

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 9 – Jesus and the Older Brother –Who is really lost? – Part 3

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 finish Luke 15.

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

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ "So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' ²⁸ "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore, his father came out and pleaded with him.

²⁹ "So he answered and said to *his* father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' ³¹ "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² 'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'" (Luk 15:25-32 NKJ)

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

1 sheep, 1 coin, 1 son

How are the sheep, coins, and sons alike? How are they different?

They are all lost.

The one sheep emphasizes that no one is unimportant to God. Even in a large crowd one percent still matters. The one coin is 10% of the loss. The one son is 50% of the loss. The other two losses represent a tremendous increase in value. The one son is of the greatest value.

In verse 29 why is the elder brother angry? Was this true?

He is angry at his father. He claims that he has served his father for many years and has never transgressed his commandment at any time. As he says he has never transgressed his father's commands (or wishes) he is refusing to go into the party as his father wishes he would. He is dishonoring his father right here and now. The older brother is very self-deceived in his self-righteousness. He also attacks his father's goodness by saying that he never gave him a goat that he might party with his friends. The father surely doesn't seem like a man who is stingy or holding back of his possessions; he already gave the younger son his inheritance because he asked. Wouldn't the father also give something much smaller like a goat to the older son? So, the older son says he honors his father's wishes and commandments, but he does not and is not at that very moment. He does not honor what the father honors in his heart and does not want to share in his father's joy. He

accuses his father of not being good to him. It seems that the older brother had a lot in common with the younger brother despite thinking that he was so much more superior!

In verse 30 what other reason does the elder brother give for being angry? Was this true?

He contrasts his experience to that of his younger brother. He first says, “but as soon as this son of yours came...” He takes no credit for him as a brother. His heart was not broken at his leaving, and his heart did not rejoice at his return. All he can think about is himself--not gaining back his brother and not the joy of his father. So he says, although you have never given me a goat to party with my friends, this son comes and devoured your livelihood with harlots, and you kill the fatted calf for him. You can hear the force behind his words: “Father, he said he wanted you dead, took all the money you worked so hard for, and went off and blew it all on harlots! And he comes back and you celebrate him? He should be shunned and shamed! Meanwhile, I have been here all this time and you should be celebrating me! You are not good as you have no sense of justice, no sense of goodness, and you are wrong to be so merciful!”

In the face of the self-righteousness of the older brother, it leads us to ask just what was the reason that the older brother served his father? Was it because he loved his father and wanted to build the family business? Or was it simply for what he could get out of his father? The mercy and joy the father showed to the younger brother was the heat that boiled the true nature of the older brother’s heart. The older brother is just as lost as the younger brother was. His compliance was merely a selfish veneer that covers his heart of darkness.

In verse 31 what reasons does the father give for making merry?

Since the older brother is blinded by his self-righteousness the father attempts to take the blinders off of his son. You can feel the love the father has for his son in his words. He says, “Son, you are always with me...” He says to his Son, “I see you, I know you, love you, and I have not given up on you and have never left you. Then he says, “and all that I have is yours.” The father has not held back anything from his son. His goodness has been proven, his generosity has been seen, and his character is one that is full of love.

But the son was also upset at the father for not exercising justice. So, the father now addresses this with his son. He says, “it was right (just) that we should make merry and be glad.” And the reason the father gives is “for your brother was dead and is alive again and was lost and is found.” The father says it is just to celebrate when someone sees their sinful heart, repents of those sins, and turns back to the father. And that act of repentance; of a dead man coming to life or a lost man found is worthy of celebration! This is the joy of the father’s heart!

There are two ways to learn life – the hard way (prodigal son) and the easy way (the older brother). Yet it is possible for the one who follows the “easy way” to miss what is right in front of his eyes.

Look back at verses one and two, who is the younger son? The older son? The father?

“younger son” tax collectors and sinners
“older son” Pharisees and scribes
The Father is God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

Who really needs to repent? Why?

The older brother needs to repent of his self-righteousness which is a greater sin than the sins of the younger brother. The older brother is just as dead, blind, and lost as the younger brother whom he so despised and judged.

Sometimes we can “go through all the motions” of obedience to the father and still have a heart that is not loving to the father. Obedience without love to the father, without a realization of your sin and living a life of repentance, living in constant judgment and self-righteousness over others, and not sharing in the joy of the lost finding salvation shows that our heart is not right with God.

We are not saved by our works; we are saved by grace through faith in the work of Jesus Christ for us alone. Our works do not make us savable, keep us saved, or earn us salvation. Salvation is a gift that Jesus gives when we repent of our sins and place our trust in his work alone. And Jesus promised that the Spirit will take up residence in us as the downpayment of all that Jesus promised is true and will be true (Eph 1:13-14). So true is God’s promise of salvation to us in Christ, the Spirit takes up residence in us now! The Holy Spirit then grows us in good works that flow from a grateful heart of love for so great a salvation -- not to earn anything, but because we have been given everything!

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