24. The father restored the younger son to full sonship (not to be a hired man or slave). (underline one).

True or False

10. What kind of attitude is Jesus showing us that the heavenly Father has towards us when we turn or return to God?
The attitude of love, acceptance and restoration. He doesn't make us slaves but restores us to the full position of sonship.
11. Read Luke 15:10. When a sinner repents and turns back to God, who do you think rejoices in heaven? (underline one)
- a. Angels.
 - b. The four and twenty elders.
 - c. God.**
12. Read James 4:8. If we draw near unto God, what will God do?
Draw near to you.
13. Read 1 John 4:19. Why should we love God?
Because He first loved us.

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