

Date: 01.21.2005

Passage: Luke 15: 11 – 31 (Parable of the Prodigal Son)

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*What are the characteristics of the younger son?*

Rebellious

- During those times, only when the father dies that the inheritance are portioned out
- Left home to seek freedom from his father's presence/influence

Stubborn and proud

- when he was in trouble, he tried to solve it using his own way first
- only as a last resort did he go back to his father

*What are the characteristics of the father?*

Gracious/ Merciful

- Based on Deuteronomy 21:18, the father could have punished his rebellious son, instead he gave his son what he asked.
- He forgave his younger son readily by restoring the younger son's status in the family (putting the robe, ring and sandals on his younger son.)

Loving

- He willingly threw away his status when he ran to meet the younger son. Since men wore long robes during those times, he'd have to lift his robes to run and expose his ankles, which was a loss of stature. Also, usually, only the servants and slaves would run out to greet the guests.

Patient

- He was on the look out for the younger son and has waited for his return.

*What are the characteristics of the older brother?*

Jealousy

- He became angry that his father was celebrating the return of the younger son while his father never gave him even a goat to feast with his friends. It also shows that he focused on what he has with his friends.

Judgmental

- He did not understand how the father could forgive the younger son since the younger son has squandered the father's wealth.

Bitter

- He took up the offense done by his younger brother to their father.
- He may also be harboring some bitterness that his father did not accept his friends.

*In the parable, the younger son came to his senses, repented of his sins and was able to ask his father for forgiveness. How does that apply to our lives?*

The coming to senses is an important turning point. In our journey to salvation, it is only when we come to our senses that we are able to ask God to forgive our sins and us.

*Why did the younger son say that he has sinned not only against the family but also the heaven?*

By being rebellious, the younger son failed to honor his father, thus breaking the fifth commandment.

*Who does the father represent and what can we learn from the father's example?*

The father represents God. The father's action of running to the younger son, reminds us of how Jesus humbled himself, left his status to come to earth to save us. All the characteristics of the father apply to how God treats us, i.e. patiently, graciously, mercifully and lovingly. The father reveals that God is God of reconciliation that the father explains to the older son his joy and states that his younger son is brother to the older son.

*Who does the younger son represent and what can we learn from the younger son's example?*

The younger son can either represent non-believers who became Christians, or Christians who have wandered away and now returned. It reminds us that if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us. (1 John 2:15). If we leave Him, we are not with Him. However, if we humble ourselves and go back to Him and ask for His forgiveness, He will welcome us back and forgive us of our wrongdoings.

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*Who does the older son represent and what can we learn from his example?*

The older son represents the Pharisees who were judgmental about people they considered sinners. It reminds us not to be judgmental towards others. When we are quick to judge, we forget to love others, and consequently pushed them away from us. We need to remember the grace Jesus has shown us and show the same to others. We should be glad and rejoice when we see people returning back to Christ. Also, we should not take up offenses done to others as the older son did about what his younger brother has done to their father, as it will lead to bitterness and a hardened heart.

*Other points:*

- ◆ Reflect on where we are in life and where our hearts are. What is our relationship with God? What is our relationship with other people? Don't lose focus that everyone's God's creation. Don't pick and choose whom we want to share the gospel with.
- ◆ Both brothers did not feel the love, even though their father loved them, because their hearts were closed due to rebellion and bitterness. When we don't feel God's love, it's not because He doesn't love us anymore, but it's because we have closed our hearts towards Him.