

Notes And Helps to Instructors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a group through the treasures of God's word! You may feel overwhelmed or inadequate, but you can do this! The leader notes are designed to help you grow in knowledge and love for Christ and for you to help pass what you have received to your group. Here are some suggestions to help equip you to grow in your teaching and leading ability.

- These lessons could simply be read, and a group would receive something but that is not how they are designed. The notes are designed to grow you as a leader so you might tailor the lesson for the needs of your group. Some groups may not have much of a knowledge base in the bible, so the concepts must be brought down to their level. Other groups may have a large knowledge base and you may challenge them with more information. The key is to know your group. If you begin leading a group in one way and find that it is not connecting, it is alright to modify and bring down or raise up the level of information.
- The more preparation you do the stronger you will be as a leader. Let the study material be a joy for you! Let it feed you as you prepare! The more you are fed the more you have to give to your group.
- There is no set time on how long a lesson may take. Lessons could be slowed down and take several weeks to finish. Perhaps in leading a group, one question captivates the group and leads to a fruitful conversation. If that happens, that is good! You are in no hurry. If you can finish the material in a week, then great! But if it takes several, that is great as well! The important thing is that they receive deeply from the gospel of Jesus.
- Pray about your lesson! Pray as you prepare! Pray as you teach! Remember we do not teach or exercise our gifts in our own strength. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to move in your heart and the heart of the group.

May our merciful Triune God bless your study and your group that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In Christ,

Prison Discipleship Ministry

Lessons in Luke -- Lesson 8 – Jesus and the Older Brother –Who is really lost? – Part 2

Introduction:

Simeon prophesied over baby Jesus that He would raise up many weak persons and bring down many proud persons (Luke 2:33-35). This week we look at Luke 15:11-24.

Read this passage at least five times then answer the questions as best you can:

¹¹ Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. ¹² "And the younger of them said to *his* father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me*.' So he divided to them *his* livelihood. ¹³ "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*. ¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. ²³ 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

How many sheep were lost? How many coins? How many sons?

1 sheep, 1 coin, 1 son

What did the lost son do with his inheritance? What is justice for the younger son?

In vs. 12, the son demanded from his father his share of the Father's inheritance. In essence, what the son is saying to the father is "I wish you were dead, and you are dead now to me." The firstborn son would have received the double portion of the inheritance, so the younger son's inheritance would have been much less. The dishonor and disrespect the younger son showed to his father is incredible! People would have wanted him stoned for his disrespect! But shockingly, the father agrees and divides out his property and gives the inheritance to the son.

Verse 13 says the son quickly goes to a far country and wastes possessions on prodigal living.

Definition of "prodigal" : noun – "person who is wasteful of his or her money, possessions, etc. spendthrift. Adjective – wastefully or recklessly extravagant"

Verse 14 says that he spent it all and then a famine came into the land. And he had nothing. He got a job feeding pigs. Now, imagine this picture for the Jewish audience

who would have heard it. Good Jews do not go anywhere near pigs as they are unclean. So here is this young man feeding pigs and dreaming to eat the pig food. This is the lowest of the low that one can go!

What does the phrase “came to himself” in verse 17 mean?

It means that he realized just what state his heart and life was in. God did something in his heart to bring his heart back from the dead as the parable says in verse 32. He remembered the goodness of his father. He remembered how even the hired servants of his father had enough to eat, and yet, here he is perishing in hunger. He remembered the generosity and kindness of his father in caring for his people. He decided that he had nothing else to lose except his life. He looked to the goodness and kindness of his father and said I will go back to him. He even rehearsed his apology to the father. He said he would go back and say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” Notice, the son knew that he had sinned against his father and moreover, he has sinned against God. He owned his sinful actions which came from his sinful heart. He would repent to him and maybe he would receive him in the lowest place of the house. But in his fathers house, he knew he would be safe. But what is repentance? The Westminster Shorter Catechism gives us a helpful definition.

87. What is repentance unto life?

Answer: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience.

The younger son demonstrated this kind of repentance. He admitted his sins and understood the true depth of them, he apprehended the mercy of his father, and turned away from his sin and turned to the father to live in obedience to him.

How did the lost son get right with his father?

He turned from his past, came to his father, and repented.

How did his father receive him? What does verse 20 tell us about the father? Who is the father in this parable?

The father was looking for and waiting for the son to come home. He never gave up hope that he would be lost. And when he was still a long way off, the father ran after his son. This to a 1st century audience would have been shocking. Men in those days did not run. You cannot run well in those days with their garments with out first tying down your loins. So it would have been so undignified to run. But the father did not care! He loved his son and was so happy he was back!

Notice the father didn’t even let the son get his prepared speech out. He received him, and clothed him, and asked that the fatted calf be prepared for him so they could

celebrate that he is home! Verse 20 shows us that the father is full of compassion and is a man who pursues his lost children.

The father of course represents God the Father who sent Jesus to live the perfect life under the law that we have all failed to live, and to die the death of sin that we all deserve. God the father is rich in mercy and compassion for us. But also, he pursues us by sending Jesus for us. God comes after us! And he will receive us, cloth us, and bring us into his home with rejoicing!

What kind of a father did you have growing up? How is God different from your father?

There is no right answer here. Let them talk and listen empathetically to them. Let them know they have been heard. This may be very painful for them to speak about.

Does the fact that you might have had a bad father growing up mean that your future is hopeless? Not at all. God is the God of the future. See the next question.

How is God different from your father?

Allow the students to talk. After they have finished remind them that they are made in God's image and part of that image is a knowledge of a good father and mother. God is the only perfect father and He is for them (Romans 8:39ff).

Do you think that God rejoices over you? Why? Why not?

Again, let them talk. Listen for salvation by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ alone. Help them see that works do not save, or does works make God love them more if they are in Christ. Works are a response to grace, not the reason for salvation or for God's love. Preach them the gospel: Christ came to live the perfect life we could not and died the death for sin we deserve. And when we repent and trust in Christ, our sin is credited to Jesus and his perfect life, death, burial, and resurrection is ours. And that is a gift we receive by grace, through faith, in Christ alone.

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