

HE WAS STILL MY SON Bible Study Handout

Luke 15:11–24

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.”

INTRODUCTION: Understanding the Setting of the Parable

Luke chapter 15 reaches its climax in this final parable. Jesus is still responding to the criticism of the Pharisees and religious leaders who questioned why He welcomed sinners. In response, Jesus tells three connected stories that reveal the heart of God.

In the first parable, a shepherd searches for a lost sheep. In the second, a woman searches for a lost coin. In this final story, Jesus shifts from something lost to someone lost—a son.

This parable is more personal than the others because it focuses on relationship. It reveals not only the condition of the one who wandered, but also the heart of the Father and the response of the one who stayed.

The message of the series comes into full view:

What is lost... is still valuable.

And what is valuable... is worth restoring.

KEY TEACHING THEME

This parable reveals three important truths about the heart of God:

- God allows us to choose, even when it leads us away
 - God receives us when we turn back to Him
 - God restores us fully, not partially
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POINT 1: He Wanted the Father's Stuff... But Not the Father

The younger son asks for his inheritance before the father's death. In that culture, this request was deeply offensive. It was essentially a rejection of the father while he was still living.

The son chooses what the father can give instead of the relationship with the father himself.

He settles for less.

This reflects a pattern seen throughout Scripture, where people choose independence from God rather than relationship with Him. The desire for autonomy often leads to distance.

The son leaves for a far country, creating both physical and spiritual separation. What begins as freedom eventually leads to emptiness.

SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Genesis 3:6–7

Adam and Eve choose their own way, creating distance from God.

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right, but it leads to destruction.

James 1:17

Every good gift comes from God, not to replace Him, but to point to Him.

POINT 2: He Came to Himself

After wasting everything, the son finds himself in a place of deep need. A famine arises, and he is reduced to feeding swine, which represented the lowest condition for a Jewish audience.

This moment reveals the consequences of living apart from the Father.

But then the turning point comes.

The text says, “he came to himself.”

This is the beginning of repentance. He recognizes his condition, remembers the provision in his father’s house, and makes a decision to return.

Repentance is not just regret—it is a change of direction.

However, the son returns with a misunderstanding. He believes he must come back as a servant, not realizing the father’s desire to restore him as a son.

SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Lamentations 3:40

Let us examine our ways and return to the Lord.

Psalms 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Acts 3:19

Repent and turn to God so that times of refreshing may come.

POINT 3: The Father Ran to Him

As the son returns, the father sees him from a distance and runs to meet him. This was unexpected in that culture, as men of dignity did not run.

But the father’s compassion overrides social expectations.

The father moves toward the son before the son can fully speak.

This reveals the nature of God’s grace.

God does not wait for us to fix ourselves before coming near. God moves toward us with compassion and restores us fully.

The robe, ring, and sandals all represent complete restoration—honor, authority, and belonging.

The father does not receive him as a servant, but restores him as a son.

SCRIPTURE FOR FURTHER STUDY

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates His love while we were still sinners.

Ephesians 2:13

We who were far off have been brought near.

Romans 8:15

We have received the Spirit of adoption as sons.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE PARABLE

This parable teaches several important truths:

God's love is relational, not transactional.

Repentance leads to restoration, not rejection.

God's grace restores identity, not just position.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does the younger son's request reveal about his understanding of the father?
 2. What does it mean to "come to yourself" spiritually?
 3. How does the father's response change your understanding of God's grace?
 4. In what ways can someone be "in the house" but still disconnected like the older brother?
 5. How should this parable shape how we respond to others who are returning to God?
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SERIES CONCLUSION

Through these three parables, Jesus reveals the heart of God.

The sheep was still valuable.

The coin was still valuable.

And the son was still his.

No matter how far someone has gone, they have not lost their value in the eyes of God.

And because of that...

Restoration is always possible.