

# Luke 15 Commentary

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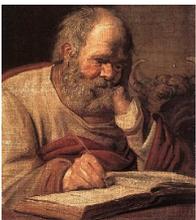
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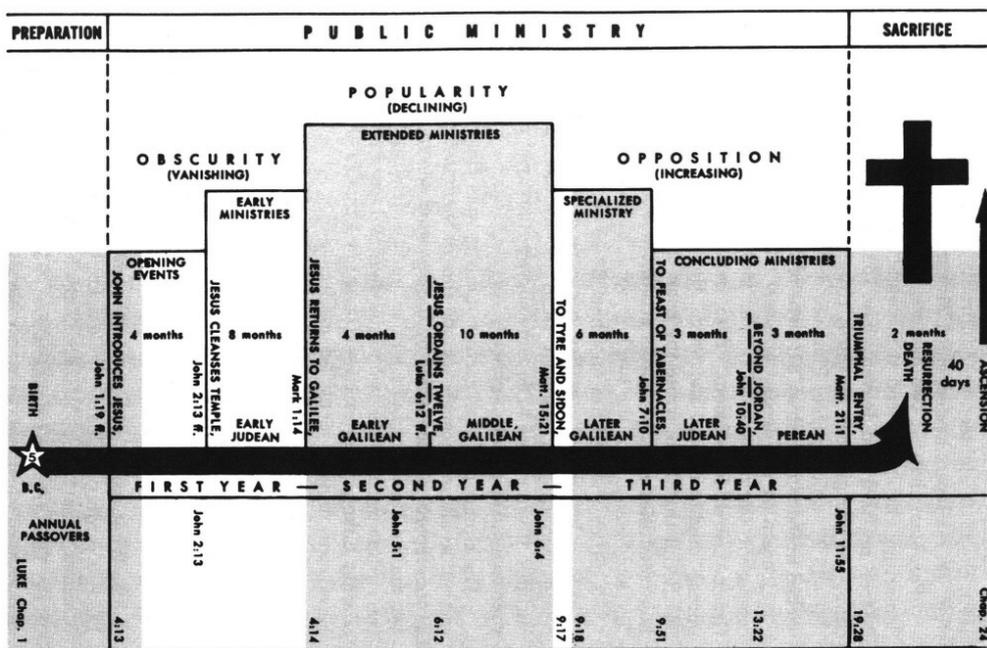
[Luke 15:32](#)



1 ELIZABETH—MARY	MAINLY PECULIAR TO LUKE										ABOUT 60% PECULIAR TO LUKE																										
	PREPARATION										INSTRUCTION										SACRIFICE																
	GALILEE										LATER JUDEAN AND PEREAN MINISTRIES TO JERUSALEM										AT JERUSALEM																
	MIRACLES AROUND HERE										PARABLES AROUND HERE										THE GREAT & GRAND SACRIFICE				THE GRAND MIRACLE												
	"MIGHTY IN DEED" →										AND WORD" (24:19)										LAST MESSAGES				MISSION ACCOMPLISHED												
30 YEARS										1 1/2 YEARS										6 MONTHS										8 DAYS				50 DAYS			

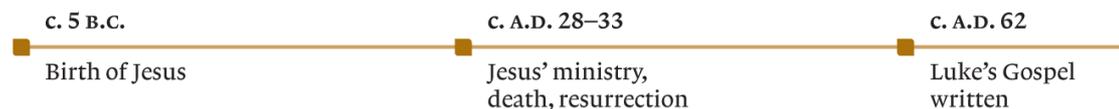
KEY PHRASE: "SON OF MAN"      KEY VERSES: 19:10; 24:19

From [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) by permission  
[John MacArthur's Introduction to the Gospel of Luke](#)  
[Charles Swindoll's Introduction to Luke](#)  
[Luke Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll



Click chart to enlarge LIFE OF CHRIST IN GOSPEL OF LUKE (See Shaded Areas)  
 Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

Ryrie Study Bible -Borrow



Source: [ESV Global Study Bible](#)

### John Hannah's Outline

Instructions concerning the nature of those in the kingdom (Luke 14:1-17:10)

- a. Instructions before the religious leaders (Luke 14:1-15:32)
  1. The cause of their exclusion (Luke 14:1-24)
    - a. Blind traditions (Luke 14:1-6)
    - b. Lack of love (Luke 14:7-11)
    - c. Prejudices (Luke 14:12-24)

2. The invitation extended (Luke 14:25-35)
3. **The basis for the invitation (Luke 15:1-32)**
  - a. **His search for sinners stated (Luke 15:1-2)**
  - b. **His search for sinners illustrated (Luke 15:3-32)**
    1. **The lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7)**
    2. **The lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)**
    3. **The lost son (Luke 15:11-32)**

**Crawford** notes that the old Puritan writers described this section of Luke as:

Luke 14—A Feast	Earth with all its madness	A Great supper.
Luke 15—A Famine	Heaven with all its gladness	A Great compassion.
Luke 16—A Fire	Hell with all its sadness	A Great gulf.

**Luke 15:1 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.**

KJV Luke 15:1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

NET Luke 15:1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming to hear him.

CSB Luke 15:1 All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to Him.

ESV Luke 15:1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

NIV Luke 15:1 Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him.

NLT Luke 15:1 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach.

NRS Luke 15:1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.

YLT Luke 15:1 And all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming nigh to him, to hear him,

- Lk 5:29-32; 7:29; 13:30; Ezek 18:27; Mt 9:10-13; 21:28-31; Ro 5:20; 1 Ti 1:15
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:1-10 God's Lost and Found](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:1-2 Heaven's Joy: Recovering the Lost](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:8-10 Recovering the Lost Coin](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur

## THOSE WHO HAVE EARS TO HEAR NOW DRAW NEAR TO JESUS

**Leon Morris** - This is one of the best-known and best-loved chapters in the whole Bible. Three parables bring out the joy of God when the lost sinner is found. The fact that the first two depict people who actively seek what is lost may well put emphasis on the truth that God does not wait passively for sinners to come to him, but actively seeks them out. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#) - borrow)

**Alan Carr** - Luke 15 has been called **God's Lost and Found Department**. In these 32 verses, Jesus uses no less than 4 illustrations dealing with the lost and with God's desire to see them saved and restored to fellowship with Himself. Verses 3-7 record the Illustration of the Lost Sheep. Verses 8-10 record the Illustration of the Lost Silver. Lk 15:11-24 give us the Illustration of the Lost Son. And, Verses 25-32 relate the Illustration of the Lost Sibling. The backdrop for these "heavenly stories with earthly meanings" is found in Luke 15:1-2. Jesus, knowing the hard hearts of these religious people, told them the parable that makes up the verses of this chapter. In this parable, Jesus uses four illustrations to teach them the value of every lost soul. He even uses this parable to teach them that they themselves might not be as secure as they thought they were. ([Luke 15:1-7 The Lost Sheep](#))

**Henry Morris** - This chapter consists of three "lost-and-found" parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Note the

numerical sequence in the three parables: one out of a hundred sheep was lost, one out of ten coins (Luke 15:8) and one out of two sons (Luke 15:11). A less concerned shepherd would have let the lost sheep go, but "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Similarly, a more careless woman would not have gone to so much trouble to find one lost coin when she still had nine, but the Lord "came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), and He knew the full redemption price must be paid. No human father could be unaffected by the loss of half his sons, but all he could do was pray. He could not go searching for the wandering son, like the shepherd or the woman, but God could! (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Roy Zuck** - When the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law complained, "This Man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (15:2), Jesus gave the Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost or Prodigal Son. By these stories Jesus indicated that He ate with sinners because they, like the three lost elements, were in need of being "found" spiritually. (Borrow [Basic Bible Interpretation : a Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth](#))

**Crawford** introduces this chapter - Often, and we have seen this in Luke, the Lord tells two parables to press home one truth, but here He tells three to impress on every heart the great truth of how the lost are found. The golden text of Luke's Gospel is fully depicted here, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10). ([What the Bible teaches – Luke](#))

**Now all the tax collectors (telones) and the sinners (hamartolos) were coming near (eggizo) Him to listen** (akouo - hear) **to Him** - The adjective **ALL** generally means all without exception. To the religious leaders these were the "spiritually untouchable" and they were drawn to Jesus like iron filings to a magnet. We see some of the tax collectors had approached John seeking baptism (Lk 3:12). **Tax collectors** were in synonymous with **sinners** (cf Lk 15:2 where Luke uses only the word "sinners") Human "rejects" rejected by the "religious righteous" were received by the Righteous Redeemer. **Coming near (eggizo)** is in the present tense describing the rejects as continually flocking to the Redeemer.

Remember that chapter breaks in Scripture are not inspired but were added by men and unfortunately often hide contextual associations in the text. And so in this case the very last words of Luke 14 were "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**" And the first word in Luke 15 in many of the translations is "**Now**" (NAS, ESV, NIV, NET). It is as if **ALL** the **tax collectors and the sinners** had heard Jesus command in Luke 14:35+ where "**let him hear**" is a command in the [present imperative](#) (keep on hearing!) and **were coming near Him to listen** (akouo = same verb translated "hear" in Lk 14:35) **to Him**. These "outcasts" had ears to hear what the Savior was teaching, while the Pharisees and scribes did not and thus began grumbling just as they had done at the beginning of chapter 14 (Lk 14:1+)

**Leon Morris** adds - We should not let the modern chapter division make us miss an important point. Jesus has just made an uncompromising demand for whole-heartedness as he showed what following him meant. He finished with 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear'. Luke's very next words tell us that these sinners came near to **hear** him. Whatever the case with the Pharisees and their like, these sinners had been challenged. They knew what discipleship meant. They were called on to hear. And they heard. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#) - borrow)

**R Kent Hughes** on **tax collectors** - For centuries before and after Christ, tax collectors were universally hated. Cicero insulted an opponent by saying that he must have imagined himself a tax-gatherer, "since you most thievishly ransacked every man's house, the warehouses and the ships, entangled men engaged in business with the most unjust decrees, terrified the merchants as they landed, and delayed their embarkation" (*In Vatin.* 5). St. Chrysostom preached, "The tax-gatherer is the personification of licensed violence, of legal sin, of specious greed" (*Hom.* 2.4)....They were loathed in every way. Synagogues would not accept their alms. Their testimony was not received in Jewish courts. They were held to be worse than the heathen. (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

We see a similar scene in Mark

When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the **sinners and tax collectors**, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with **tax collectors and sinners**?" And hearing this, Jesus \*said to them, "It is not those who are healthy (SELF RIGHTEOUS RELIGIOUS LEADERS MISTAKENLY THOUGHT THEY WERE SPIRITUALLY "HEALTHY"!) who need a physician, but those who are sick (SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING); I did not come to call the righteous (THAT IS, THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS), but sinners (THOSE WHO RECOGNIZE THEIR DESPERATE NEED FOR JESUS)." (Mark 2:16-17+)

**NET Note** - Jesus' point is that he associates with those who are sick because they have the need and will respond to the offer of help. A person who is healthy (or who thinks mistakenly that he is) will not seek treatment.

**Gary Inrig** on **sinners** - As the Pharisees used the term, it did not necessarily describe notorious sinners. More commonly it referred to ordinary people who lived with indifference to the rigorous observances of the pious. The religious derisively called them *am h'aretz*, "the people of the land," the non-observant, the unclean. They may have been indifferent to religion, but such people were

not indifferent to spiritual truth. They were drawn to the Lord's teaching—a fact that infuriated “the Pharisees and the teachers of the law,” men who represented the epitome of religion and respectability in Jewish life. The problem was not so much sinful people's response to the Lord, but the Lord's response to them. After all, who could object if sinners came to learn? As long as they knew their place! But Jesus didn't merely tolerate their presence. “This man welcomes sinners.” They felt comfortable in His presence! “And eats with them.” In a culture where sharing a meal meant acceptance and even approval, how could a good man behave like this? How could He enjoy their company and have them enjoy His? “That tells us all we need to know about Jesus. You can tell a man by the company He keeps, and since He's not with good people, He's obviously not a good man.” ([The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#) - Borrow)

**Spurgeon** - The Pharisees and scribes formed the outside ring of Christ's hearers, but the inner circle consisted of the guilty, the heavy-laden, and the lowly. They pressed as near to Christ as they could, that they might catch his every word; and besides, there was an attractiveness about his manner that drew them towards him. His mercy attracted their misery. They wanted him, and he desired them; they were thus well met. There will be an inner circle tonight when the gospel is preached, and it will not consist of the self-righteous. They that are full will not press to the table on which the gospel feast is spread, the hungry will be found nearest to the heavenly provision. ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

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**Tax collectors** (**publican**) (5057) (**telones** from **telos** = tax + **onéomai** = to buy) means a reaper of the taxes or customs, tax-collector, one who pays to the government a certain sum for the privilege of collecting the taxes and customs of a district. The public revenues of the Greeks and Romans were usually farmed out. Among the latter, the purchasers were chiefly of the equestrian order and were distinguished as being of a higher class because they rode horses, or they were at least persons of wealth and rank like Zacchaeus who is called the **chief tax collector** (architelones in Lu 19:2). These farmers also had subcontractors or employed agents of the Roman government who collected the taxes and customs at the gates of cities, in seaports, on public ways and bridges. These, too, were called **telomnai** (pl.), publicans, or eklégontes (n.f.), (ek = out of, + légo = in its original sense meaning to collect), those who collected out of the people.

In summary the **tax collectors** were Jews who worked for the Roman Empire collecting taxes from their countrymen, often charging more than was required, pocketing the difference, and enriching themselves (cf Lk 3:12–13). It is no surprise that they were hated and detested, to the point that no one but individuals of worthless character were likely to be apply for these positions. Given this background, one can readily understand why the religious leaders so strong frowned upon Jesus fraternizing with these vermin, who were considered traitors and outcasts from Jewish society.

**Telones - 20v - collector(1), tax collector(5), tax collectors(15).** Matt. 5:46; Matt. 9:10; Matt. 9:11; Matt. 10:3; Matt. 11:19; Matt. 18:17; Matt. 21:31; Matt. 21:32; Mk. 2:15; Mk. 2:16; Lk. 3:12; Lk. 5:27; Lk. 5:29; Lk. 5:30; Lk. 7:29; Lk. 7:34; Lk. 15:1; Lk. 18:10; Lk. 18:11; Lk. 18:13

**Sinners** (268) (**hamartolos** from **hamartáno** = deviate, miss the mark which some lexicons say is from a = negative + meiomai = attain -- not to attain, not to arrive at the goal) is an adjective (e.g., “*that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful*” - see Ro 7:13+) that is often used as a noun (as in this verse and Ro 5:19+) to describe those who are continually erring from the way, constantly missing God's mark, living in opposition to His good and acceptable and perfect will. Thus a sinner is one who lives his entire life, every facet of it, in opposition to the divine will. In a more selective use, in the view of the Pharisees a **sinner** was a Jew who is one not careful in the observance of ceremonial duties (Mt 9:10ff, Lk 15:1ff, Mk 2:16). Finally, the Jews called the Gentiles sinners or despisers of God and considered them heathen or pagan, *tá éthne* = the nations (Mt 26:45). Jesus' purpose for coming into the world was to save sinners (Mt 9:13 1Ti 1:15) It was these poor people who no one cared about that Jesus reached out to!

**Hamartolos - 47x/44v - sinful(4), sinner(12), sinners(31).** Matt. 9:10; Matt. 9:11; Matt. 9:13; Matt. 11:19; Matt. 26:45; Mk. 2:15; Mk. 2:16; Mk. 2:17; Mk. 8:38; Mk. 14:41; Lk. 5:8; Lk. 5:30; Lk. 5:32; Lk. 6:32; Lk. 6:33; Lk. 6:34; Lk. 7:34; Lk. 7:37; Lk. 7:39; Lk. 13:2; Lk. 15:1; Lk. 15:2; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 15:10; Lk. 18:13; Lk. 19:7; Lk. 24:7; Jn. 9:16; Jn. 9:24; Jn. 9:25; Jn. 9:31; Rom. 3:7; Rom. 5:8; Rom. 5:19; Gal. 2:15; Gal. 2:17; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 7:26; Heb. 12:3; Jas. 4:8; Jas. 5:20; 1 Pet. 4:18; Jude 1:15

**Were coming near** (1448) (**eggizo**) means to approach, draw closer to, draw near, be near, come near, all these uses referring to moving in space and drawing closer to some point. Eggizo can describe the nearness of various aspects of the spiritual kingdom including the hour of betrayal (Mt 26:45), redemption (Lk 21:28), and the Second Coming (Heb 10:25-note, cf James 5:8). The writer of Hebrews uses eggizo to explain

For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect) (THE LAW WAS ONLY PREPARATORY FOR RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL AND FAITH IN CHRIST - Gal 3:23-24-note), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope (THE [NEW COVENANT](#) IN JESUS' BLOOD), through which **we draw near** (eggizo) to God.

(Heb 7:18-19-note, cf Acts 13:39)

**MacArthur - Drawing near to God** is the **essence of Christianity** as compared with the Levitical system (IN THE NT IT WAS THE PHARISEES WHO KEPT SINNERS FROM DRAWING NEAR TO GOD! SEE Mt 23:15, cf Gal 4:17, 6:12, Php 3:18-note), which kept people outside His presence. As believer priests, we are all to draw near to God—that is a characteristic of priesthood. (MacArthur Study Bible)

**Eggizo** is the verb James uses in his exhortation

**Draw near** (eggizo in the [aorist imperative](#) - a command - the Spirit enables us but we still must choose to draw near) to God and He will draw near to you. **Cleanse** ([aorist imperative](#) ) your hands, you sinners; and **purify** ([aorist imperative](#)) your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:8-note)

**Eggizo** is often used to describe the approach of the Kingdom of God and in this passage describes the continuous (eggizo is in the [present tense](#)) approach of "untouchables" to the **King** of the Kingdom! **Steven Cole** writes "What a great word of hope that is for sinners! If the thought of standing before the holy God who knows everything you have ever thought, said, or done frightens you, because you know that your sin is great, don't run! Rather, do what these sinners in Jesus' day did: Draw near to Him and listen to Him. He will receive you."

Luke has over 50% of the NT uses of **eggizo** - Lk. 7:12; Lk. 10:9; Lk. 10:11; Lk. 12:33; Lk. 15:1; Lk. 15:25; Lk. 18:35; Lk. 18:40; Lk. 19:29; Lk. 19:37; Lk. 19:41; Lk. 21:8; Lk. 21:20; Lk. 21:28; Lk. 22:1; Lk. 22:47; Lk. 24:15; Lk. 24:28; Acts 7:17; Acts 9:3; Acts 10:9; Acts 21:33; Acts 22:6; Acts 23:15;

**Mattoon** - on **drawing near** in the [present tense](#) (they were continually drawing new) which emphasizes that it was the habitual practice all through Jesus' ministry for people to draw near

- All throughout the New Testament, we find people attracted to Christ.
- Children were attracted to Him. (Matthew 19:13-14)
- Sinners approached Him. (Luke 15:1)
- Men accompanied Him. (Luke 5:11, 28)
- Shepherds and Mary adored Him. (Matthew 2:11; John 12:3)
- Soldiers admired Him. (John 7:46)
- A centurion acknowledged or confessed Him. (Luke 23:47)
- Pilate was astonished at Him. (John 18:33-38)
- The Samaritan acclaimed or praised Him. (Luke 17:15, 16)
- Martha accommodated or served Him. (Luke 10:38) (
- [Mattoon's Treasures from Luke, Volume 4.](#)

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#### QUESTION - [Why does the Bible speak so negatively about tax collectors?](#)

**ANSWER** -Probably in every culture, in every part of history, from the tax collectors of ancient Israel to the IRS agents of today, the tax man has received more than his share of scorn and contumely. The New Testament indicates that the occupation of "tax collector" (or "[publican](#)") was looked down upon by the general populace.

The [Pharisees](#) communicated their disdain for tax collectors in one of their early confrontations with Jesus. The Lord was eating a meal with "many tax collectors and sinners . . . , for there were many who followed him." When the Pharisees noticed this, "they asked his disciples: 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Mark 2:15–16). A "sinner," to a Pharisee, was a Jew who did not follow the Law (plus the Pharisees' own rules). And a "tax collector" was—well, a *tax collector*.

Jesus used the commonly held opinion of tax collectors as an illustration of the final stage of church discipline: when a person is excommunicated, Jesus said to "treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17). In other words, the excommunicant is to be considered an outsider and a candidate for evangelism.

There are a few reasons for the low view of tax collectors in the New Testament era. First, no one likes to pay money to the government, especially when the government is an oppressive regime like the Roman Empire of the 1st century. Those who collected the taxes for such a government bore the brunt of much public displeasure.

Second, the tax collectors in the Bible were *Jews* who were working for the hated Romans. These individuals were seen as turncoats, traitors to their own countrymen. Rather than fighting the Roman oppressors, the publicans were helping them—and enriching themselves at the expense of their fellow Jews.

Third, it was common knowledge that the tax collectors cheated the people they collected from. By hook or by crook, they would collect more than required and keep the extra for themselves. Everyone just understood that was how it worked. The tax collector [Zacchaeus](#), in his confession to the Lord, mentioned his past dishonesty (Luke 19:8).

Fourth, because of their skimming off the top, the tax collectors were well-to-do. This further separated them from the lower classes, who resented the injustice of their having to support the publicans' lavish lifestyle. The tax collectors, ostracized as they were from society, formed their own clique, further separating themselves from the rest of society.

Jesus taught that we should love our enemies. To emphasize the point, He said, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" (Matthew 5:46). The word *even* is significant. Jesus was telling the crowd they needed to rise above the level of publican behavior. If our love is only reciprocal, then we're no better than a tax collector! Such a comparison must have left its mark on Jesus' hearers.

Given the low esteem people had for tax collectors, it is noteworthy that Jesus spent so much time with them. The reason He was [eating that meal](#) in Mark 2 with "many tax collectors" is that He had just called Matthew, a tax collector, to be one of His twelve disciples. Matthew was throwing a feast because he wanted his circle of friends to meet the Lord. Many believed in Jesus (verse 15). Jesus responded to the Pharisees' indignation by stating His ministry purpose: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

The Pharisees saw tax collectors as enemies to be shunned. Jesus saw them as the spiritually sick to be healed. The Pharisees could offer nothing to the tax collectors except a list of rules. Jesus offered forgiveness of sins and the hope of a new life. No wonder the publicans liked to spend time with Jesus (Luke 15:1). And tax collectors like Matthew and Zacchaeus were transformed by the gospel and followed the Lord.

[John the Baptist's](#) message was that *all* need to repent, not just tax collectors and other obvious sinners. The Pharisees couldn't see their need and refused to be categorized with publicans. To the self-righteous, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him" (Matthew 21:31–32). [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resource:

- [What is a publican in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Croft Pentz - REPENTING BRINGS REJOICING Luke 15:1–32

Jesus spoke often in parables. This lesson contains three parables. The parables Jesus gave were always:

1. Scriptural. He often quoted the Old Testament.
2. Spiritual. Each one had a spiritual truth for the hearer.
3. Sound. His parables always made sense.

##### I. THE LOST SHEEP—Luke 15:1–7

1. People—vv. 1–2. The publicans (tax collectors) and sinners came to hear Christ speak. The Pharisees were critical toward Him.

2. Parable—vv. 3–6.

- a) Sheep—vv. 3–4. If only one out of one hundred sheep were lost the shepherd would leave the ninety-nine to search for it.
- b) Satisfaction—vv. 5–6. Finding the lost sheep brings joy. All rejoice with the shepherd.
- c) Sinner—v. 7. When a sinner repents of his sin, the angels in heaven rejoice. Christ rejoices, and we should too.

We are as sheep gone astray (Isa. 53:5–6). Of all animals, a sheep is the only one who cannot find his way home. Christ came to die, and by this He could lead us home to heaven.

##### II. THE LOST SILVER—Luke 15:8–10

1. Remorse—v. 8. The lady lost a coin. This coin was worth seventeen cents, or a day's salary. The lady sought until she found it.

2. Rejoicing—v. 9. When she found the coin she rejoiced. Her neighbors rejoiced with her. We rejoice when a sinner finds Christ.

3. Repentance—v. 10. There is joy when a sinner repents of his sins and follows the Lord completely.

When a person works for the Lord and leads people to Christ, he has great joy. All sorrow and gloomy feelings leave when we tell others about Christ.

### III. THE LOST SON—Luke 15:11–32

Here is a good picture of God the Father and the sinner.

1. Rebellion—vv. 12–13. The son wanted his share of the money. He left home and wasted his money on sinful living.
2. Results—vv. 14–16. His money gone—his friends gone! He fed the pigs. Even the pigs' food looked good. No one gave him food.
3. Realization—vv. 17–19. He thought of his home and father. He would arise and go to his father's home. He would repent of his wrong.
4. Return—vv. 20–21. The father forgave and gave his very best to him.
5. Rejoicing—vv. 22–24. There was rejoicing because of his return.
6. Rejection—vv. 25–32. The older brother didn't rejoice, but opposed the father's joy and the return of his brother. We should rejoice because our lost brother is found (note v. 32).

As Christians we should encourage new converts. We should not push down, but lift up these "babes in Christ." Don't be critical; be compassionate. Don't scold; encourage. Be interested in the problems of people. Rejoice with them when they rejoice and weep with them when they weep. Lack of love and patience with these people shows a lack of Christlikeness. ([Expository Outlines from Luke](#))

**Luke 15:2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."**

KJV Luke 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

- **began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them"** - Lk 15:29-30; 5:30; 7:34,39; 19:7; Mt 9:11; Acts 11:3; 1 Co 5:9-11; Gal 2:12
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:1-10 God's Lost and Found](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:1-2 Heaven's Joy: Recovering the Lost](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur

## MURMURING ABOUT MEALTIME

**Both the Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)) and the scribes ([grammateus](#)) began to grumble ([diagogguzo](#))** - Grumble is first word in sentence for emphasis! **Began to grumble** where **grumble** is in the [imperfect tense](#) giving us a vivid [onomatopoeic](#) picture of these religious hypocrites, grumbling over and over! They were visibly disturbed by this veritable "sea of sinners!" It is notable that this chapter begins with the opposition of the Pharisees, just like the previous section (Lk 14:1+), indicating that the anger against Jesus is fomenting and would soon explode in Jerusalem.

**Pharisees and the scribes-** The Gospels mention these two religious groups ganging up against our Lord in 20 verses - Mt 5:20, 12:38. Mt 15:1, Mt 23:2, Mt 23:13, Mat 23:14, Mt 23:15, Mt 23:23, Mt 23:25, Mt 23:27, Mt 23:29, Mk 2:16, Mk 7:1, Mk 7:5, Luke 5:21, Luke 5:30, Luke 6:7, Luke 11:53, Luke 15:2, Jn 8:3

- Don't grumble because you don't have what you want—be thankful you don't get what you deserve.
- Most people don't mind suffering in silence as long as everyone else knows about it.
- Some people intend to be gratefully humble but instead turn out to be grumbly hateful.
- If you feel "dog tired" at night, it is because you growled all day.
- Stop grumbling because roses have thorns. Instead (filled with the Spirit) be thankful that thorns have roses!
- When we are discontented with ourselves, we grumble about others, a perfect description of **the Pharisees and scribes!**

**William Barclay** - The **Pharisees** gave to people who did not keep the law a general classification. They called them the People of the Land; and there was a complete barrier between the Pharisees and the People of the Land. To marry a daughter to one of them was like exposing her bound and helpless to a lion. The Pharisaic regulations laid it down, "When a man is one of the People of the Land, entrust no money to him, take no testimony from him. trust him with no secret, do not appoint him guardian of an orphan, do not make him the custodian of charitable funds, do not accompany him on a journey." A Pharisee was forbidden to be the guest of

any such man or to have him as his guest. He was even forbidden, so far as it was possible, to have any business dealings with him. It was the deliberate Pharisaic aim to avoid every contact with the people who did not observe the petty details of the law. Obviously, they would be shocked to the core at the way in which Jesus companied with people who were not only rank outsiders, but sinners, contact with whom would necessarily defile. We will understand these parables more fully if we remember that the strict Jews said, not "There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents," but, "There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God." They looked sadistically forward not to the saving but to the destruction of the sinner. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

**David Holwick** has a sermon entitled "[Grumbler's Grip](#) (good if you are prone toward grumbling) including the dangers of grumbling and three ways to minimize grumbling!" Here is an [illustration](#) from that sermon "At the beginning of a new year, a high school principal decided to post his teachers' new year's resolutions on the bulletin board. As the teachers gathered around the bulletin board, a great commotion started. One of the teachers was complaining. "Why weren't my resolutions posted?" She was throwing such a temper tantrum that the principal hurried to his office to see if he had overlooked her resolutions. Sure enough, he had mislaid them on his desk. As he read her resolutions he was astounded. This teacher's first resolution was not to let little things upset her in the new year!" (See also Ray Pritchard's sermon [Grumblers Anonymous](#)).

**C H Spurgeon** wrote that "A heavy wagon was being dragged along a country lane by a team of oxen. The axles groaned and creaked terribly, when the oxen turning around thus addressed the wheels, "Hey there, why do you make so much noise? We bear all the labor, and we—not you—ought to cry out!" Those complain first in our churches who have the least to do! The (UNSPIRITUAL) **gift of grumbling** is largely dispensed among those who have no other talents, or who keep what they have wrapped up in a napkin." ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**This man** (This fellow = NRSV) **receives** ([prosdechomai](#) - "welcomes") **sinners** ([hamartolos](#)) **and eats** ([sunesthio](#)) **with them** - **This man** is the Pharisees' [derogatory](#), [contemptuous](#) way of identifying Jesus, similar to the use of the same phrase **this man** in Lk 14:30+. (cf similar [disparaging](#) uses of "this man" - Mt 12:23, 24, Mt 13:54, 56, especially Mt 26:61, et al). **Receives sinners** is rendered in NIV as "welcomes sinners" and the NLT as "associating with such sinful people." **Receives** and **eats with** are both in the [present tense](#) indicating that this was the habitual practice of Jesus to continually associate with the "riff raff rejects." As noted below the prefix of the verb **eats with** ([sunesthio](#)) is [sun/syn](#) which speaks of Jesus' intimacy and of Jesus' willingness to rub shoulders with sinners. So what is the big deal about Jesus eating with them? In the East eating meals together was a gesture of intimate fellowship and no Pharisee would stoop so low as to eat with (in their eyes) "[low life](#)". Jesus, as he would demonstrate in the parable, had come to search out and save those who were lost.

**THOUGHT** - Jesus receives sinners and none are too sinful to come to Him, if they would but come! If you know someone who thinks they are simply beyond the reach of Jesus because of the heinous character of their sins, you need to bring them to this passage and show them that Jesus still receives sinners! This verse gives incredible hope to all sinners (I ought to know as I am one saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and by the Spirit - 2Cor 13:14+)

**William Hendriksen** - To **associate** with people of this class was considered contaminating; to **eat** with them, outrageous!...He associated with publicans and sinners, meeting them on their own level, in order to deliver them from their sinful ways and to raise them to the level of genuine holiness, the holiness required by *God's* law (Lev. 19:2+). In reality, therefore, it was Jesus, rather than the rabbis, who was honoring the law." ([Exposition of the Gospel of Luke](#) - borrow)

**R Kent Hughes** - The rabbinic commentary on Exodus 18:1 cites an old rule that "a person should not associate with the godless" and points out that the rabbis would not associate with such a person, even to teach him the Law (*Midrash Mek. Amalek* 3 on Exodus 18:1, 65a). (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Rod Mattoon** points out that "In fellowshiping with these sinners, He was not condoning their sin or involved in their sin. He met them where they were and reached out to save and pardon them if they sought His forgiveness and cleansing. Many Christians are not able to do this because they do not have the spiritual maturity to avoid entanglement in the lifestyle of the wicked. They cannot handle pressure from peers. Jesus, however, could reach the corrupt without being corrupted." ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Leon Morris** - Eating with these people was regarded as worse than mere association: it implied welcome and recognition. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

Jesus' fellowshiping with sinners invariably drew the ire of the self-righteous hypocritical religious leaders...

Luke 5:29-32+ And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes **began grumbling** ([gogguzo](#) in the [imperfect tense](#) = over and over murmuring) at His disciples, saying, "**Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners** ([hamartolos](#))?" 31 And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician (THE SELF-DECEIVED, SPIRITUALLY BLIND

PHARISEES THOUGHT THEY WERE "WELL"), but those who are sick (SPIRITUALLY SICK). 32 "I have not come to call the righteous (PHARISEES WHO CONSIDERED THEMSELVES RIGHTEOUS IN GOD'S EYES BUT WERE NOT!) but sinners to repentance (NOTICE HERE THAT REPENTANCE CLEARLY IS USED IN THE CONTEXT OF SALVATION - THIS WILL BE DISCUSSED MORE BELOW)."

**Comment:** The religious leaders had hardened their hearts against Jesus and his message, but the "despicable" people were coming to listen. It is notable that in Luke 5 the opponents of Jesus had found fault with His disciples for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners, but here in Luke 15, they had grown bolder, and so directly criticized Jesus Himself for such outrageous behavior.

**Hendriksen** remarks that clearly the Pharisees and scribes "had not taken to heart the lesson Jesus had taught them (Lk 5:31, 32+). They refused to believe that it was for the very purpose of seeking and saving the lost that he had come into the world (Lk 19:10+)." (Ibid)

Luke 7:39+ Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a **sinner** ([hamartolos](#))."

Luke 19:7+ When they saw it, they all **began to grumble** (diagogguzo in the [imperfect tense](#) = over and over), saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a **sinner** ([hamartolos](#)).

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**Pharisees** (5330)([pharisaios](#)) is transliterated from the Hebrew **parash** (06567 - to separate) from Aramaic word **peras** (06537) ("Peres" in Da 5:28+), signifying to separate, owing to a different manner of life from that of the general public. After the resettling of the Jewish people in Judea on their return from the Babylonian captivity, there were two religious groups among them. We first read of them in the second century B.C. (see [Josephus Antiquities 13.10.5-6](#) [13.288-98]). One party contented themselves with following only what was written in the Law of Moses. These were called **Zadikim**, the righteous. The other group added the constitutions and traditions of the elders, as well as other rigorous observances, to the Law and voluntarily complied with them. They were called **Chasidim** or the pious. From the Zadikim the sects of the Sadducees and Karaites were derived. From the Chasidim were derived the Pharisees and the Essenes.

The **Pharisees** were the most influential of the four major Jewish sects - the [Sadducees](#), the [Essenes](#) and the [Zealots](#). There were more **Pharisees** than [Sadducees](#) (according to [Josephus, Ant. 17.2.4](#) there were more than 6,000 Pharisees at this time). They emphasized meticulous observance of God's law as the means of attaining righteousness before God. They were not priests but more of a laymen's fellowship, popular with the common people and connected to local synagogues. Their zeal for the OT law that caused the Pharisees to become focused on rituals and externally keeping the law, to the point that they abandoned heart religion for external ritual (cf. Mt. 15:3-6), leading Jesus to scathingly denounce them as hypocrites.

The **Pharisees** (in contrast to the Sadducees) believed in the resurrection, the existence of angels and demons (Lk 20:27; Acts 23:6-9), predestination and free will, and the validity of both the written and the oral Law. Politically they were more conservative than the Sadducees, but religiously they were more liberal due to their acceptance of the oral law.

See interesting analysis by Knox Chamblin on the [Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees](#)

**Scribes** (1122)([grammateus](#) from [grapho](#) = to write) was one skilled in Jewish law and theology scribe, expert, scholar (Mt 2.4). **Grammateus** also referred to a chief executive officer of a governmental entity such as a town official secretary, town clerk (Acts 19.35). Jesus gives a long rebuke including **8 WOES** primarily to the **Scribes and Pharisees** which should be read to help understand how this religious group functioned (See Mt 23:1-39, 13, 14, 15, 16, etc). Most sources consider the **lawyers** ([nomikos](#) - meaning one skilled in the Mosaic law) to be scribes specialized in the jurisprudence of the Law of Moses. Finally the scribes in Lk 5:17 ([nomodidaskalos](#)) were teachers of the Jewish law who were equal to the lawyers and scribes.

**Grumble** (1234)([diagogguzo](#) from **dia** = intensifies meaning of [gogguzo](#) = grumble, murmur) means to express dissatisfaction. To complain or murmur greatly (aloud) or to keep murmuring, associated with the idea of complaint, to express a grumbling attitude. **Thayer** adds that "dia" which is the preposition meaning "through" suggest the murmuring was through the whole crowd or among one another. **Grumble** in English dictionaries - a loud low dull continuous noise, a complaint uttered in a low and indistinct tone, to make a low, growling or rumbling noise, like a hungry stomach or certain animals, to make complaining remarks or noises under one's breath, to utter or emit low dull rumbling sounds, to utter (complaints) in a nagging or discontented way, to complain about something in a bad-tempered way. The only other use is Lk 19:7 ' When they saw it (Rich chief tax collector Zaccheus - Lk 19:5-6), they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

**Diagogguzo** - 9x in the Septuagint in reference to Israel's grumbling toward God or His leaders - Ex 15:24; Ex 16:2; Ex. 16:7; Ex 16:8; Nu 14:2; Nu 14:36; Nu 16:11; Dt. 1:27; Jos. 9:18.

**Receives** (accepts)(4327)(**prosdechomai** from **pros** = in compound Greek words implies motion or direction toward + **dechomai** = a deliberate and ready reception) means to accept favorably, to receive one into intercourse/companionship, to give access to oneself or receive to oneself. **Prosdechomai** means to receive one coming from some place and so to welcome with friendliness (Ro 16:2+). This was ever the attitude of the Holy One of Israel toward the unholy ones of Israel (and all those of the entire world)!

**Prosdechomai - accepted(1), accepting(1), cherish(1), looking(3), receive(2), receives(1), waiting(5), waiting anxiously(1).** Mk. 15:43; Lk. 2:25; Lk. 2:38; Lk. 12:36; Lk. 15:2; Lk. 23:51; Acts 10:24; Acts 23:21; Acts 24:15; Rom. 16:2; Phil. 2:29; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 10:34; Heb. 11:35; Jude 1:21

**Eats with** (4906)(**sunesthio** from **sun/syn** = intimately with + **esthio** = to eat) of social association meaning to eat together, to take food together with, to associate with on familiar terms. All the NT uses speak of the implications of friendship or acceptance in the Eastern concept of table fellowship or “eating together.” While not the same verb in Rev 3:20-note, the idea of intimate fellowship over a meal is clearly implied in Jesus' call to the Church at Laodicea to open the door and He would “come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.” Paul's exhortation in 1 Cor 5:11 emphasizes that a meal was more than just eating but included the idea of mingling or mixing with each other (see below). We see the idea of intimacy in the post-resurrection meals of the 11 disciples and Jesus (Acts 10:41).

**Gilbrant on Sunesthiō** - Its usage is consistent through classical Greek and the Septuagint. David said (Ps 101:5) that he did not and would not eat with the slanderer, proud, or insatiable. David's words are in keeping with the Middle Eastern custom that equated table fellowship with companionship, friendship, or acceptance (cf. Ge 43:32). David did not want to be associated with these sinners, thus he would not eat with them. Peter had to answer to the Jerusalem brethren concerning his eating with (acceptance of) the Gentiles (Acts 11:3). Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their lax stand with the immoral brother and thus commanded them not to “even” eat with an immoral brother (1 Corinthians 5:11). Paul also rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy concerning the Gentiles in Galatians 2:12. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Sunesthio** - 5x in 5v - ate with(2), eat with(2), eats with(1). Lk. 15:2; Acts 10:41; Acts 11:3; 1 Co 5:11; Gal 2:12

Acts 10:41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who **ate** and drank **with** Him after He arose from the dead.

Acts 11:3 (context - Acts 11:1-2 = the Jews were) saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and **ate with** them.”

1 Corinthians 5:11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate (**mingle with, mix with, intermingle**) with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to **eat with** such a one.

Galatians 2:12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to **eat with** the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

**Sunesthio** - 4x - Ge 43:32; Ex 18:12; 2 Sa 12:17; Ps 101:5

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## **When The Lost Is Found**

Read: Luke 15:1-32

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. —Luke 19:10

Six-week-old Crystal Guerrero was kidnapped on December 16, 1993, from a Chicago health clinic. Her parents lived in emotional turmoil for a week, unable to eat or sleep. Then an abandoned baby was found in a church. It was Crystal! She was unharmed and well. Imagine the family's joy, a joy shared by the whole country as the media spread the heartwarming news. The infant was back in her mother's arms just in time for a jubilant Christmas.

How does God feel about those who are lost? In Luke 15, Jesus told the parable of the shepherd who left his flock of 99 sheep and went out into the desert to search for one that was lost. He also told about a father who waited and watched with anguished heart praying for the return of his prodigal son.

Those stories reveal the heart of the heavenly Father. Indeed, God was so burdened for the lost human race that He made the costliest sacrifice He could make. He sent His Son into the world to die on the cross so that He could save lost sinners. And Jesus said that whenever a sin-abducted soul is found and restored to the Father's family, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God” (Lk. 15:10). By Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Have you made heaven rejoice?

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew  
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me.  
It was not I who found, O Savior true,  
No, I was found by Thee. —Anon.

When we find Christ, we discover that we were the ones who were lost.

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### Spurgeon - "This man receiveth sinners." —Luke 15:2

Observe the condescension of this fact. This Man, who towers above all other men, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—this Man receiveth sinners. This Man, who is no other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces—this Man receiveth sinners. It needs an angel's tongue to describe such a mighty stoop of love. That any of us should be willing to seek after the lost is nothing wonderful—they are of our own race; but that he, the offended God, against whom the transgression has been committed, should take upon himself the form of a servant, and bear the sin of many, and should then be willing to receive the vilest of the vile, this is marvellous.

"This Man receiveth sinners"; not, however, that they may remain sinners, but he receives them that he may pardon their sins, justify their persons, cleanse their hearts by his purifying word, preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and enable them to serve him, to show forth his praise, and to have communion with him. Into his heart's love he receives sinners, takes them from the dunghill, and wears them as jewels in his crown; plucks them as brands from the burning, and preserves them as costly monuments of his mercy. None are so precious in Jesus' sight as the sinners for whom he died. When Jesus receives sinners, he has not some out-of-doors reception place, no casual ward where he charitably entertains them as men do passing beggars, but he opens the golden gates of his royal heart, and receives the sinner right into himself—yea, he admits the humble penitent into personal union and makes him a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. There was never such a reception as this! This fact is still most sure this evening, he is still receiving sinners: would to God sinners would receive him.

### Luke 15:3 So He told them this parable, saying,

- **told them this parable** - cf Lk 5:36 ("And He was also telling them a parable")
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:1-2 Heaven's Joy: Recovering the Lost](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur

**So He told them this parable** - As **Dwight Pentecost** observes "While the reply contained three parables, it was collectively a single parable; and Luke referred to Christ's response as "**this parable**" (Luke 15:3). The following parables are connected to the first by the word "**OR**" (Lk 15:8) and the words "**JESUS CONTINUED**" (Lk 15:11NIV), showing that there are not three replies, but a single reply to the question concerning God's attitude toward sinners." (The Parables - page 96)

This tri-partite parable is like a mirror to show the Pharisees their heart and to open a window to heaven.

This section has been called "the heart of the Third Gospel"...

-- R Kent Hughes

**Hughes** - These three coordinated parables—the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7), the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), and the lost son (Luke 15:11-32)—are, as I. H. Marshall has said, an "artistically constructed unit with a single theme" —namely, God's joy when he finds a lost sinner. Jesus would later say of himself in Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost," and that is what this passage is about. This section has been called "the heart of the Third Gospel" because here Luke's great theme of God's love and mercy for sinful human beings and his call for repentance and conversion come forth with full power. (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Wiersbe** - Jesus saw what these "**sinners**" really were: lost sheep who needed a shepherd; lost coins that had value and needed to be put into circulation; lost sons who needed to be in fellowship with the Father. (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#))

**MacArthur** - By introducing the first two parables with a hypothetical question, the Lord drew the scribes and Pharisees deep into

both the experience and thinking of the main characters. Having assumed that role in their minds and affirmed that what the character in the story did was right ethically they were trapped. There was no way to avoid the Lord's clear and unmistakable application of the truth that it was right to recover a valuable coin and sheep—was it less important to rescue a soul from judgment? (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Roy Zuck** has an excellent description of **parable**- Parables, allegories, and fables require special attention in Bible study. A **parable** is a form of figurative language involving comparisons. But rather than using a single word or phrase to make the comparison or analogy, as in a simile, metaphor, or hypochastasis, a parable is an extended analogy in story form. A parable is a true-to-life story to illustrate or illuminate a truth. It is true to life though it may not have actually occurred in all details as the story is presented. Historic events may serve as illustrations; but parables are special stories, not necessarily historic events, that are told to teach a particular truth. Since parables are true to life, they differ from allegories and fables....The word parable comes from the Greek para ("beside or alongside") and ballein ("to throw"). Thus the story is thrown alongside the truth to illustrate the truth. Hearers and readers, by sensing the comparison or analogy between the story and their own situation, are prodded to think. In interpreting parables we need to ask, What is the point of the story? What spiritual truth is being illustrated? What analogy is being made? Parables are sometimes unusual and startling, but never unlikelike or fictitious. Besides referring to stories the Greek word parabolē also refers to short statements (sometimes called similitudes) and to proverbs. Similitudes normally refer to customary habits, stated in the present tense, whereas the story parable records a specific instance, using the past tense (e.g., "A farmer went out to sow his seed," Matt. 13:3)....Parables were an effective form of communication because, as stories, they immediately sparked interest in the hearers. As the people heard Jesus' stories, all of which were true-to-life, they were immediately drawn into the stories with Him. Their curiosity was aroused as they wondered how the stories would develop and conclude. Parables encouraged people to think. By drawing analogies Jesus wanted His hearers "to pass a judgment on things on which they were well-acquainted, and then to compel them to transfer that judgment to something to whose significance they had been blind." Jesus did not narrate the parables simply to entertain audiences with stories. He relayed the parables so that those for whom they were intended would "apply them, even if resentfully or reluctantly, to themselves." His parables were thus often disarming....In interpreting the parables it is important to keep in mind that they all refer in some way to the kingdom of God....If Bible students do not recognize the emphasis on the kingdom in the parables, they overlook an important key to understanding those stories and why Jesus told them. (Borrow [Basic Bible Interpretation - an excellent resource](#))

**Parable** (3850)(**parabole** from **para** = beside, near + **ballo** = throw, cast; English "parable") is literally a throwing beside or placing of one thing by the side of another (juxtaposition as of ships in battle in classic Greek). The metaphorical meaning is to place or lay something besides something else for the purpose of comparison.

**Parabole** - 48v - Matt. 13:3; Matt. 13:10; Matt. 13:13; Matt. 13:18; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:34; Matt. 13:35; Matt. 13:36; Matt. 13:53; Matt. 15:15; Matt. 21:33; Matt. 21:45; Matt. 22:1; Matt. 24:32; Mk. 3:23; Mk. 4:2; Mk. 4:10; Mk. 4:11; Mk. 4:13; Mk. 4:30; Mk. 4:33; Mk. 4:34; Mk. 7:17; Mk. 12:1; Mk. 12:12; Mk. 13:28; Lk. 4:23; Lk. 5:36; Lk. 6:39; Lk. 8:4; Lk. 8:9; Lk. 8:10; Lk. 8:11; Lk. 12:16; Lk. 12:41; Lk. 13:6; Lk. 14:7; Lk. 15:3; Lk. 18:1; Lk. 18:9; Lk. 19:11; Lk. 20:9; Lk. 20:19; Lk. 21:29; Heb. 9:9; Heb. 11:19

**Gotquestions** on **parable** - Jesus' parables were stories that were "cast alongside" a truth in order to illustrate that truth. His parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies or inspired comparisons. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. For a time in His ministry, Jesus relied heavily on parables. He told many of them; in fact, according to Mark 4:34a, "He did not say anything to them without using a parable." There are about 35 of Jesus' parables recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. It had not always been that way. In the early part of His ministry, Jesus had not used parables. Suddenly, He begins telling parables exclusively, much to the surprise of His disciples, who asked Him, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" (Matthew 13:10). Jesus explained that His use of parables had a **two-fold purpose**: to reveal the truth to those who wanted to know it and to conceal the truth from those who were indifferent. In the previous chapter (Matthew 12), the Pharisees had publicly rejected their Messiah and blasphemed the Holy Spirit, thus committing the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:22–32). They fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of a hardhearted, spiritually blind people (Isaiah 6:9–10). Jesus' response was to begin teaching in parables. Those who, like the Pharisees, had a preconceived bias against the Lord's teaching would dismiss the parables as irrelevant nonsense. However, those who truly sought the truth would understand. Jesus made sure His disciples understood the meaning of the parables: "When he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything" (Mark 4:34b).

**Interpreting a parable can present some challenges for the student of the Bible** Sometimes, interpretation is easy because the Lord Himself gave the interpretation—the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares are both explained in Matthew 13. Here are some principles that help in interpreting the other parables: **(1) Determine the scope of the spiritual truth being presented.** Sometimes, a parable is preceded by some introductory words that provide a context. For example, often Jesus preceded a parable with the words "this is what the kingdom of heaven is like" (7 times in Matthew 13 alone Ed: Actually the phrase "kingdom of heaven is like..." is found only in Mt 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47). Also, before the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, we read this: "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this

parable” (Luke 18:9). This introduction delineates the subject matter being illustrated (self-righteousness and spiritual pride). **(2) Distinguish between the “meat” of the story and what is just ornamentation.** In other words, not every detail of a parable carries a deep spiritual meaning. Some details are simply there to help the story seem more realistic. For example, in Jesus’ own interpretation of the Parable of the Sower, He does not comment on the fact that there are four (and only four) different types of soil. That detail was meaningless to the overall point Jesus was making. **(3) Compare Scripture with Scripture.** This basic principle of [hermeneutics](#) is invaluable when studying parables. Jesus’ parables will never contradict the rest of the Word of God, which He came to express (John 12:49). The parables are meant to illustrate doctrine, and the teachings Jesus illuminated are found clearly taught elsewhere in the Bible. There are parables in the Bible other than those found in the Gospels. The book of Proverbs is full of analogies—whenever Solomon used a comparison to teach a truth, especially in emblematic parallelism, the result was a simple parable. For example, Proverbs 20:2 says, “A king’s wrath strikes terror like the roar of a lion.” The roaring of a lion is “cast alongside” the wrath of a king for the purpose of comparison. That is the essence of parabolic language. After telling some of His parables, Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear” (Mark 4:9, 23, **Ed:** cf “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” in Lk 14:35 - see comment). This was a call to listen to the parables, not just as one would listen to an ordinary story but as one who is seeking the truth of God. May God grant us all ears to truly “hear.” ([Gotquestions](#) - this site is excellent and is highly recommended)

They tell us not so much about a lost sheep as a seeking shepherd,  
not so much about a lost coin as a searching woman,  
not so much about a lost son as a loving father.  
And all these speak of our Father in heaven.  
-- Gary Inrig

**Gary Inrig** - There is an ancient story about a young man who came to a rabbi he greatly admired. “Sir, I love you, and I want to follow you. May I become your disciple?” “My son,” came the reply, “do you know what hurts me and gives me pain?” “No, sir, I don’t think I do.” “Then how can you say you love me, if you don’t know what hurts me?” That is the sense of these three parables. How can we say we know God if we do not know what gives Him pain and brings Him joy? The Lord wants us to see that the Father’s heart hurts for the lost and rejoices when the lost are found. He uses a concept we all understand. When something of value is lost, we do not despise it, we search for it, and rejoice in the finding of it. It is obvious that people feel this way, but the amazing discovery is that God does also. That is the point of the parables. They tell us not so much about a lost sheep as a seeking shepherd, not so much about a lost coin as a searching woman, not so much about a lost son as a loving father. And all these speak of our Father in heaven. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

**Hampton Keathley IV** helps set the context for why the Pharisees and scribes were so upset with Jesus eating with sinners - The [Talmud](#) said, “All the prophets prophesied only for repentant sinners, but as for the perfectly righteous, who had never sinned at all, the eye has not seen, what God has prepared for him.” The Talmud taught that a person *could* live a sinless life. The Pharisees believed that they were perfectly righteous, that they had not sinned. Therefore, they really despised the sinners and the tax-gatherers. What was wrong with being a tax-gatherer? A tax-gatherer was a Jew working for Gentiles and that was bad. In that culture, the word tax-gatherer was synonymous with sinner because tax-gatherers were Jews who had sold out to the Romans and collected taxes for them. In the eyes of the community, a tax-gatherer was a thief. Jesus habitually ministered to the sinners, and it bothered the Pharisees. They concluded that Jesus could not be from God because God did not like sinners. The unspoken question is this: “What is God’s attitude towards sinners?” So Jesus tells three parables to show why He eats with outcasts. In them He will answer the question about God’s attitude towards sinners. And he will deal with the Pharisees self-righteous attitude and their condemnation of others. ([Parables](#))

**Moody Bible Commentary** - The primary point of the parables, usually neglected in popular lessons on them, is that the religious leaders should not have been criticizing Jesus for seeking tax collectors and sinners (Lk 15:1; note how this verse introduces all three parables). God rejoices when such are “found,” and the sour attitude of the Pharisees and the scribes is condemned (as seen in the interaction between the father and the older brother in Lk 15:25-32, which makes up nearly half of the parable, another point frequently neglected). A secondary, though admittedly important, theme of all three parables is that God rejoices when repentant sinners turn to Him and are “found.” “The way to God is through repentance. God’s arms are open to the person who will seek Him on His terms. God’s arms close around the child ready to run to Him and receive what He offers” (Bock, Luke, 1295). Another theme is the joy that comes when that which is lost is found....The fourfold pattern—an item is lost, a search is made, the item is found, rejoicing follows—appears in each of the parables. This pattern is the pattern of salvation—sinners are lost, they are sought by Christ (cf. 19:10), they are found by God, rejoicing follows. Only in the parable of the Prodigal Son is the human responsibility to repent presented. (See [The Moody Bible Commentary](#))

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**Rod Mattoon** - The three parables or stories illustrate something else to us. They picture three key ways people tend to get away from God.

**1. Wandering:** Folks can get away from God by wandering away from Him like a wayward lamb. Many Christians have gotten out of church by slowly drifting away from the Lord. The psalmist spoke of this in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119:10— With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. If you wander from His Word, you will wander from Him. They are intertwined.

**2. A Wayward, Wavering Fall:** As the coin suddenly fell, some get caught up in a fleshly temptation on the spur of the moment. Sensual desires are ignited and the person falls into sin like a dropped coin. The circumstances were perfect for a fall on the whim of a moment. As the thread attaching the coin to the headdress of the woman was weak and broken, weakened resistance to temptation and broken fellowship with God can lead to a rapid fall into sin. Peter knew what it was like to fall away from the Lord and he warned us of this problem.

2 Peter 3:17— Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

**3. Willful Rebellion:** The willful, rebellion of the son led to his destruction in sin. Our rebellion and hard heart can destroy us, too. It can keep us from coming to Christ and trusting in Him or it can cause us to run away from the Lord. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Luke 15:4 “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?”**

KJV Luke 15:4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

- **What man among you** Lk 13:15; Mt 12:11; 18:12; Ro 2:1
- **if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them** Ps 119:176; Isa 53:6; Jer 50:6; Ezek 34:8,11,12,16,31; Mt 18:12,13; John 10:15,16,26-28; 1 Peter 2:25
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:1-2 Heaven's Joy: Recovering the Lost](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur

#### Related Passages:

Luke 13:15+ But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?”

Matthew 12:11+ And He said to them, “What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?”

### ONE SHEEP: LOST, SOUGHT & FOUND

Compare similar passage in Matthew 18:12-14

“What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? 13 “If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. 14 “So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones **perish** ([apollumi](#) = “lost” in Lk 15:4).

**Stein** comments - In Matt 18:10–14 the sheep are not “lost” but “wandering.” (STRAYING) (New American Commentary – Volume 24: Luke)

Notice in Lk 15:3 Luke states **this parable** (singular), indicating that there is one parable dealing with three entities - a sheep, a coin and a son. “The three have one central theme, namely, *The Father's Yearning Love for the Lost*. It is that theme on which the

emphasis is placed throughout." (Hendriksen)

**Leon Morris** - A great Jewish scholar, C. G. Montefiore, saw here a distinctive and revolutionary note: God actively seeks out sinners and brings them home. The rabbis agreed that God would welcome the penitent sinner. But it is a new idea that God is a seeking God, a God who takes the initiative. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep ([probaton](#)) and has lost ([apollumi](#)) one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture ([eremos](#)) and go after the one which is lost ([apollumi](#)) until he finds ([heurisko](#)) it? What man among you** is a different manner of address than in other parables which Jesus began with the more impersonal phrase "a certain man," (Lk 10:30, 13:6, 14:2, 16). Here Jesus directs this parable personally to each hearer (Pharisees "Listen up!"). The **NIV** has "suppose one of you" which was a common way for Jesus to introduce a parable - compare Lk. 11:5NIV; Lk. 14:28NIV; Lk. 15:4NIV; Lk. 17:7NIV The answer to this rhetorical question is clear. Everyone would search for the one lost sheep, even though they still had the 99.

**Dwight Pentecost** adds that in personalizing this parable, Jesus "caused each of His hearers to immediately take personal interest in what was of value to the one who had suffered a loss. Christ's opening statement caused His listeners to evaluate their own responses to such a situation. The Lord knew that because of the value of what had been lost, any of these hearers would have left the ninety—nine to go seek the lost sheep. The search would not have been casual or of short duration; rather, it would have been diligent and would have extended until the valuable lost sheep was found. The search would have been initiated and pursued because of the value placed on what the owner had lost." (See [The Parables of Jesus: Lessons in Life from the Master Teacher](#))

**What man** - In the parable the **man** is clearly a shepherd, and is representative of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pe 5:4, cf Heb 13:20), even as He taught in John 10:14-17:

"I am the **Good Shepherd**, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep (FORESHADOWING HIS CRUCIFIXION). 16 "I have other sheep ("GENTILE" SHEEP), which are not of this fold (JEWISH "SHEEP"); I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

The picture of **lost sheep** was used Ezekiel to figuratively describe the nation of Israel

Ezekiel 34:6, 11, 12, 16 - "My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them.""

(34:11) For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, **I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.**

(34:12) "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.

(34:16) "**I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick;**but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.

**Hughes** - The thrust of Ezekiel's prophecy is clear: since the undershepherds of Israel had failed, God himself would shepherd and rescue the people.

**William Hendriksen** asks must the lost sheep "be ignored, neglected, despised, as was the attitude of Pharisees toward the people whom they regarded as wayward and lost? Was that the way a good shepherd dealt with a lost sheep?" ([Exposition of the Gospel of Luke](#) - borrow)

**Barclay** on shepherds - So Jesus told them the parable of the lost sheep and the shepherd's joy. The shepherd in Judaea had a hard and dangerous task. Pasture was scarce. The narrow central plateau was only a few miles wide, and then it plunged down to the wild cliffs and the terrible devastation of the desert. There were no restraining walls and the sheep would wander. George Adam Smith wrote of the shepherd, "On some high moor across which at night the hyaenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning on his staff and looking out over his scattered sheep, everyone of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judaea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to the king and made him the symbol of providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice." The shepherd was personally responsible for the sheep. If a sheep was lost the shepherd must at least bring home the fleece to show how it had died. These shepherds were experts at tracking and could follow the straying sheep's footprints for miles across the hills. There was not a shepherd for whom it was not all in the day's work to risk his life for his sheep. Many of the flocks were communal flocks, belonging, not to individuals, but to villages. There would be two or three shepherds in charge. Those whose flocks were safe would arrive home on time and bring news that one shepherd was still out on the mountain side searching for a sheep which was lost. The whole village would be upon the watch, and when, in the distance, they saw the shepherd striding home with the lost sheep across his shoulders, there would rise

from the whole community a shout of joy and of thanksgiving. ([DSB](#))

**MacArthur** - Shepherds were near the bottom of the social ladder. Caring for sheep was the lowest of the legitimate occupations, ranking just above the outcast line, below which were tax collectors and other irreligious sinners. Shepherds were uneducated and unskilled, and were increasingly viewed in the post-New Testament era as dishonest, unreliable, and unsavory—so much so that they were not permitted to testify in court. Sheep had to be watched and cared for seven days a week, leaving shepherds unable to fully comply with the Pharisees' man-made Sabbath regulations. Because they were in continual violation of those regulations, shepherds were perpetually ceremonially unclean. For Jesus to ask the scribes and Pharisees to imagine themselves in the role of a shepherd was insulting. No Pharisee would demean himself by becoming a shepherd, not even hypothetically. By challenging them to put themselves in the imaginary shepherd's place, the Lord once again attacked their overweening pride. (See [Luke 11-17 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**NET Note** on a **hundred sheep** - This individual with a hundred sheep is a shepherd of modest means, as flocks often had up to two hundred head of sheep.

**Sheep** - In the context of the criticism of Jesus was directed at (1) welcoming sinners and (2) eating with **sinners** (Lk 15:2), so the sheep represent **sinners**, for as Isaiah documented "All of us like **sheep** have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." (Isa 53:6).

**Adam Clarke** on **sheep** - No creature strays more easily than a sheep; none is more heedless; and none so incapable of finding its way back to the flock, when once gone astray: it will bleat for the flock, and still run on in an opposite direction to the place where the flock is: this I have often noticed."

**THOUGHT** - [Watch this hilarious video](#) of a sheep released from a ditch! And before we are too hard on that dumb sheep, we all need to take a close look in the mirror and do a little heart searching about how often we too mimic that stupid sheep's behavior by running right back to the same stupid sin! (cf 1Pe 2:25) Or am I just talking to myself? Praise God for Romans 8:13 and God's gift of the Holy Spirit to enable us to continually kill sin!

**Steven Cole** explains that "The biblical description of those who do not know Jesus Christ is not **unsaved**," but **lost**. It's an empty, hopeless word when used in reference to things or to animals, but it's an especially bleak word when it is used in reference to people. We once lost Christa at Disneyland when she was about seven years old. We felt a wave of horror sweep over us, followed by about ten minutes of frantic searching that seemed much longer. When we finally found her, we were so thankful and relieved. We didn't even mind losing our place in line for the Dumbo ride! When a close family member is lost, you cannot be at rest until he or she is found. Whether the person knows it or not, the Bible describes every person who does not know Jesus Christ as being lost. In what is perhaps the saddest verse in the Bible, Paul describes the former condition of his Gentile readers: "You were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12-[note](#)). A lost sheep in the Judean wilderness was doomed. It had no protection and it would be only a short time before the coyotes or other predators would attack and kill it. A lost dog might eventually find its way home, but a lost sheep is unable to do so. As such, it is a picture of a lost sinner. The sinner may not even know that he is lost and headed for destruction, but that is the truth. Even if he becomes aware of his condition, there is nothing he can do about it. Jesus said that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him (Jn 6:44, Jo 6:65). Paul says that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2Co 4:4). Unbelievers are lost and helpless, prey for the enemy unless God intervenes. But, thank God, He has intervened! ([God's Lost and Found](#))

**Phillip Keller** in his excellent book [A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 \(borrow this book\)](#) describes the fate of lost sheep, especially if they roll over on their back: The way it happens is this. A heavy, fat, or long fleeced sheep will lie down comfortably in some little hollow or depression in the ground. It may roll on its side slightly to stretch out or relax. Suddenly the center of gravity in the body shifts so that it turns on its back far enough that the feet no longer touch the ground. It may feel a sense of panic and start to paw frantically. Frequently this only makes things worse. It rolls over even further. Now it is quite impossible for it to regain its feet. As it lies there struggling, gases begin to build up in the rumen. As these expand they tend to retard and cut off blood circulation to the extremities of the body, especially the legs. If the weather is very hot and sunny a cast sheep can die in a few hours. If it is cool and cloudy and rainy it may survive in this position for several days. It is not easy to convey on paper the sense of this ever present danger. If I saw black-winged buzzards circling overhead ... anxiety would grip me. This is part of the drama depicted for us in the story of the ninety and nine sheep with one astray. This is the Shepherd's deep concern; his agonizing search; his longing to find the missing one; his delight in restoring it not only to its feet, but also to the flock, as well as to himself. Again and again I would spend hours searching for a single sheep that was missing ... As soon as I reached the cast ewe, my very first impulse was to pick it up ... I would hold her erect, rubbing her limbs to restore the circulation to her legs. When the sheep started to walk again, she often stumbled, staggered and collapsed. Little by little the sheep would regain its equilibrium. It would start to walk steadily and surely. By and by it would dash away to rejoin the others, set free from its fears and frustrations, given another chance to live a little longer. All

of this pageantry is conveyed to my heart and mind when I repeat the simple statement, "He restoreth my soul!" ([Here is an audio](#) of Chapter 1 of Keller's book).

**Adam Clarke** - "No creature strays more easily than a sheep; none is more heedless; and none so incapable of finding its way back to the flock, when once gone astray: it will bleat for the flock, and still run on in an opposite direction to the place where the flock is: this I have often noticed." ([Luke 15](#))

**Guzik** - Many rabbis of that time believed that God received the sinner who came to Him the right way. But in the parable of the shepherd and the sheep, Jesus taught that God actively seeks out the lost. He does not grudgingly receive the lost; instead, He searches after them. God finds the sinner more than the sinner does find God. ([Luke 15](#))

**Barclay** - "A great Jewish scholar has admitted that this is the one absolutely new thing which Jesus taught men about God—that he actually searched for men." ([Luke 15](#))

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**Does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost**([apollumi](#)) - The sheep don't seek the shepherd, but the shepherd seeks the sheep, a perfect picture of God seeking men, even those (all of us) who do not seek Him! **God takes the initiative in salvation.** Paul makes it clear that absolutely no lost man seeks for God (Ro 3:11<sub>b</sub>).

In Luke 19:10+ Jesus clearly stated His mission was to seek declaring that "the Son of Man has come **to seek and to save** (see Ezek 34:16) that which was **lost** (same word [apollumi](#) as in Lk 15:4)," where **lost** speaks of those who were spiritually dead and destined for eternal separation in Hell unless they are saved (cf 2 Th 1:9).

**Steven Cole** adds that "Scripture is clear that if we are saved, it is because the Lord took the initiative; we did not. That initiative springs out of His great love and compassion. As the apostle Paul states, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (Eph 1:4,5<sub>+</sub>). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). If salvation had been left up to us, we would still be in our sins. But, thank God, He lovingly took the initiative. He launched the search. He sent Christ to die for our sins while we were wandering from the fold. ([God's Lost and Found](#))

**Until he finds it** - Notice the word is **Until** not **if** - He will look "[until](#)" which indicates up to point in time he finds it. Then he no longer needs to seek. The point is that this is the length to which the Shepherd will go to find the lost sheep. **Until he finds it** emphasizes his determination and persistence. One lost human soul is of inestimable value to God and He will go to any length necessary to find them and bring them home!

**THOUGHT** - He sought after me for 39 years and through a amalgamation of circumstances brought me safely into His sheepfold. He went after me until He found me. And my guess is that many of you reading would have a similar testimony that He went after you until He found you and did whatever it took to get your attention! ([My testimony of God's grace](#)).

**NET Note** on **until he finds it** - The parable pictures God's pursuit of the sinner. On the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, see John 10:1–18.

The Pharisees who prided themselves on the knowledge of Scripture had forgotten how even in the very beginning, God had sought Adam and Eve despite the fact they had sinned and catapulted all humanity into spiritual death! And they like all of us wandering sheep attempted to hide from God, but this did not deter Him from seeking them as Moses recorded:

They (Adam and Eve) heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "**Where are you?**"(Gen. 3:8-9+).

**Comment:** God's seeking Adam after his sin reminds me of an old song filled with truth and sadness by Don Francisco which you might listen to if you have time - [Adam Where Are You?](#)

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**Lost** ([622](#)) ([apollumi](#) from **apo** = away from or wholly + **olethros** = state of utter ruin) means to destroy utterly (perish) as used by Jesus in Mt 5:29-30 of those lost eternally in hell (cf similar meanings in Mt 10:28, 39, 16:25). In Mt 10:6 (Mt 15:24) Jesus instructs His disciples to "go to the **lost** sheep of the house of Israel." Apollumi is used to describe the goal of the religious leaders for "the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might **destroy** ([apollumi](#)) Him." (Mt 12:14). Apollumi means 1. act. destroy, ruin, kill Mt 2:13; Ro 14:15; 1 Cor 1:19. Lose Mt 10:39, 42; 2Jn 8.—2. mid. and pass. be lost, perish, die, be ruined

Mt 8:25; 9:17; 26:52; Lk 15:24; Jn 11:50; Jas 1:11; pass away Heb 1:11. [Apollyon]

Luke uses **apollumi** in Luke 13:3, 5+ I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish (**apollumi** - BE ETERNALLY LOST). ...“I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise **perish**.”

**Apollumi in Luke and Acts** - Lk. 4:34; Lk. 5:37; Lk. 6:9; Lk. 8:24; Lk. 9:24; Lk. 9:25; Lk. 9:56; Lk. 11:51; Lk. 13:3; Lk. 13:5; Lk. 13:33; Lk. 15:4; Lk. 15:6; Lk. 15:8; Lk. 15:9; Lk. 15:17; Lk. 15:24; Lk. 15:32; Lk. 17:27; Lk. 17:29; Lk. 17:33; Lk. 19:10; Lk. 19:47; Lk. 20:16; Lk. 21:18; Acts 5:37; Acts 27:34

**Open pasture** (2048) (**eremos**) means lonesome, solitary, wilderness = uninhabited, lonely, uncultivated region translated “wilderness” 32x in the KJV. Obviously the **wilderness** would not normally be a safe place to leave the other 99 sheep. This is where we need to remember this is a parable and we should not seek to explain every detail. This detail was not important to the central point of the story which is the seeking and finding of the one lost sheep.

Eremos - 48v - Matt. 3:1; Matt. 3:3; Matt. 4:1; Matt. 11:7; Matt. 14:13; Matt. 14:15; Matt. 23:38; Matt. 24:26; Mk. 1:3; Mk. 1:4; Mk. 1:12; Mk. 1:13; Mk. 1:35; Mk. 1:45; Mk. 6:31; Mk. 6:32; Mk. 6:35; Lk. 1:80; Lk. 3:2; Lk. 3:4; Lk. 4:1; Lk. 4:42; Lk. 5:16; Lk. 7:24; Lk. 8:29; Lk. 9:12; Lk. 15:4; Jn. 1:23; Jn. 3:14; Jn. 6:31; Jn. 6:49; Jn. 11:54; Acts 1:20; Acts 7:30; Acts 7:36; Acts 7:38; Acts 7:42; Acts 7:44; Acts 8:26; Acts 13:18; Acts 21:38; 1 Co. 10:5; Gal. 4:27; Heb. 3:8; Heb. 3:17; Rev. 12:6; Rev. 12:14; Rev. 17:3

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## Lessons From A Shepherd

Read: Luke 15:1-7

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, . . . does not . . . go after the one which is lost? —Luke 15:4

Jesus' parable of the shepherd and the lost sheep has some pointed lessons for Christians about their responsibility to those who are lost.

The shepherd wasn't satisfied with 99 percent of his sheep safe within the fold. He did not say boastfully, “What a remarkable showing—only one absent!” No, he felt personally responsible for that one missing sheep (Lk. 15:4).

Nor did the shepherd assume that it would come back on its own. That sheep was indifferent to its lost condition and needed to be found. So the shepherd took the initiative and went searching for it. And he did not give up until it was found (v.5).

The shepherd also wanted others to share his joy in finding that one lost sheep (v.6). His friends and neighbors who celebrated with him must have felt that to find a lost sheep was one of the most joyous and worthwhile endeavors in the world.

Christians have an obligation to seek out the lost. What a difference it would make if we who know the Lord responded with a resounding “Yes!” to the age-old question, “Am I my brother's keeper?” Then, like the shepherd in Jesus' parable, we too would be zealous in seeking the lost sheep. By Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Seeking the lost—and pointing to Jesus  
Souls that are weak and hearts that are sore,  
Leading them forth in ways of salvation,  
Showing the path to life evermore.  
—Ogden

To be your brother's keeper means that you will be his seeker.  
(Borrow [A Shepherd looks at Psalm 23](#) by Phillip Keller)

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**Lost and Found** - An engagement ring that fell into the sea off the west coast of Sweden almost two years ago found its way back to its owner. The ring was consumed by a mussel that was caught by fisherman Peder Carlsson. Carlsson was able to return the ring to its owner because its owner, Agneta Wingstedt, had her name engraved on the inside. If we belong to Christ and bear his name, we will be reunited with him one day. —Parade (12/26/96). Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 4.

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**Adrian Rogers** - A family put the following ad in the "Lost and Found" section of the paper: "Lost Dog: Crippled in front paw, blind in left eye, mange on back and neck, tail missing. Recently neutered. Answers to the name 'Lucky'" He truly was a lucky dog, because in spite of all that was wrong with him, somebody loved him enough to want him. Actually, we're all lucky dogs. Even better, we're blessed dogs. God loves us out of sheer grace. Marvel of marvels! Wonder of wonders! God loves us with an everlasting love.

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## The Value Of One

What man . . . having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost? —Luke 15:4

Only hours before Kim Haskins' high school graduation, an auto accident took the life of her father and left Kim and her mother hospitalized. The next day, Joe Garrett, Kim's high school principal, visited her at the hospital and said they wanted to do something special for her at the school. The Gazette (Colorado Springs) article by James Drew described the outpouring of love and support as the teachers, administrators, and classmates—deeply touched by Kim's loss—filled the high school auditorium a few days later at a graduation ceremony just for her.

Principal Garrett said, "We talk a lot in education about no child left behind. In the military, they talk about no soldier left behind. Today, this is about no graduate left behind."

Jesus underscored the importance of every person to God with three stories about something lost—a sheep, a coin, and a son (Luke 15). In each story, a person has lost something of great value. When it is found, friends and neighbors are called to celebrate and rejoice together.

The point is clear: We are all of great value to God, who offers us forgiveness and new life through Christ. And He faithfully pursues us with His love and grace. There is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (v.7). By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

I was lost but Jesus found me—  
Found the sheep that went astray,  
Threw His loving arms around me,  
Drew me back into His way.  
—Rowley

Our value is measured by what God has done for us.

### Luke 15:5 "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing."

KJV Luke 15:5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

- **When he has found it** Lk 19:9; 23:43; Isa 62:12; John 4:34,35; Acts 9:1-16; Ro 10:20,21; Eph 2:3-6; Titus 3:3-7
- **he lays it on his shoulders** Isa 40:10,11; 46:3,4; 63:9; Micah 5:4; Eph 1:19,20; 2:10; 3:7; 1 Th 1:5; 2 Ti 2:26; 1 Peter 1:5
- **rejoicing** Lk 15:23,24,32; Isa 53:10,11; 62:5; Jer 32:41,42; Ezek 18:23; 33:11; Micah 7:18; Zephaniah 3:17; John 15:11; Hebrews 12:2
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur

### Related Passages:

Isaiah 53:4-6+ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him (COMPARE "**HE LAYS IT ON HIS SHOULDERS**")

1 Peter 2:24-25+ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

**OUR COMPASSIONATE SHEPHERD  
IS "THE HOUND OF HEAVEN"**

**When he has found ([heurisko](#)) it** - Not **"IF** he finds it" but **WHEN**. He will find the ONE! In the same way our Good Shepherd goes after every sheep whom His Father has given to Him, that none will be lost (Jn 17:2, Jn 17:6, Jo 17:9), but that all will be brought safely into His fold. God has been called the "Hound of Heaven," a phrase taken from a poem by Francis Thompson (see note below).

**"The Hound of Heaven,"** by Francis Thompson. Thompson (1859–1907) was a poet and essayist who struggled throughout his life with an addiction to opium. His poem "The Hound of Heaven" is a powerful narrative of **God's steady, majestic, but uncompromising pursuing and reconciling work in his life**. Although the poet flees from him, God remains unhurried and unperturbed until finally the pursued understands that this is the true love of a determined God (**Ed**: Who loses none who are His sheep!). It would be worth reading several of the memorable, often-quoted stanzas aloud. (Below is just the first stanzas of Thompson's relatively long poem of over 180 lines - [click for full version](#))

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears  
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.  
Up vistaed hopes I sped;  
And shot, precipitated,  
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,  
**From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.**

But with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
They beat—and a Voice beat  
More instant than the Feet—  
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

**He lays it on his shoulders** - Notice that the shepherd did not get out his whip and drive the wandering sheep back into the fold. Instead he put it securely on his own shoulders and carried it home. There is no grumbling by the shepherd, but instead rejoicing. What a picture of the shepherd's compassion for his sheep, manifest by his gentleness and willingness to carry his lost sheep that was surely worn down and weary from wandering.

**THOUGHT** - A sheep on the Good Shepherd's shoulders reminds us of our Lord bearing our sins on the Cross! It is also a beautiful picture of our Good Shepherd Who reaches down to pick us up after we cease running from Him and finally falling to our knees, "[bleating out](#)" because of our otherwise hopeless, lost condition?

The sheep was weary from wandering and likely unable to ambulate on its own. What a picture of what the Good Shepherd does for us in our helpless state, Paul writing "For while we were still **helpless** ([asthenes](#) = without strength, powerless!), at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6+)

Notice in the [picture above](#), the shepherd is holding the sheep by his feet. When the shepherd is holding the legs, its hard to get lost again. Is this picture not a description of Jesus' wonderful words in John 10 "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and **no one will snatch them out of My hand**." (Jn 10:28) See [Is eternal security biblical?](#)

It is fascinating that this picture of **the shepherd carrying the sheep on his shoulders** was **the original figure used to identify Christians** before people began identifying Christianity with crosses.

What a beautiful picture of a Christian, for even now in this moral wilderness in which believers live, Jesus (by the power of His indwelling Spirit) "carries us on His shoulders" (figuratively speaking of course). In fact our great God has rescued us in three tenses - (1) In [past tense salvation](#) He "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son us in the past (Col 1:13+) (2) In [present tense salvation](#) (sanctification) God daily delivers (rescues - [rhuomai](#)) "us from evil" from the "many dangers, toils and snares" laid by the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#), (Mt 6:13+). (3) Finally, in the consummation of all things Jesus "rescues ([rhuomai](#)) us from the wrath to come!" (1 Th 1:10+) Hallelujah! What a Savior! Thank You Jesus! And so we sing out John Newton's words....

Through many dangers, toils and snares,

I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.  
AMEN

**Hendriksen** explains that "the shepherd, in typically Mid-Eastern fashion, places it over his two shoulders, with its stomach against the back of his neck, and with its four feet tied together in front of his face. Loaded down thus heavily (SHEEP COULD WEIGH UP TO 100 POUNDS), he returns to his home in the village. ([Exposition of the Gospel of Luke](#) - borrow)

**Spurgeon** responds to the view that those whom the Savior has rescued can ever be lost again (See [Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?](#)) stating that those who hold this view need to go up to heaven and set the angels straight on this matter. They need to tell them not to rejoice until the sinner dies and goes to heaven, because they may be rejoicing too soon. What if he repents but later falls away and is lost? The angels shouldn't be so fast on their joy! ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**Steven Cole** adds that "the glad fact is, you are not secure in your salvation because of your grip on the Good Shepherd, but rather because of His grip on you. He chose you as His own before time began. He sent His Son to secure your redemption by His blood. He sent the Holy Spirit to pursue you with the good news that Christ died for your sins. He sought after you until He found you and rescued you from your hopeless condition. Do you think that now He will let you go back into your sins and be lost again? Impossible! If the Good Shepherd has saved you, He will keep you from falling (Jude 1:24-25+). ([God's Lost and Found](#))

**John MacDuff** in a devotional on Acts 7:56 in the context of Stephen's martyrdom writes - "He, the same gentle, tender Shepherd that He ever was, sees one of the choicest sheep of the fold in the fangs of ravening wolves! Roused by these wild beasts who were scattering His flock;—touched with the tender bleat of that holy and innocent victim of their rage,—the good Shepherd stoops down from the hills of glory; and, as Stephen enters the valley of the shadow of death, He comforts and supports him with His rod and staff!"

Isaiah 40:10-11 prophecies

Behold, the Lord GOD ( Adonai Jehovah) will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him (cf when "the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory." 1 Pe 5:4-[note](#)) And His recompense before Him. Like a **shepherd** He will tend His flock (in context the Lord Jesus at His [Second Coming](#)), **In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom** He will gently lead the nursing ewes." (Hallelujah!)

**Cole** applies this section of the parable - God goes to great effort to seek lost sinners. *If He so seeks lost sinners, should not we?* If our Lord came from heaven to seek and to save the lost, shouldn't we be praying often, "Lord, use me to be Your instrument in seeking lost people with Your good news"? Rather than avoiding sinners, we should be pursuing them, not to run with them in their sins, but to rescue them from this evil world. Ask God to burden your heart with the lost and to give you opportunities to pursue them with the gospel.

**THOUGHT** - I have found that often times when I begin to pray for those in my sphere of influence, God's Spirit emboldens me (cf Acts 4:31+) to share the Gospel with them, at times even providing providential "coincidences!" For whom are you praying asking that the Good Shepherd might seek them and find them and gently bring them into His fold?

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**Found** ([2147](#)) ([heurisko](#)) means to find after searching and so to discover (Mt 7:7). The idea of *heurisko* is to learn the location of something, either by intentional searching or by unexpected discovery (clearly the former in this context).

**Rejoicing** (continually = [present tense](#)) ([5463](#)) ([chairo](#)) (used also in Lk 15:32-[note](#)) means to be "cheer" full, calmly happy or well-off. **Chairo** implies and imparts joy. **Chairo** is used in a whole range of situations in which the emotion of joy is evoked. Predominant in the usage of **chairo** is the focus on rejoicing over the redemptive deeds of God that come to fruition in the gospel in the person of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. And so rejoicing is expressed when sinners repent as in 2Co. 7: 9 = " I now **rejoice**, not that you were made sorrowful, but that **you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance**; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us." In Acts 8:39; 13:48; Rev. 19: 7, salvation is associated with rejoicing.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - The late Bible teacher, Harry Ironside, told of a new convert who gave his testimony at a church service. With a smile on his face and joy in his heart, the man related how he had been delivered from a life of sin. He gave the Lord all the glory, saying nothing about anything that he had done. The person in charge of the meeting was a legalistic man who did not understand the fact that salvation is totally by God's grace, apart from human merit or works. So he responded to the young man's comments by

saying, "You seem to indicate that God did everything when He saved you. Didn't you do your part before God did His?" The new Christian jumped to his feet and said, "Oh, yes, I did. For more than 30 years I ran away from God as fast as my sins could carry me. That was *my part*. But God took out after me and ran me down. That was *His part*." Ironside commented, "It was well put and tells a story that every redeemed sinner understands."

**Luke 15:6 "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'"**

KJV Luke 15:6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

- **his friends and his neighbors** Lk 15:7,10,24; 2:13,14; Isa 66:10,11; John 3:29; 15:14; Acts 11:23; 15:3; Phil 1:4; 2:17; 4:1; 1 Th 2:19; 3:7-9
- **for I have found my sheep which was lost** Ps 119:176; 1 Peter 2:10,25
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur

## AMAZING GRACE HOW SWEET THE SOUND

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.  
--John Newton  
([Play this beautiful vocal version!](#))

**And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors**(geiton) - This detail is lacking in Matthew's parallel (cf. Mt 18:13).

**Rejoice** ([sugchairo](#)) **with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost** - "The shepherd rejoices, and this not simply because of the recovery of a physical loss. No, he loves that sheep. His shepherd's heart rejoices because the sheep was not devoured or did not perish in some other way." (Hendriksen)

**Sugchairo** is used twice in the form of commands ([aorist imperative](#)) here of the man who rejoiced over finding his lost sheep (Luke 15:6) and of the woman who, rejoiced over finding her lost coin, both of these individual desiring that others share in their joy (Luke 15:9 also [aorist imperative](#)).

**Rejoice with** (4796)([sugchairo](#) from [sun/syn](#) = with, speaks of an intimate union + [chairo](#) = to rejoice, be glad) means literally to rejoice with, to take part in joy, to feel (and express) joy with, to share joy with (Lk 1:58, Php 2:17). Sugchairo describes a deep mutuality of purpose and feeling. "To express pleasure over another's good fortune, congratulate." (BDAG)

**Moody Bible Commentary** - The "over-the-top" reaction of the shepherd (Lk15:6) is meant to contrast with the attitude of the Pharisees and scribes toward the tax collectors and sinners who have come to hear Jesus. They should at least have been supportive—if not ecstatic—when sinners showed an interest in the things of the Lord. They were however as unmoved as this shepherd was overjoyed. Jesus made the point: heaven (a metonymy for God) is much more like the overly ecstatic shepherd when sinners come to repentance (Lk 15:7) and unlike the critical Pharisees.

**I have found my sheep which was lost** - Notice the possessive pronoun "**my**." In a similar way believers who have been sought, found and bought by the Shepherd are no longer their own, but are eternally His possession.

Titus 2:14+ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for **His own possession**, zealous for good deeds.

1 Peter 2:9+ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR **God's OWN POSSESSION**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1 Cor 6:19-20+ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that **you are not your own**? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

**Life Application Bible Commentary** - For Christians today, this parable of the lost sheep is not only an invitation to rejoice with God at the repentance of sinners but also a reminder to follow Jesus' example in searching for the lost. Join God in his search for the lost by telling one of your acquaintances about Jesus today. (Borrow <https://archive.org/details/lifeapplicationn0000unse>)

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**Neighbors** (1069)(**geiton** from **ge** = earth, land) means literally one "of the same land," one living nearby and sharing ethnic and cultural similarities. Always used in plural. Synonym = plesion.

**Gilbrant** - The adjective "neighboring" oftentimes gives this word a locative sense as in the English "neighborhood." However, in the few times it is used in the New Testament, *geitōn* is more broadly used to mean "human relationships" which pass beyond the limits of geography. This is especially true in Luke 14:12 and Luke 15:6,9 where the term is used with *adelphos*, "brother." ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Geiton** - 4x in NT - Lk. 14:12; Lk. 15:6; Lk. 15:9; Jn. 9:8. **Lxx** = Ex. 3:22; Ex. 12:4; Ru 4:17; 2 Ki. 4:3; Job 19:15; Job 26:5; Ps. 31:11; Ps. 44:13; Ps. 79:4; Ps. 79:12; Ps. 80:6; Ps. 89:41; Jer. 6:21; Jer. 12:14; Jer. 49:10  
- Lxx uses frequently in context of "reproach to one's neighbors."

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## [A Heart Of Compassion](#)

Read: Luke 15:1-7

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! —Luke 15:6

Popular teacher, speaker, and author Howard Hendricks warns against "enshrining" the gospel in a church building. He once wrote, "I can't find a verse of Scripture that commands a lost person to go to church; I know a lot of Scripture that commands believers to go into a lost world."

Hendricks then told about a Christian woman who read in the newspaper about a car that crashed into a house and killed a baby. With a compassionate heart, she grieved over the family's loss, but she was also concerned for the driver, who was facing criminal charges. She wrote to the driver, assuring her that God cared about her situation. She included her telephone number and then waited to see if she would respond.

The devastated woman called her and they agreed to meet. Because of that Christian's witness of God's love, that sorrowing woman trusted Christ as her Savior. She then began attending a Bible study and a church. The compassion shown to her resulted in others in her family coming to Christ. She did go to prison for her crime, but her faith strengthened her and made a great impact on other prisoners. By Joanie Yoder

When one Christian goes after one lost soul (Luke 15:1-7), there can be salvation and great rejoicing. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Seeking the lost, and pointing to Jesus,  
Souls that are weak and hearts that are sore;  
Leading them forth in ways of salvation,  
Showing the path to life evermore.  
—Ogden

God's love in our heart gives us a heart for the lost.

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## **LOST AND FOUND**

Jim Connor's custom banjo was lost, but was recently found thanks to eBay and a friend with sharp eyes. Connor who was once a member of the Kingston Trio is now the supply pastor at brown's Presbyterian Church in Virginia. Connor had designed the instrument himself, asking the builders for a carved heel and special neck decoration. He even told them exactly what kind of tonering he wanted in the banjo's resonator.

Connor said, "It was a one-time banjo. The company even called it the 'Jim Connor Custom banjo.'"

Thieves took the banjo in 1971 when the New Kingston trio was too tired to unpack their van after a New York City performance. They left the van parked in a hotel garage with everything inside. The next morning the van was empty. Connor got over the lost of

the instrument, but never forgot it. Recently, one of Connor's friends recognized the distinct markings when they saw the instrument on the Internet and told Connor about it.

When eBay learned the instrument had been stolen, they stopped the sale. Connor said he considered how much he would have to spend for a lawyer and a trip to New York, and decided to pay the seller a fee to regain the instrument. The men met at a Maryland coffee shop and had a good talk. The seller said a relative of his had purchased the banjo at a used furniture store in Harlem. Since it was stolen, the seller wanted to cooperate. Connor said the instrument was either well cared for or had never been used and he was surprised to get it back. Connor added, "I had gotten over the disappointment of having it stolen. I didn't feel like saying anything ugly. I think I have a kind of spiritual feeling, like 'Thank you, Lord, but it sure took a long time!'" (Jim Wilson - Fresh Illustrations)

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## LOST AND FOUND

When Miami Florida engineer Isaac Daniel heard that his son was missing from school in 2002, he started thinking about a way to locate people in emergency situations. Though the situation with his son turned out to be a case of miscommunication, Daniel followed through on his idea, developing a sneaker with a built in Global Positioning tracking device. The GPS sneakers can be monitored around the clock and instantly locate the wearer anywhere on earth.

The new GPS shoes are available, but expensive, costing more than \$325 a pair, and 24 hour monitoring is an extra \$20 a month. Daniel's company makes the shoes in adult sizes now and will add a children's version soon. (Jim Wilson - Fresh Illustrations)

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## LOST/FOUND

A man believed missing in the collapse of the World Trade Center has turned up alive in a New York hospital. The family of George Sims learned of his whereabouts earlier this month when the hospital called and said they believed Sims was a patient there.

Family members said they believed Sims was "selling things" near the twin towers when the attacks occurred. When they did not hear from him for a few weeks, they reported him missing on Oct. 7th. Sims was listed officially as "reported missing" because there was no verification, other than missing persons report, that he was a World Trade Center victim.

Sims has been diagnosed with amnesia and schizophrenia. His mother says he did not remember any of his family members. Though his health is not good, Sims's mother is hopeful he will recover and tell the family about what happened to him. Anna Sims says, "If God brought him this far back to me, he will come back the rest of the way. It will take time. I am just grateful he is alive. God worked a miracle."

The family never applied for any financial assistance provided to victim's survivors, and did not obtain a death certificate according a local newspaper. —Associated Press, August 27, 200. Submitted by Jim Sandell.(Jim Wilson - Fresh Illustrations)

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## Lost And Found

Read: Luke 15:1-10

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! —Luke 15:6

Until the day I was found, I didn't know I was lost. I was going about business as usual, moving from task to task, distraction to distraction. But then I received an e-mail with the heading: "I think you're my cousin." As I read my cousin's message, I learned that she and another cousin had been searching for my branch of the family for nearly 10 years. The other cousin promised her father, shortly before he died, that she would find his family.

I hadn't done anything to get lost, and I didn't have to do anything to be found except acknowledge that I was the person they had been looking for. Learning that they had spent so much time and energy searching for our family made me feel special.

This led me to think about the "lost and found" parables of Luke 15—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Whenever we wander away from God, whether intentionally like the prodigal son or unintentionally like the sheep, God looks for us. Even though we may not "feel" lost, if we have no relationship with God, we are. To be found, we need to realize that God is looking for us (Luke 19:10) and admit that we are separated from Him. By giving up our waywardness, we can be reunited with Him and restored to His family. By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Lord has come to seek and save  
A world that is lost in sin;  
And everyone who comes to Him

Will be restored and changed within.

—Sper

To be found, you must admit you are lost.

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## [You Matter To God](#)

Read: Luke 15:3-7

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! —Luke 15:6

American author Julia Ward Howe is remembered chiefly for her poem “Battle Hymn Of The Republic.” According to her daughter, Howe once invited her friend US Senator Charles Sumner to meet a rising young actor. But he declined her invitation, saying, “I don’t know that I should care to meet him. I have outlived my interest in individuals.” Julia later wrote in her diary, “Fortunately, God Almighty had not, by last accounts, gotten so far.”

Aren’t you glad the Lord hasn’t gotten beyond caring about people? In fact, our heavenly Father is interested in every individual member of the human family.

According to Jesus, the Father is like a devoted shepherd who leaves his flock of 99 sheep in the safety and shelter of the fold and sacrificially goes out to find that one lost lamb (Luke 15:4-6). Indeed, to help us understand the intensely individual nature of God’s love, Jesus declared that the very hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). It’s amazing that this divine Shepherd even laid down His life for us, His sheep (John 10:11).

Are you a lost sheep, needing Jesus the Shepherd to find you? Call out to Him today and let Him rescue you. Remember, you matter to God. By Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!  
He loved me ere I knew Him;  
He drew me with the cords of love;  
And thus He bound me to Him. —Small

When we find Christ, we discover we were the ones who were lost.

**Luke 15:7 "I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.**

KJV Luke 15:7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

- **there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents** Lk 15:32; 5:32; Mt 18:13
- **than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.** Lk 15:29; 16:15; 18:9-11; Pr 30:12; Ro 7:9; Phil 3:6,7
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur

### **Related Passages:**

Luke 5:32+ “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 15:32 (REPENTANCE IN "REAL TIME") ‘But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’”

Luke 18:9+ And He also told this parable to some people who **trusted in themselves** that they were **righteous**, and viewed others with contempt:

Matthew 18:13 “If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.

Proverbs 30:12 There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, Yet is not washed from his filthiness.

## THE CONTRAST - REJOICING <> GRUMBLING!

**In the same way** - This phrase introduces the comparison of the parable to the kingdom of heaven. Just as one rejoices with **his friends and his neighbors**, over one lost sheep that has been found, all heaven rejoices over one lost soul that has been found. Think about this for a moment. The day you were saved, heaven was filled with an extra "[decibel](#)" of reverberating joy (there is always a "baseline" of joy in Heaven in the presence of the Lord!) for the eyes of your soul were opened you turned "from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God." (Acts 26:18-[note](#)). And to think that this celebration of joy happens every time one lost sheep is found! O, what we have to look forward to when we get to heaven!

**Phrase of comparison - same way** - Neh. 6:4; Est. 1:18; Est. 4:16; Ezek. 23:13; Ezek. 44:3; Ezek. 46:8; Matt. 5:12; Matt. 7:12; Matt. 18:33; Matt. 27:41; Mk. 15:31; Lk. 6:23; Lk. 6:26; Lk. 6:31; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 15:10; Lk. 20:31; Lk. 22:20; Acts 1:11; Acts 15:11; Rom. 1:27; Rom. 8:26; Rom. 11:5; 1 Co. 11:25; Phil. 2:18; Heb. 6:17; Heb. 9:21; Jas. 2:25; 1 Pet. 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:7; Jude 1:7; Jude 1:8; Rev. 2:15; Rev. 8:12

**MacArthur** - Having drawn the scribes and Pharisees into the story, the Lord delivered a devastating application to them....The contrast between the scribes and Pharisees, who were indifferent to the plight of the lost, and God, who seeks them and rejoices when they are found, is striking.

Notice how this parable presents the picture of **'more joy'** in contrast to continual grumbling of the Pharisees. The shepherd rejoices, the neighbors rejoice, and heaven rejoices. This emphasis on joy continues in the second section of the parable describing the lost coin and the third describing the lost son. In fact **joy/rejoicing/rejoicing** is a **key word** in this parable occurring 6 times - Lk 15:5 = rejoicing; Lk 15:6 = rejoice; Lk 15:7 = joy"; Lk 15:9 = rejoice"; Lk 15:10 = joy; Lk 15:32 = rejoice.

**Cole** adds that "Heaven is already filled with joy, but when a sinner gets saved, they throw a party, just as the father of the prodigal son did! As he tells his older son, "We **had** (verb = [dei](#) = it is necessary, needful) to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (Lu 15:32)." ([God's Lost and Found](#))

There was an ancient Jewish saying that "There is **joy** before God when those who provoke Him **perish** from the world." What a striking contrast with the heart of God Who rejoices over the returning penitent.

God does not rejoice in destroying those He created but in redeeming them. Peter describes God's heart writing...

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is **patient** (FIRST NOTE GOD'S "[makrothumeo](#)" = HIS "LONG FUSE") toward you, **not wishing for any to perish** (same verb as "**lost**" = [apollumi](#)) **but for all to come to repentance.** (2Pe 3:9+)

**There will be more joy ([chara](#)) in heaven over one sinner ([hamartolos](#)) who repents ([metanoeo](#) in present tense = as one's lifestyle) than over ninety-nine righteous ([dikaios](#)) persons who need no repentance ([metanoia](#))** - For a moment just imagine you were a self-righteous Pharisee listening to Jesus' piercing words! It would be difficult for the Pharisees to miss His point! Clearly the **ninety-nine righteous persons** represent the Pharisees. Who is it among fallen men (even those who are born again) who is so righteous that they need no repentance? This is very error of thinking by the Pharisees (thinking they needed no repentance) which Jesus was seeking to correct.

**Guzik** - The emphasis in this parable is not on the proportion, but on the joy of finding the lost. This was the error of the Pharisees and scribes who complained. They were not joyful when tax collectors and sinners drew near to Jesus. ([Luke 15](#))

**Hendriksen** - Christ's emphasis was on *the one* that was lost, searched for, found, and cheered. Even more emphatically, what Jesus is saying is this: if even a human shepherd will leave the ninety-nine to find the one sheep that was lost, how much more will the Great Shepherd do *to seek and reclaim* the lost sinner! And how much greater will be his joy! ([Exposition of the Gospel of Luke](#) - borrow)

**MacArthur** - The story also contains Christological overtones. God incarnate in Jesus Christ is the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14), who came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He has compassion on lost sinners, whom He likened to sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34), and bore the full burden of their restoration to God by laying down His life for them (John 10:11; cf. Isa. 53:4-6; 1Peter 2:24-25) (See [Luke 11-17 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Ninety-nine righteous ([dikaios](#)) persons** - Jesus adds a touch of **divine irony!** (Other examples of Jesus' use of irony = Luke 5:32; 11:47-48; 12:54-56; 13:33; 18:9-14) Clearly Jesus is not saying these were **righteous persons** in God's sight. Yes, they were **righteous**, but only in their **OWN** sight, not God's sight and that makes all the difference in this world and the next, for as Paul wrote "THERE IS **NONE** RIGHTEOUS, **NOT EVEN ONE;**" (Ro 3:10+). In other words, no sinful human being in Adam (that's all of us - Ro

5:12+) either truly seeks for God or does anything "good" that merits salvation (declaration of righteousness in the sight of God). ESV Note adds that "Paul does not deny that human beings perform some actions that conform externally to goodness, but these actions, prior to salvation, are still stained by evil, since they are not done for God's glory (Ro 1:21+) and do not come from faith (Ro 14:23+)."

As an aside some commentators really "go off the reservation" so to speak in trying to identify the **99 sheep**. Some ancient writers for example, such as Cyril, Alexander, and Ambrose attempted to identify the ninety-nine as the angels and the one which was lost as the human race! Remember this is a parable and one must be cautious in using one's "sanctified imagination" in attaching a specific interpretation to every detail.

Notice that **repents** is in the [present tense](#), which signifies not just a one time repentance but a veritable lifestyle of repentance. Does this characterize your Christian life dear follower of Christ? Do you bring joy to heaven by repenting from sin? Of course the only way to work out your salvation in fear and trembling in this case manifest by continual repenting (Php 2:12-[note](#)) is to depend on God the Spirit Who is continually at work in you (supernaturally energizing you and) giving you both the desire and power to repent as a lifestyle! (Php 2:13-[note](#)) Let me ask you a related question, are you "prospering" spiritually speaking? If not, could it be that you are not living a lifestyle of repentance? **Proverbs** speaks of the presence or absence of spiritual prosperity in the context of concealing our sin or confessing and repenting from our sin:

He who conceals his transgressions **will not prosper** (SPIRITUALLY), but he who confesses and forsakes them (~REPENTS) will find compassion. (Pr 28:13+)

There are those who classify themselves as evangelicals and yet who sadly deny that the Bible calls for repentance as part of a sinner's salvation experience. In so doing they are contending against a host of Biblical witnesses for as A T Robertson says "This word (**repent**) was the message of the **Baptist**, of **Jesus**, of **Peter**, of **Paul**, this radical change of attitude and life." Robert Stein

And we need to beware of "false repentance" (no real change in one's lifestyle) which can be subtle and self-deceiving, for as **Albert Barnes** wisely said "False repentance dreads the *consequences* of sin; true repentance dreads *sin itself*."

Notice that **repents** is in the [present tense](#) which means this person repents continually, as his or her lifestyle. The implication of course is that even after we have repented and believed the Gospel, we still harbor the old sin nature and sadly often sin against our Father in Heaven. And in His great mercy and lovingkindnesses which "are new every morning" (Lam 3:23), He grants us the gift of repentance and we work out our salvation by carrying out the choice of our will to repent from our sin against Him. Amazing grace indeed!

**Who need no repentance** ([metanoia](#)) - These individuals think they need no repentance. Self-righteousness blinds one's eyes to their desperate need for God's perfect righteousness in Christ by grace through faith.

**Bishop Ryle** offers this descriptive definition of repentance - **Repentance** is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "**repentance**." The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." ([Repentance](#))

One of the best illustrations of **genuine repentance** is found in Paul's description of the saints at Thessalonica...

For they themselves (other believers in Macedonia and Achaia) report about us (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) what kind of a reception we had with you, and **how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1Th 1:9; 1:10+)

**C H Spurgeon** in a sermon entitled **The Plumbline** (Amos 7:7, 8) wrote that "Side by side with that faith, God puts true repentance. When a man attempts to convert his fellow-man, he gives him a sham repentance, or perhaps he tells him that there is no need of any repentance at all. Certain preachers have been telling us, lately, that it is a very easy matter to obtain salvation, and that there is no need of repentance; or if repentance is needed, it is merely a change of mind. That is not the doctrine that our fathers used to preach, nor the doctrine that we have believed. That faith, which is not accompanied by repentance, will have to be repented of; so, whenever God builds, he builds repentance fair and square with faith. These two things go together; the man just as much regrets

and grieves over the past as he sees that past obliterated by the precious blood of Jesus. He just as much hates all his sin as he believes that his sin has been all put away. ([Amos 7:7-8 The Plumline](#))

**Robert Stein** has an interesting comment on **repentance** - "**Repentance**" here literally means a change of mind but refers more broadly to the human dimension involved in the experience of conversion in contrast to the divine element (regeneration)...The message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins is a central theme in Luke-Acts and must always be a central part of the gospel message.cf. Luke 4:18; 5:17-32; 24:47; Acts 5:31; 8:22 (**Ed**: To be sure repentance must be a personal choice, but Scripture teaches that it is a gift of God - cf Ro 2:4, Acts 3:26, Acts 11:18, Acts 5:31, 2 Ti 2:25). (See [Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#))

**John MacArthur** on the nature of **repentance** - Saving repentance never exists except in partnership with faith. **It is impossible to have true faith in Jesus Christ apart from true repentance from sin or true repentance from sin apart from true faith.** They are two sides of the same work of the Holy Spirit to convict sinners of their sin and draw them to Christ. It must be clearly understood that **repentance is not a human work that earns salvation Repentance is not a pre-salvation effort by sinners to set their lives right** that God rewards by saving them. In repentance sinners recognize their dire condition (**Ed**: "Lost" like sheep!), acknowledge that they are unable to save themselves, and turn to Jesus Christ as the only One who can save them. Left to themselves, the unregenerate (**Ed**: cf the "self-righteous" Pharisees) will never come to that conclusion, since they love darkness rather than light (John 3:19), and are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). **The conviction that produces repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit**, who "convict[s] the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). (See [Luke Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

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**Repents** (3340) ([metanoeo](#) from **meta** = with, among + **noeo** = to think, exercise the mind <> from **nous** = mind - see study = [metanoia](#)) means to have another mind. **Metanoeo** means to change one's mind in respect to sin, God, and self. To turn to God and from sin (Luke 15:7 = "one sinner who **repents**", cf 1Th 1:9-note).

**Luke's** uses of **metanoeo** - Lk. 10:13; Lk. 11:32; Lk. 13:3; Lk. 13:5; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 15:10; Lk. 16:30; Lk. 17:3; Lk. 17:4; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Acts 17:30; Acts 26:20

**Joy** (5479) [chara](#) (and rejoice) is a feeling of great pleasure, of inner gladness, or of delight. **Joy** is an emotion evoked by a sense of well-being. It is a deep feeling of happiness and contentment. **Joy** in the NT is virtually always used to signify a feeling of "happiness" that is based on spiritual realities (independent of what "happens"). **Joy** is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful heart. It is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful behavior. **Joy** is not necessarily an experience that comes from favorable circumstances, but is God's gift from His Spirit to believers. **Joy** is a part of God's very essence and as discussed below His Spirit manifests this supernatural joy in His children (Galatians 5:22+, Acts 13:52+, 1 Th 1:6+). In sum, **Joy** is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who is filled with the Spirit and knows all is well between himself and the Lord. There is a chorus from an old spiritual song that is apropos...Happiness happens But joy abides

**Chara - 57v** - Matt. 2:10; Matt. 13:20; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 25:21; Matt. 25:23; Matt. 28:8; Mk. 4:16; Lk. 1:14; Lk. 2:10; Lk. 8:13; Lk. 10:17; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 15:10; Lk. 24:41; Lk. 24:52; Jn. 3:29; Jn. 15:11; Jn. 16:20; Jn. 16:21; Jn. 16:22; Jn. 16:24; Jn. 17:13; Acts 8:8; Acts 12:14; Acts 13:52; Acts 15:3; Rom. 14:17; Rom. 15:13; Rom. 15:32; 2 Co. 1:24; 2 Co. 2:3; 2 Co. 7:4; 2 Co. 7:13; 2 Co. 8:2; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 1:4; Phil. 1:25; Phil. 2:2; Phil. 2:29; Phil. 4:1; Col. 1:11; 1 Thess. 1:6; 1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Thess. 2:20; 1 Thess. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:4; Phlm. 1:7; Heb. 10:34; Heb. 12:2; Heb. 12:11; Heb. 13:17; Jas. 1:2; Jas. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:8; 1 Jn. 1:4; 2 Jn. 1:12; 3 Jn. 1:4

**Repentance** (3341) ([metanoia](#) from **meta** = after + **noéo** = to understand) literally means "afterthought" or "to think after" and implies a change of mind. From the NT uses, it is clear that **metanoia** means however much more than merely a change of one's mind but also includes a complete change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. **Metanoia** is a conversion in every sense of the word.

**Luke's** uses of **metanoia**- Lk. 3:3; Lk. 3:8; Lk. 5:32; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 24:47; Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:24; Acts 19:4; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20;

**See in depth comments on repentance**

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**Vance Havner** wrote that Our Lord's last word to the church was not the great commission but **'repent,'** and it is the last thing the church is willing to do. We hear much about [revival](#), but [revival](#) is an Old Testament word. The New Testament word is **"repent."** I almost despair of our churches ever learning the difference between [revival](#) and evangelism. The average ["revival"](#) is mainly a drive for more members, and we already have too many of the kind that most of them are!...(**"Repent"**) was (Jesus') command to **five out of seven of the churches in Asia** and that proportion still holds (see **notes** on those 5 churches - Rev 2:5, 16, 21, 22+, Rev 3:3, 19+). Five out of seven Christians and churches today need first of all to repent. Another weakness that needs to be corrected is **the**

**present-day accent on conversion without repentance.** Do not misunderstand me here. I know that eternal life is the gift of God and that there is nothing meritorious in our tears... What I do mean is that we have made it easy for hundreds superficially to "accept Christ" without ever having faced sin and with no sense of need (**Ed note:** We can't put our sins behind us until we are ready to face them.). We are healing slightly the hurt of this generation, trying to treat patients who do not even know they are sick." (See also [Is it biblical to ask Jesus into your heart?](#))

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### **ILLUSTRATION** - The "R" Word -

Jimmy had trouble pronouncing the letter "R" so his teacher gave him a sentence to practice at home: "Robert gave Richard a rap in the rib for roasting the rabbit so rare."

Some days later the teacher asked him to say the sentence for her. Jimmy rattled it off like this: "Bob gave Dick a poke in the side for not cooking the bunny enough."

He had evaded the letter "R."

There are a lot of people today—including Christians—who go to great lengths to avoid the "R" word of "Repentance."

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Perhaps the best-known hymn describing this parable is "[The Ninety and Nine](#)" by [Elizabeth C. Clephane](#) (1868), [play this hymn](#). Why do we not sing hymns like this today? One could even add a "beat" to make it modern! Clephane's lyrics are poignant and powerful and worthy of pondering rather than just being mouthed. Take a moment to read her poem.

1 There were ninety and nine that safely lay  
In the shelter of the fold;  
But one was out on the hills away,  
Far off from the gates of gold.  
Away on the mountains wild and bare;  
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

2 "Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;  
Are they not enough for Thee?"  
But the Shepherd made answer: "This of Mine  
Has wandered away from Me.  
And although the road be rough and steep,  
I go to the desert to find My sheep."

3 But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How deep were the waters crossed;  
Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through  
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.  
Out in the desert He heard its cry—  
Sick and helpless, and ready to die.

4 "Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way,  
That mark out the mountain's track?"  
"They were shed for one who had gone astray  
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back."  
"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?"  
"They are pierced tonight by many a thorn."

5 And all through the mountains, thunder-riven,  
And up from the rocky steep,  
There arose a glad cry to the gate of heaven,  
"Rejoice! I have found My sheep!"  
And the angels echoed around the throne,  
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!"

**Ira Sankey** tells the story behind the hymn "[The Ninety and Nine](#)" - At the noon meeting on the second day, held at the Free Assembly Hall, the subject presented by Mr. Moody and other speakers was "The Good Shepherd." When Mr. Moody had finished speaking he called upon Dr. Bonar to say a few words. He spoke only a few minutes, but with great power, thrilling the immense

audience by his fervid eloquence. At the conclusion of Dr. Bonar's words Mr. Moody turned to me with the question, "Have you a solo appropriate for this subject, with which to close the service?" I had nothing suitable in mind, and was greatly troubled to know what to do. The Twenty-third Psalm occurred to me, but this had been sung several times in the meeting. I knew that every Scotchman in the audience would join me if I sang that, so I could not possibly render this favorite psalm as a solo. At this moment I seemed to hear a voice saying: "Sing the hymn you found on the train!" But I thought this impossible, as no music had ever been written for that hymn. Again the impression came strongly upon me that I must sing the beautiful and appropriate words I had found the day before, and placing the little newspaper slip on the organ in front of me, I lifted my heart in prayer, asking God to help me so to sing that the people might hear and understand. Laying my hands upon the organ I struck the key of A flat, and began to sing.

Note by note the tune was given, which has not been changed from that day to this. As the singing ceased a great sigh seemed to go up from the meeting, and I knew that the song had reached the hearts of my Scotch audience. Mr. Moody was greatly moved. Leaving the pulpit, he came down to where I was seated. Leaning over the organ, he looked at the little newspaper slip from which the song had been sung, and with tears in his eyes said: "Sankey, where did you get that hymn? I never heard the like of it in my life." I was also moved to tears and arose and replied: "Mr. Moody, that's the hymn I read to you yesterday on the train, which you did not hear." Then Mr. Moody raised his hand and pronounced the benediction, and the meeting closed. Thus "The Ninety and Nine" was born.

A short time afterward I received, at Dundee, a letter from a lady who had been present at the meeting, thanking me for having sung her deceased sister's words. From correspondence that followed I learned that the author of the poem was Elizabeth C. Clephane, a resident of Melrose, Scotland, one of three sisters, all members of a refined Christian family. She was born in Edinburgh in 1830. Her sister, in describing Elizabeth, says: "She was a very quiet little child, shrinking from notice and always absorbed in books. The loss of both parents, at an early age, taught her sorrow. As she grew up she was recognized as the cleverest of the family. She was first in her class and a favorite with the teacher. Her love for poetry was a passion. Among the sick and suffering she won the name of 'My Sunbeam.' She wrote 'The Ninety and Nine' for a friend, who had it published in 'The Children's Hour.' It was copied from thence into various publications, but was comparatively little noticed. She died in 1869." (This is an excerpt - [click for full story](#)).

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**Steven Cole** - There are different views on what Jesus means in verse Lu 15:7, but two are most likely. **Spurgeon** takes the 99 righteous persons who need no repentance to refer to those who have already been justified by grace through faith (*Twelve Sermons*, p. 27; Charles Simeon takes the same view, *Expository Outlines of the Whole Bible* [Zondervan], 12:537). Thus they are not at present in need of repentance. He uses the illustration of a family with seven children, where one is deathly ill, but then recovers. The family rejoices more over the recovery of that one child than over the health of the other six.

**I prefer, however, another view** (ED: THIS WRITER DOES ALSO). In the three parables, the **lost** sheep, the **lost** coin, and the **lost** son all represent the **lost** tax gatherers and sinners who were coming to hear Jesus and getting saved. The **99 sheep**, the **nine coins** that were not lost, and the **older brother** who never strayed **all represent the Pharisees and scribes**. They are not in the fold or household of faith, but in the household of Israel, made up both of those who are saved and those who are not. **It is not that they did not need repentance for themselves, but rather that they thought that they were good enough not to need repentance**. Thus Jesus was using irony to show them their self-righteous pride, especially in the case of the older brother who could not bring himself to rejoice at his brother's repentance. He is a mirror of the Pharisees!

We saw the same thing back in Lu 5:32+, when the Pharisees grumbled because Jesus and His disciples ate with the sinners at Levi's house. Jesus replied, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The Lord hates pride, and so the Pharisees were just as sinful as the more outwardly notorious sinners whom they despised. But they were blind toward their own hypocrisy and pride. Jesus also confronts them in Lu 16:15, when He says, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts." Jesus hits the same thing in Lu 18:9, with the parable of the Pharisee and the publican going to the temple to pray. He told it because the Pharisees "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt." Thus the "righteous" are the self-righteous who need to repent just as much as the tax gatherers and sinners, but who are blind to their need.

Repentance means turning to God from our sins. Such repentance is God's gift, not a work of man (Ac 11:18), and is inextricably bound up with saving faith. You cannot have one without the other. When a person savingly believes in Christ, he turns from his sins and trusts in God's mercy. A person who says, "I believe in Jesus," but who does not repent of his sins, has not truly believed in Jesus unto salvation.

When a sinner turns from his sins to God, all heaven rejoices because God gets the glory. When a self-righteous person continues in his self-righteousness, he gets the glory and God is not pleased. ([God's Lost and Found](#))

There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. —Luke 15:7

Martie and I recently traveled to some major cities in several countries. We were struck with how lost our world is and grieved over the millions who have never heard the message of the saving grace of Jesus. The thought of reaching our world for Christ felt overwhelming.

Until I remembered the story of the boy walking on a beach. Encountering hundreds of starfish dying under the heat of the burning sun, he started throwing them back into the sea. A passerby asked, "What are you doing?" "Saving their lives," the boy replied. "Forget it," the man said. "You can't possibly save all these starfish." "Right," replied the boy, "but it makes a big difference to each one I do save."

I love the boy's perspective. When the wave of sin threw us onto the shore to die, God sent His Son to walk on the beach to rescue all who would repent. And, as Jesus told His listeners in Luke 15, each time someone is rescued, heaven throws a party. "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

Has heaven rejoiced over your rescue? If so, join the ranks of those who reach other lost souls with the rescuing grace of Jesus. By Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Your love, O God, would spare no pain  
To conquer death and win;  
You sent Your only Son to die  
To rescue us from sin.  
—M. Gustafson

When you've been rescued, you'll want to rescue others.

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## **[T-Ball Faith](#)**

Read: Luke 15:1-7

The joy of the Lord is your strength. —Nehemiah 8:10

Whoever dreamed up T-ball is a genius: Every kid on the field gets a taste of the fun and joy of the game before they taste the disappointment of striking out.

In T-ball, a baseball is placed on a rubber tee about waist-high to the 5- and 6-year-old batters. Players swing until they hit the ball and then run. On my first night as a coach, the very first batter hit the ball far into the outfield. Suddenly every player from every position ran to get the ball instead of staying where they were supposed to. When one of them reached it, there was nobody left in the infield for him to throw it to! All the players were standing together—cheering with unrestrained exuberance!

Those who have recently come to know Jesus as Savior have an unrestrained joy that is a delight to be around as well. We rejoice with them, and so do the angels in heaven! (Luke 15:7). New Christians are in love with God and excited about knowing Him and learning from His Word.

Those who've been Christians for a long time may get discouraged with the struggles of the Christian life and forget the joy of new-found faith. So take the opportunity to rejoice with those who've come to faith. God can use them to inspire you to renew your own commitment to Jesus. By Randy Kilgore ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Rejoice, O soul, your debt is paid,  
For all your sins on Christ were laid;  
We've been redeemed, we're justified—  
And all because the Savior died.  
—D. DeHaan

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. —Psalm 51:12

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## **[New To The Family](#)**

There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no

repentance. — Luke 15:7

While on a ministry trip with a Christian high school chorale to Jamaica, we witnessed an illustration of God's love in action. On the day we visited an orphanage for disabled children and teens, we learned that Donald, one of the boys our kids had interacted with—a teen with cerebral palsy—was going to be adopted. When the adopting couple arrived at the “base” where we were staying, it was a joy to talk to them about Donald. But what was even better was what happened later. We were at the base when Donald and his new parents arrived just after they had picked him up at the orphanage. As the brand-new mom embraced her son, our students gathered around her and sang praise songs. Tears flowed. Tears of joy. And Donald was beaming! Later, one of the students said to me, “This reminds me of what it must be like in heaven when someone is saved. The angels rejoice because someone has been adopted into God's family.” Indeed, it was a picture of the joy of heaven when someone new joins God's forever family by faith in Christ. Jesus spoke of that grand moment when He said, “There will be . . . joy in heaven over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:7).

Praise God that He has adopted us into His family. No wonder the angels rejoice! — Dave Branon [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

The One who made the heavens,  
Who died on Calvary,  
Rejoices with His angels  
When one soul is set free.  
— Fasick

Angels rejoice when we repent.

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**Ray Pritchard**... In 1937 the American Tract Society sponsored a contest in which they offered a prize of \$1,000 for the best new book written on one of the “essential evangelical doctrines of the Christian faith.” Sixty-one years ago, \$1,000 was a lot of money and a great many well-known Christian authors entered the contest hoping to win the prize. A committee representing six denominations judged the entries. The judges unanimously chose a book written by a man whose name I have mentioned before—Dr. Harry Ironside, who for many years served as pastor of the famous Moody Memorial Church in downtown Chicago. The book he wrote is entitled *Except Ye Repent*. The title is taken from the King James Version of Luke 13:3 where Jesus said to the men of his day, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Let me quote the first sentence from Dr. Ironside's introduction: “Fully convinced in my own mind that the doctrine of repentance is the missing note in many otherwise orthodox and fundamentally sound circles today, I have penned this volume out of a full heart.” Repentance, he says, is the missing note in many otherwise sound churches. If it was so in 1937, how much more it must be true in 1998.

In our day, and in our circles, the doctrine of repentance is not preached very often. There are several reasons for this. First, we live in a superficial age and any preaching of repentance is bound to cut through the superficiality. This is one point on which both liberals and conservatives share unspoken agreement—no one wants to go to church and hear hard truth from the pulpit, and repentance is the ultimate hard truth. Second, some evangelicals fear the preaching of repentance because they think it somehow opposes the gospel of grace. Their fears are justified if repentance is made to equal penance, the act whereby a man atones for his own sin. But that is not true biblical repentance. Where true repentance is preached, it actually promotes the grace of God. ([Repent! The Forgotten Doctrine of Salvation by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#))

**Don't wait till the 11th hour to repent --  
you may die at 10:30!**

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An **illustration** from the **Speaker's Quote Book**

A Sunday school teacher asked a class what the word “repentance” means.

A little boy put up his hand and said, “It is being sorry for your sins.”

A little girl also raised her hand and said, “It is being sorry enough to quit.”

A schoolgirl was saved and someone asked her, “What were you before?” She said, “A sinner.” The she was asked, “What are you now?” She answered, “A sinner.” They asked, “What's the difference?”

She answered, “I was a sinner running after sin. But now I'm a sinner running from sin.” (Borrow [The speaker's quote book : over 4,500 illustrations and quotations for all occasions](#))

**It's never too soon to repent,**

but soon it may be too late!

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#### Related Resources on Repentance:

- [What is repentance and is it necessary for salvation?](#)
- [What is cheap grace?](#)
- [Matthew 3:7-10 The Fruits of True Repentance, 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 3:7-12 The Fruits of True Repentance, 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:7-8 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:8-14 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 3:15-17 True Repentance: God's Highway to the Heart- 4](#) - John MacArthur
- [Repent! The Forgotten Doctrine of Salvation by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [Ezra 10:1-44 Genuine Repentance - Pdf - Steven Cole](#)
- [Luke 13:3 Repentance - J C Ryle](#)
- [Psalm 51:17 Repentance After Conversion - Pdf - C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Jonah 3:9 - Who Can Tell? - C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Zechariah 12:12-14 - Apart - C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Mark 1:15 Faith and Repentance Inseparable - C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Luke 15:10 The Sympathy of the Two Worlds - C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Acts 11:18 Repentance Unto Life - C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Romans 2:4 God's Goodness Leading to Repentance - C H Spurgeon](#)
- [Revelation 16:9 Judgments and No Repentance: Repentance and No Salvation - C H Spurgeon](#)

**Luke 15:8 "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?"**

KJV Luke 15:8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

- **ten silver coins and loses one coin** Mt 18:28."
- **search carefully until she finds it** Lk 15:19:10; Ezek 34:12; John 10:16; 11:52; Eph 2:17
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:8-10 Recovering the Lost Coin](#) - John MacArthur

**Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins ([drachme](#)) and loses ([apollumi](#)) one coin ([drachme](#)) does not light ([hapto](#)) a lamp ([luchnos](#))** - Jesus began with a man that was obviously a shepherd which were not a respected profession among the Pharisees. Now He follows up with a woman, who similarly was not rightly respected by the Pharisees. One can imagine their grumbling is intensifying! The important point is not how she lost the coin or the 10:1 ratio (100:1 with the sheep) but that she lost a coin. That is the point Jesus wants us to focus on. Remember when you interpret parables, be careful not to be distracted by trying to explain every detail and thereby miss the central point of the parable. Houses in Palestine were usually dark so she begins her search by lighting a lamp.

**Leon Morris** - The ten coins may represent a poor woman's savings, or, as some think, they may have been strung together as an ornament. The point is evidently not significant. Either way the loss of a coin would be a serious matter for a poor woman. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

As **Hampton Keathley IV** reminds us "These two parables deal with the question of God's attitude towards sinners. God's attitude towards the sinners and tax gatherers is that they are very valuable to Him and He is searching diligently to find those who are **lost**." ([Luke 15 The Lost Sheep, Coins and Sons](#))

**John MacArthur** introduces this story - Like the first story, this one also takes place in a village setting. As does the previous parable, this one presents a poor person of low social standing facing a major crisis—a woman who lost a coin of great value. If the

scribes and Pharisees were insulted that Jesus asked them to think like a shepherd, calling on them to imagine themselves in the place of a woman was an even greater insult. Shepherds were considered unclean, and in that male-dominated culture women were deemed insignificant and not worthy of respect....It was mercy that prompted Jesus to assault their foolish pride, since only the humble can be saved (Matt. 5:5+; James 4:6+, James 4:10+). (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - If the shepherd was interested in one in a hundred, it makes sense that the woman would be interested in one in ten. She did not just count the coin as lost and care nothing about it. ([Luke 15](#))

**MacArthur** notes that while one coin "may not seem like a large sum, in a bartering society, where money was not used as frequently as in most modern societies, it was a significant loss."

**Mattoon** - In Bible times, the women in the Middle East would often receive ten silver coins as a wedding gift. These were valuable, equal to about one day's wage. They were also sentimental to the wife, and were worn on her headdress across her forehead. These coins were like the wedding ring of today. Some scholars state that the loss of a coin was considered as an indication of unfaithfulness to the husband. These are some of the reasons why this woman is in "panic" mode. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Wiersbe** has an interesting comment - The necklace of ten coins was a headband that signified that a woman was married. To lose one of the coins would be to ruin the necklace and embarrass the woman. Like that coin, sinners bear the imprint of the image of God and are valuable (20:24–25); but they are lost and "out of circulation." When found, sinners are once again useful and able to serve the Lord. (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

Someone has written that a **drachma** was worth in the range of 16-20 cents! And that was their daily wage! As several commentators suggest it may have been that the woman's 10 coins were also part of her **dowry**, which would contribute to her motivation to search with such an intensity.

**Robert Stein** has a different take writing "The exact value of such coins (literally *drachmas* ), which are not mentioned anywhere else in the NT, is difficult to estimate. They may have been equal to a denarius. Speculation about whether these were part of the bridal headdress and dowry is unnecessary and irrelevant to the story, as is the exact value of a drachma. No comparison is intended between the hundred-to-one or ten-to-one ratios." (See [Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#))

**Barclay** describes a typical Palestine house to give us a sense of the difficulty of the woman's searching for the lost coin - The houses were very dark, for they were lit by one little circular window not much more than about eighteen inches across. The floor was beaten earth covered with dried reeds and rushes; and to look for a coin on a floor like that was very much like looking for a needle in a haystack. The woman swept the floor in the hope that she might see the coin glint or hear it tinkle as it moved. ([Luke 15](#))

**Does not light** ([hapto](#)) **a lamp** ([luchnos](#)) **and sweep** ([saroo](#)) **the house and search** ([zeteo](#)) **carefully** ([epimelos](#)) - All three verbs are in the present tense indicating continuous activity. These three verbs indicate the continual effort and zeal undertaken in order to find what is lost. She left nothing to chance. She left no stone (no speck of dust) unturned. When God searches for the lost, He does so with a holy zeal, leaving no stone unturned! (cf [Hound of Heaven](#)).

**THOUGHT** - Am I as vigilant as this woman in seeking the lost around me? Why not? Not only will I have joy, but when they are found it pleases my Father and gives Him joy! Amazing thought indeed!

**Until she finds** ([heurisko](#)) **it** (see [related note](#) on Lk 15:4) - Not **"IF"** she finds it but **UNTIL**. She will not give up the search. **Until** is a small word but as a time sensitive word it can yield big dividends in interpretation if become attentive to its occurrences (about 500x depending on the translation you use). The basic meaning of until is up to the point in time. If something happens **until** a particular time, it happens during the period before that time and stops at that time. Stated another (similar) way, if something happens **until** a time, it happens before that time and then stops at that time. In summary whenever you encounter a time word like **UNTIL** consider the **"5P's"** - **P**ause to **P**onder the **P**assage then **P**actice it in the **P**ower of the Spirit. Remember you can always ask "What time is it?"

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**Coins** (1406)([drachme](#) from [drássomai](#) = to grasp) means something after which people grasped. It referred to a drachma, a Greek coin of silver equal to a quarter of the Jewish shekel, and to the Roman denarius or dinar which was the average pay for a twelve-hour work day (Matt. 20:2) and is used only in Luke 15:8, 9.

**Wikipedia** - The name *drachma* is derived from the verb *drássomai*, "grasp").<sup>[n 3]</sup> It is believed that the same word with the meaning of "handful" or "handle" is found in [Linear B](#) tablets of the [MyceneanPylos](#).<sup>[3][n 4]</sup> Initially a drachma was a fistful (a "grasp") of six [oboloi](#) or [obeloi](#) (metal sticks, literally "[spits](#)") used as a form of currency as early as 1100 BC and being a form of "bullion": bronze, copper, or iron ingots denominated by

weight. A [hoard](#) of over 150 rod-shaped obeloi was uncovered at [Heraion of Argos](#) in [Peloponnese](#). Six of them are displayed at the [Numismatic Museum of Athens](#). It was the standard unit of silver coinage at most ancient Greek mints, and the name *obol* was used to describe a coin that was one-sixth of a drachma. The notion that *drachma* derived from the word for fistful was recorded by [Herakleides of Pontos](#) (387–312 BC) who was informed by the priests of Heraion that [Pheidon](#), king of Argos, dedicated rod-shaped obeloi to Heraion. Similar information about Pheidon's obeloi was also recorded at the [Parian Chronicle](#).

**Sweep** (4563)([saroo](#)) means to sweep with a broom. Floors were usually earthen. The [present tense](#) pictures here diligence and determination for she was continually sweeping, leaving no particle of dust undisturbed. Saroo is found only in Matt. 12:44; Lk. 11:25-note; Lk. 15:8. There are no uses in the Septuagint.

**Gilbrant** on **saroo** - In Matthew 12:44 and Luke 11:25-note the word is used metaphorically by Jesus to describe a house cleaned and decorated, but empty. In a parable about the wicked generation Jesus lived in, He described the Pharisee who was seeking for a sign as a demon-possessed person who experiences a temporary cessation from demonic influence in his life but does not subsequently repent. Such a person is void of any protection against demonic activity. In Luke 15:8 the literal meaning "sweep" appears in the Parable of the Lost Coin.

**Search** (2212)([zeteo](#)) implies giving attention and priority to and deliberately pursuing after. The most common sense of this word is to "seek". **Webster** says that to **seek** means to go in search or quest of, to look for, to try to discover, to search for by going from place to place. To inquire for; to ask for; to solicit; to endeavor to find or gain by any means.

**Zeteo** is used of Jesus who came to seek and to save the lost which implies far more than a mere "looking around" (as seen in Mt 6:32,33; 13:45,46; Lk 15:8) and includes the idea of diligently, earnestly, and tenaciously searching after something, sparing no effort, for the sought object is valued to the highest degree. Likewise, believers are to seek God in the same way.

**Carefully** (1960)([epimelos](#) from **epí** = upon or for + **mélō** = to concern oneself) is an adverb which means diligently, carefully, [sedulously](#). Only use in NT ([Hapax legomenon](#)) In early Greek literature *epimelōs* means to perform a service carefully. Of sinning continually (Ge 6:5). Of disciplining a son diligently (Pr 13:24)

**Epimelos** - 9x in 9v in the Septuagint - Gen. 6:5; Gen. 8:21; Ezr. 6:8; Ezr. 6:12; Ezr. 6:13; Prov. 13:24

**Finds** (2147) See discussion above on [heurisko](#). **Heurisko** is used by Jesus in the context of the narrowness of the way that leads to salvation (Mt 7:14 - For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who **find** it.) In Matthew 10:39 Jesus declared "He who has **found** his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will **find** it."

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**SOUL** - An Australian council gave an Irishman special permission to dig through a local garbage dump. The man is desperately trying to find a lottery ticket worth 1.5 million dollars (\$700,000 US), that he says he accidentally threw out in an empty grocery bag. News agent Sue Virgin said the winning ticket was sold December 18 in a mining town in the state of Western Australia and the prize has not been claimed. Virgin said, "People aren't generally allowed just to go to the tip and dig, and we would certainly be discouraging people from doing that." She said the man had spent four days digging. Virgin added that with all the refuse dumped after Christmas, "It must have been disgusting." —Reuters, January 22, 2002, Submitted by Jim Sandell. (**Ed**: We never find out if the Irishman found what he lost, which was of great value. In contrast we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God always finds the one lost soul for it is of great value to Him! Amazing grace indeed!)

Why would this man dig through refuse? Because he lost something that is of great value to him. And if he finds it, I'm sure he will rejoice. Just as heaven does when a lost soul, something of great value, is found. (Jim Wilson - Fresh Illustrations)

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## KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

William Bailey panicked when he realized he had accidentally left a leather portfolio containing a Picasso print, and a painting by Sophie Matisse worth \$6,000 in a New York subway station. Bailey, a framer and art instructor had been taking the portfolio downtown when he put it down while waiting for his train. When Bailey arrived in Columbus Circle, he realized he had left the artwork behind. Though he hailed a cab and hurried back to the station, the portfolio and the artwork had disappeared. Bailey said, "It was like a Hitchcock movie. I broke into a tremendous sweat."

After Bailey searched the entire area, he collapsed in tears in front of a nearby church. He plastered the area with posters, begging anyone with information to call and promised a \$1,000 reward. Bailey received so many calls, his voice mail stopped working. he says the calls covered everything from people calling him awful names to people telling him they were praying for him. Three days later, Bailey received the call he was waiting for from Paul Abi Boutros, a book vendor from West 80th Street.

Boutros says a homeless man apparently brought the portfolio up from the subway platform to the street. Boutros noticed it propped against the wall of a Bagel shop. When it had been there a couple of hours, he asked the man if he planned to keep it. The homeless man said. "Do whatever you want with it." Boutros says, " I liked the leather—I liked the portfolio—so I took it."

Boutros' wife read the story about the missing paintings in the paper the following Sunday and realized what her husband had found. He says, "I thought they're very good pictures, but I don't want them because they're not mine."

When he received the case back, Bailey compared his ecstatic feeling to the brilliant colors in the Matisse painting. He gave Boutros the \$1,000 reward. As an added gift, Bailey gave the street vendor the leather portfolio he admired too.

—www.nynewsday.com; Lost Picasso, Matisse Recovered; by Melanie Lefkowitz, June 2, 2003. Submitted by Jim Sandell. (Jim Wilson - Fresh Illustrations)

**Luke 15:9 "When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'**

KJV Luke 15:9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

- **Rejoice with me** Lk 15:6,7
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:8-10 Recovering the Lost Coin](#) - John MacArthur

## JOY OVER A LOST COIN FOUND

Remember that the main point of this parable is that the lost is found.

**When she has found ([heurisko](#)) it, she calls together her friends ([philos](#)) and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with ([sugchairo](#) - [aorist imperative](#)) me, for I have found ([heurisko](#)) the coin ([drachme](#)) which I had lost ([apollumi](#))!' -- As noted above **joy/rejoicing/rejoicing** is a **key word** in this parable occurring 6 times - Lk 15:5 = rejoicing; Lk 15:6 = rejoice; Lk 15:7 = joy; Lk 15:9 = rejoice; Lk 15:10 = joy; Lk 15:32 = rejoice. All three parts of the parable present the picture of **exuberant JOY** - The shepherd and his friends rejoice, the woman and her neighbors rejoice, and heaven rejoices. **Found** ([heurisko](#)) means to find after searching and how this depicts God as the "Hound of Heaven."**

**MacArthur** comments that "People in a small, tight-knit village would share each other's sufferings and joys, so a party celebrating the woman's joy at recovering what she had lost would have been appropriate. Are eternal souls worth less? (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - In a sense, the lost belong to God whether they know it or not. "The piece of silver was lost but still claimed. Observe that the woman called the money, 'my piece which was lost.' When she lost its possession she did not lose her right to it; it did not become somebody else's when it slipped out of her hand and fell upon the floor." (Spurgeon) ([Luke 15](#))

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**Friends** ([5384](#)) ([philos](#)) means loved (loved one), dear, befriended, friendly, kind. **Philos** can mean kindly disposed or devoted (Acts 19:31). **Philos** describes one having special interest in someone else. One who is on intimate terms or in close association with someone else

**Philos** - 27v - Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:6; Lk. 7:34; Lk. 11:5; Lk. 11:6; Lk. 11:8; Lk. 12:4; Lk. 14:10; Lk. 14:12; Lk. 15:6; Lk. 15:9; Lk. 15:29; Lk. 16:9; Lk. 21:16; Lk. 23:12; Jn. 3:29; Jn. 11:11; Jn. 15:13; Jn. 15:14; Jn. 15:15; Jn. 19:12; Acts 10:24; Acts 19:31; Acts 27:3; Jas. 2:23; Jas. 4:4; 3 Jn. 1:15

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### Lost And Found

Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost! —Luke 15:9

During the many years I've worked with drug-addicted youth, I've never given up on anyone—until Sam. He had peculiar problems

and was extremely rebellious. Without realizing it, I began to pull away from him. Then God alerted me to my wrong attitude. I was staying overnight with friends when I lost a treasured ring. I hunted frantically for it. I even pulled the bed apart and remade it, but still no ring. Finally I thought, This hunt is consuming too much of my attention. I'm going to turn to God and His Word. As I knelt by the bed, I opened my Bible to Luke 15 and began reading about the woman who hunted diligently for her lost coin. When I thought about the parable, it seemed as if God was saying, "You've given a lot of effort looking for your lost ring. Are you willing to work that hard seeking after Sam?" With closed eyes, I earnestly answered, "Yes, Lord, I am!" When I opened my eyes, I discovered my ring on the bed not far from my Bible. How I rejoiced! But months later, the angels and I rejoiced far more over Sam, who at last turned his life over to Christ!

Ask yourself: Am I as diligent in searching for lost people as I am in searching for lost things? By Joanie Yoder [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Is your life a channel of blessing?  
Are you burdened for those who are lost?  
Have you urged upon those who are straying  
The Savior who died on the cross?  
—Smyth

Because we have been found, we have a mission to seek the lost.

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## Lost And Found

Rejoice with me, for I have found the [coin] which I lost! —Luke 15:9

Recently, I couldn't find my credit card. I began frantically looking for it because losing a credit card is no small thing. Automatic payments and daily purchases would all be disrupted until it could be replaced. Not to mention the possibility of someone finding it and charging items to our account. What a relief it was when my wife found it on the floor under the computer table.

In Luke 15:8-10, Christ told the story of something that was lost—a valuable coin, which was equivalent to a day's wages. The woman who lost the coin was so concerned about locating it that she lit a lamp, swept the house, and carefully searched until she found it. Then she told her friends "Rejoice with me, for I have found the [coin] which I lost!" (v.9). Then Jesus gave the point of the story: "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v.10).

People are of great value to God. Those who don't know Him are lost in their sins. Christ paid the ultimate price by dying on the cross for their redemption. Do you know people who are lost? Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to share the good news with them so they can repent of their sins and be found by our gracious God. By Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The Lord has come to seek and save  
A world that is lost in sin;  
And everyone who comes to Him  
Will be restored and changed within.  
—Sper

To be found, you must first admit that you're lost.

**Luke 15:10 "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

KJV Luke 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

- **there is joy in the presence of the angels of God** Lk 2:1-14; Ezek 18:23,32; 33:11; Mt 18:10,11; 28:5-7; Acts 5:19; 10:3-5; Hebrews 1:14; Rev 5:11-14
- **over one sinner who repents** Lk 7:47; 13:5; 2 Chr 33:13-19; Mt 18:14; Acts 11:18; 2 Co 7:10; Phile 1:15
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15 Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15 The Seeking Savior - Pt 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:8-10 Recovering the Lost Coin](#) - John MacArthur

**In the same way** - [See note](#) on Lk 15:7. In the previous story the joy was **in heaven** and here **in the presence of the angels**.

**Leon Morris** writes that "Among the rabbinic writings there is the lost coin motif, but it is used very differently. If a man keeps seeking for a lost coin much more should he seek for the Law, said the rabbis (Canticles Rabbah I.i.9). There is no rabbinic equivalent to God's seeking of sinners." (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**I tell you, there is joy** ([chara](#)) **in the presence of the angels** ([angelos](#)) **of God** - The point is that there is extravagant joy in the presence of the angels (Lk 15:10 indicating God Himself) when sinners repent.

**Guzik** - In the same way, God is happy when sinners repent, in contrast to the religious leaders who complained when the tax collectors and sinners drew near to Jesus to hear Him. We don't often think of God as rejoicing, but this passage tells us that He does, and in what circumstances. As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you (Isaiah 62:5). The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).. According to Barclay, many of the religious people of Jesus' day believed differently and even had a saying: "There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God." Christians today must be careful that they do not give the same impression, especially in their often-appropriate zeal to speak out against culturally popular sins. ([Luke 15](#))

**Henry Morris** - Each recovery of that which was **lost** became an occasion for rejoicing "with friends and neighbors" (Luke 15:6,9,25). The Lord was telling the self-righteous Pharisees that there is joy in heaven when even one sinner repents. The angels rejoice, but also there is rejoicing in their presence, no doubt by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Roy Zuck** emphasizes that when we read parables, we need to "Ascertain the Main Truth Being Illustrated by the Parable. Usually a parable, like a sermon illustration, is teaching a single truth. When Jesus explained a number of His parables, He usually, though not always, stated one spiritual truth. For example when the man found his one lost sheep, he rejoiced, and Jesus said this illustrates the truth that there is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7). Luke 15:10 records the same interpretation of the Parable of the Lost Coin. (Borrow [Basic Bible Interpretation](#))

**MacArthur** comments that "In terms of ethics, the Pharisees would once again have agreed that she had done what was necessary under the circumstances. All would agree that having lost a significant sum of money, there was nothing else for her to do but diligently search for it until she found it. This parable too was aimed squarely at them, as Christ's emphatic statement **I tell you** indicates. Yet they again failed to make the connection between their contemptuous disdain for lost souls and God's passionate concern for them. They failed to share in the **joy** that exists **in the presence of the angels of God**, who have a keen interest in the redemption that produces God's joy (cf. Matt. 18:10; 25:31; Luke 2:10-14; 1 Peter 1:12; Rev. 3:5), **over one sinner who repents**. The joy here is God's joy, the joy that fills heaven, and in which the angels and the redeemed share (cf. Rev. 4:8-11; 5:8-14). The Lord's indictment of the scribes and Pharisees was clear and inescapable. How could they affirm the ethical responsibility of a shepherd to search for a lost sheep and a woman to search for a lost coin, while condemning Him for seeking to recover lost souls? **How could they understand the joys of the humble men and women in a village over temporal recovery, and utterly fail to comprehend the joy of God in heaven over eternal salvation?**" (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Over one sinner** ([harmatolos](#)) **who repents** ([metanoeo](#)) - Jesus linked **repentance** and **belief** in Mark 1:15+ declaring ""The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** ([present imperative](#) - command to make repentance your lifestyle, only possible as we are enabled by the Spirit. Before the Iron Curtain fell believers were called "*Repenters!*") and **believe** ([present imperative](#) - command to make believing your lifestyle, something only possible as we are enabled by the Spirit) in the Gospel." In Luke 13:5 Jesus declared "I tell you, no, but unless you **repent**, you will all likewise **perish** (be lost = [apollumi](#))." In short, it is clear that Jesus uses "**repents**" as a description of a lost sinner who is saved by grace through faith.

**THOUGHT**- If you preach and teach, do you preach and teach that repentance is an integral component of true salvation? In some of Jesus' last words, in the Lucan version of the "Great Commission" we read "He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that **repentance for forgiveness of sins** would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Lk 24:46-47+) Are you obeying Jesus' final instructions to His disciples?

**Morrison** - One of the first things to arrest us powerfully is the worth of single souls. It was one sheep the shepherd went to find. It was for one coin the woman searched the house. (Ed: Have you meditated much on the worth of ONE SOUL? Methinks if we do, it will motivate to first pray for EVERY SOUL we are privileged to meet and share Christ will as many as God gives us opportunity. Fill us with holy boldness, Holy Spirit, for the fields are white, but the workers are few and we too will not go unless You send us with supernatural power that the Name of Jesus might be exalted among the nations. Amen)

Notice that just as in Luke 15:7, the verb **repents** is in the [present tense](#), which signifies not just a one time, first time repentance but a lifestyle of repentance. Does this characterize your Christian life dear follower of Christ? Do you bring joy to heaven by repenting from sin? [See the discussion in the note](#) on Luke 15:7.

### Keathley summarizes The Principles

- We must be careful that we do not despise nor neglect those with socially unacceptable lifestyles because they are valuable to God.
- We should expend great effort to bring the lost to salvation. This parable should make us want to share the gospel. If we were really concerned for the lost, we would.
- We should be excited when a sinner repents. ([Parables](#))

**MacArthur** explains components of this parable from their theological perspective - The **woman** represents God in Christ seeking lost sinners in the cracks, dust, and debris of a dirty world of sin. He initiated the search for those sinners who belong to Him through His sovereign choice of them, since like the lifeless, inanimate coin, they can do nothing on their own (Eph. 2:1-3). Jesus came all the way from heaven to earth to **search** for His **lost** ones, pursuing sinners into every dark corner, and then shining the **light** of the glorious Gospel (2 Cor. 4:5-6; 1 Tim. 1:11) on them. Having found the **lost sinner**, God in Christ restores him or her to His heavenly treasury, and then expresses **joy** in which the holy inhabitants of heaven share. Recovering the **lost** requires costly grace. The sinless Son of God became a man, lived with sinners, bore God's wrath for sin on the cross, and rose in triumph from the grave. None of the false gods of the world's religions are like the true and living God, Who seeks and saves unworthy sinners because He values them as His own; Who makes His enemies His friends for the sheer joy that He receives in saving them. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Steven Cole** elaborates on this joy in heaven noting that "God's joy is shared by the angels in heaven. Peter tells us that the angels long to look into the matters of our salvation (1Pe 1:12). The angels revel in the glory of God and God is glorified in His sovereign grace, secured by the death of Christ and revealed to undeserving sinners by the Holy Spirit. The angels also rejoice because they know the terrors of hell that would overtake lost sinners, were it not for God's redeeming grace. They know the joys of God's glorious presence in heaven, where those rescued by the Good Shepherd will spend eternity. Not one whom the Father has chosen and given to the Son will be lost, or else Satan and his evil forces would rejoice and the angels in heaven would mourn. But the angels rejoice when a sinner repents because that sinner will now spend eternity glorifying God and His grace in heaven. Again, let me briefly apply this. If God so rejoices when sinners repent, should not we? The things that make us happy reflect our values or what we consider important. Do we rejoice when our stocks go up and we make a huge profit? Do we rejoice when we get a new car? But when we hear of a sinner getting saved, we say, "That's nice." God greatly rejoices when a sinner repents; so should we. These parables show God's concern and compassion for sinners, but not for sinners en masse, but for individual sinners. The shepherd goes after one sheep. The woman hunts diligently for a single coin. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep by name (Jn 10:3). He calls them individually to come to Himself. He cares about every lost sinner who needs repentance. He cares for you. (**ILLUSTRATION**) On a cold night in England many years ago, a group of children slipped into a church to get warm. The preacher was speaking on Lu 15:2, which in the King James Version reads, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Afterwards, one of the children, a girl of 8, went up to the pastor and said, "Pardon me, sir, but I didn't know that my name was in the Bible." He asked, "What is your name?" "Edith, sir." "No," he said, "Edith is not in the Bible." "Yes, it is," she replied. "I heard you say, 'This man receiveth sinners, and **Edith** with them.'" ("Our Daily Bread.") Even though that girl misunderstood the text, she had applied the truth personally to her own heart. If you know that there are sins in your heart that need God's merciful forgiveness, put your name in there. "This man receives sinners, and [Steve] with them." If you will join the tax gatherers and sinners and draw near to Jesus and listen to Him, you will know the joy of singing, "I once was lost, but now I'm found!" ([God's Lost and Found](#))

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**Angels** (32)([aggelos/angelos](#) [*gg* in Greek is pronounced *ng*] possibly from **ago** = to bring) literally means a messenger (one who bears a message - Lk 1:11, 2:9, etc or does an errand). Most of the NT uses refer to heavenly angels (messengers) who are supernatural, transcendent beings with power to carry out various tasks. All uses of **aggelos** that refer to angels are masculine gender (the feminine form of *aggelos* does not occur.) **Vine** writes that **aggelos** refer to "an order of created beings, superior to man, Heb 2:7; Ps. 8:5, belonging to Heaven, Mt. 24:36; Mark 12:25, and to God, Luke 12:8, 15:10, and engaged in His service, Ps. 103:20, Heb 1:14. **Angels** are spirits, Heb. 1:14, i.e., they have not material bodies as men have; they are either human in form, or can assume the human form when necessary, cp. Luke 24:4, with Lk 24:23, Acts 10:3 with Acts 10:30."

**Angelos in Luke and Acts** - Lk. 1:11; Lk. 1:13; Lk. 1:18; Lk. 1:19; Lk. 1:26; Lk. 1:30; Lk. 1:34; Lk. 1:35; Lk. 1:38; Lk. 2:9; Lk. 2:10; Lk. 2:13; Lk. 2:15; Lk. 2:21; Lk. 4:10; Lk. 7:24; Lk. 7:27; Lk. 9:26; Lk. 9:52; Lk. 12:8; Lk. 12:9; Lk. 15:10; Lk. 16:22; Lk. 22:43; Lk. 24:23; Acts 5:19; Acts 6:15; Acts 7:30; Acts 7:35; Acts 7:38; Acts 7:53; Acts 8:26; Acts 10:3; Acts 10:7; Acts 10:22; Acts 11:13; Acts 12:7; Acts 12:8; Acts 12:9; Acts 12:10; Acts

Peter alludes to the wonder of the angels over God's plan of redemption writing

It was revealed ([apokalupto](#)) to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the Gospel ([euaggelizo](#)) to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels **long to look**. (1 Peter 1:12+)

**Comment:** The verb Peter used for **angels long to look** is parakupto (from **pará** = beside, aside + **kúpto** = bend forward, stoop) which means to stoop or bend sideways in order to look into. Figuratively the idea is to look carefully into, to inspect curiously with a focus on satisfying one's curiosity. Indeed, so awesome is the truth of salvation that angels bent over to look carefully at what it entailed, but being unredeemed themselves, they could not fully comprehend the glorious truth of redemption. How sad that we who are redeemed seldom pause to ponder the breadth and length and height and depth of our "so great a salvation." (Heb 2:3). Perhaps you might take a moment in your quiet time today just to meditate on the wonder of a soul that would have been eternally lost who has now been found and can never be lost again throughout all eternity!

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## IN THE PRESENCE OF ANGELS - Vance Havner

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke 15:10.

This joy is said not to be among the angels (although that is true also, I am sure), but in their presence. They share it undoubtedly, but who else is there to do the rejoicing? **The saints, of course!** It must include loved ones in glory thrilled maybe at the conversion of a dear one on earth. It must include faithful preachers and others seeing the answer to their prayers and witnessing while on earth. **This tells us more than the fact of their rejoicing, it shows that they are conscious and aware of things happening down here.** It reveals the presence of angels who never walked down here, but in whose company we celebrate over there.

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## Heaven Rejoices!

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. — Luke 15:10

Joann had been raised in a Christian home. But when she went to college, she began to question her beliefs and walked away from God. After graduation, she traveled to a number of countries, always looking for happiness but never feeling satisfied. While experiencing some difficulties, she recognized that God was pursuing her and that she needed Him. From Germany, Joann called her parents in the US and said, "I have given my life to Christ, and He's changing me! I'm sorry for the worry I have caused you." Her parents were so excited that they called her brothers and sisters-in-law to come over immediately. They wanted to tell them the exciting news in person. "Your sister has received Christ!" they said, rejoicing through tears.

The woman in Luke 15 who found her lost coin called her friends and neighbors together to rejoice with her (v.9). Jesus told this story, and others about a lost sheep and a lost son, to the religious people of His day to show how He came to earth to pursue lost sinners. When we accept God's gift of salvation, there is rejoicing both on earth and in heaven. Jesus said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v.10). How wonderful that Jesus has reached down to us and heaven rejoices when we respond! — Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I was lost but Jesus found me—  
Found the sheep that went astray,  
Threw His loving arms around me,  
Drew me back into His way.  
- Rowley

Angels rejoice when we repent.

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## Rejoicing In Release

Read: Luke 15:1-10

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. —Luke 15:10

In November 2001, many people around the world rejoiced when eight prisoners were released after 3 tension-filled months of being detained in Afghanistan. They had been charged with "preaching Christianity," which at the time was a crime punishable by death.

After they were set free, they walked into the street and were greeted by hugs and handclapping. When they arrived in Pakistan, there was a joyful reception. And back in Texas, there was a jubilant celebration at the home church of two of the prisoners, Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer. Church members who had been involved in a prayer vigil joined the staff in whoops and shouts. The pastor raised his arms in the air and shouted, “Thank You, Lord!”

When I read of the release of those prisoners, I was reminded of an even more exciting freedom that people can experience—freedom from sin. When we accept Christ as our Savior, we are set free from the penalty and bondage of sin (Romans 6:6,23). The angels are filled with joy (Luke 15:10), and heaven is glad (v.7).

The blessings of being redeemed are immeasurable. So, when Christians hear that someone has been set free from sin, we can't help but rejoice! —Dave Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The One who made the heavens,  
Who died on Calvary,  
Rejoices with His angels  
When one soul is set free.  
—Fasick

Praise is the language of sinners set free.

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### **One-To-One**

Read: Luke 15:1-7

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. —Luke 15:10

During His short public ministry of about 3 years, Jesus spent many hours teaching and healing people—one at a time. Although the Savior preached to multitudes in Galilee and Judea and was often surrounded by a great crowd, He was never too busy to minister to men, women, and children one-to-one.

One day when a house at Capernaum was filled with people eager to hear the Master's words, He stopped to give attention to a sick man who had been let down through the roof (Mk. 2:1-12).

On another occasion the Savior singled out a man of short stature who had climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Him. Jesus stopped, looked up, and said, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house” (Lk. 19:5). Jesus also spent time with individuals in private, teaching them, guiding them, and challenging them to believe in Him (Jn. 3:1-21; 4:1-26).

Never underestimate the value of your one-to-one witness for Christ. If you ever wonder about the worth of your personal, individual witness, remember Jesus' example and what He said in Luke 15:10, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”By Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,  
And love that soul through me;  
And may I nobly do my part  
To win that soul for Thee.  
—Tucker

The best tact in leading a person to Christ is contact.

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### **Joy Over One**

Read: Luke 15:1-10

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. —Luke 15:10

Many Christians have succumbed to the false notion that their witness to one individual doesn't count for much. But that certainly isn't supported by what we read in the Gospels. Even though Jesus' public ministry was limited to a little more than 3 years, He was never “too big” to deal with one person at a time.

It's true that Jesus preached to multitudes in Judea, fed 5,000 people gathered by the Sea of Galilee, and ministered to the crowds

in Capernaum. Yet, He never lost sight of the value of one soul!

How encouraging to read of His conversation at night with an individual named Nicodemus (John 3); of His visit with one woman at the well of Samaria (John 4); and of His personal interest in one little man Zaccheus, who was sitting up in a sycamore tree (Luke 19). How thrilled he must have been when Jesus singled him out of the multitude and said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (v.5).

If you are ever tempted to minimize the value of your personal, individual witness to a single soul, remember Jesus' example. The Bible says there is joy in heaven over onesinner who repents! By Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The One who made the heavens,  
Who died on Calvary,  
Rejoices with His angels  
When one soul is set free.  
—Fasick

Never underestimate the value of a single soul.

### Luke 15:11 And He said, "A man had two sons.

KJV Luke 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

- Mt 21:23-31
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Licentious Son](#) - John MacArthur
- See [additional articles at bottom of page](#)

## THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON Luke 15:11-32

This well known title is a bit of a misnomer, as it implies that the story is only about the prodigal son which is clearly not true. While the first section focuses on the younger son's sinful actions, the last section focuses on the older son's sinful reactions. Recall that the background for this parable was the grumbling of the Pharisees and scribes against Jesus because of his willingness to associate with sinners (Lk 15:2). It was this hypocritical, self-righteous reaction of the leaders that Jesus wanted to expose. And so while the prodigal son represents the tax collectors and sinners (Lk 15:1), the petulant son represents the grumbling Pharisees and scribes. The father of the two sons of course represents God. In order to emphasize the importance of the elder brother and the father, some writers have entitled Luke 15:11-32 as the "**Parable of the Elder Son**" or the "**Parable of the Loving Father.**" Some like **John MacArthur** actually think "the older brother who is the main focus of the parable."

This parable is undoubtedly one of the best known, most memorable of all the parables Jesus told. "Many people consider it the greatest short story ever written. It is a story that speaks perfectly to the human condition." (Pritchard)

**Gotquestions** - The main character in the parable, the forgiving father, whose character remains constant throughout the story, is a picture of God. In telling the story, Jesus identifies Himself with God in His loving attitude to the lost. The younger son symbolizes the lost (the tax collectors and sinners of that day, Luke 15:1), and the elder brother represents the self-righteous (the Pharisees and teachers of the law of that day, Luke 15:2).

**Rod Mattoon** agrees that this parable "is one of the most well-known stories of the Scriptures. The story of the Prodigal Son has been labeled by Bible scholars as the "prince of the parables" or "the pearl and crown" of all the parables of the Bible. The great writer, Charles Dickens praised this story when he said that it was the finest short story ever written....Jesus taught us that God is our Father, and nowhere more so than in the story of the prodigal son. This story, together with the companion story of the older brother, is simply the story of God as Father. He who is known as Jehovah, Adonai, Elohim, El Shaddai, Jehovah-Jireh, the Almighty, the great I AM, is also "Father." In fact, Jesus speaks of God the Father twelve times in twenty-two short verses. If we miss, "God the Father," we miss the whole point of the parable. In this first section of three in this wonderful story, we will see how to

go from living high on the hog to living with the hogs. This section is about trouble and tragedy that torments a person when they surrender to temptation. It reveals to us how quickly we can fall, fail, fumble, and flounder when we run away from our Heavenly Father." ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Gary Inrig** has an interesting introduction - I haven't lost any sheep, but I have scoured the neighborhood searching for our wandering poodle, with my children in panic at the thought that she may be gone forever. And I have turned the house upside down looking for the diamond that had fallen out of my wife's engagement ring. We found the dog but not the diamond. But what can compare with the anguish of a parent's heart over a lost son? There is a horrible panic when an infant vanishes, a different but real panic when a grown child wanders morally or spiritually. The problem in the latter situation isn't that we don't know where they are or what they are doing, but that we do. We know they are in the far country, not only wasting their money but wasting their lives. Perhaps it is only a parent in such pain who can enter fully into the mood of this story. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

**Leon Morris** adds "Many regard this superb story as the finest of all the parables. It is certainly among the best-loved of them all. The human heart responds to the message of God's forgiving love for sinners so plainly set forth. This does not mean that they are right who say that since the parable does not speak of an atoning sacrifice no atonement is necessary. That would be a precarious conclusion, for **Jesus is not dealing here with the whole Gospel message but with the one great fact of the Father's pardoning love.** The story is **not**, in T. W. Manson's words, '*a complete compendium of theology*' and further (Manson says), '*If the carrying out of the purpose of God leads, as in fact it did, to the Cross, then it becomes the business of Christians to include the Cross in the purpose of God and to think out, as best they can, how the death of Christ is involved in God's purpose of saving sinners.*' (The Sayings of Jesus - T W Manson)**This is not to diminish the importance of the parable, but to see it as powerfully setting forth the love of God for sinners, the mainspring of the Gospel.**" (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#)) (Bold added for emphasis)

**MacArthur** writes that "Though a child can grasp the tale, its meaning is probably the most rich and complex of Jesus' parables. This story deserves more than just a barebones treatment; a mere superficial understanding that fails to grasp the depth and richness of its message....Like the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, this parable depicts God's joy over the salvation of the lost. But while the first two parables emphasize God's part in seeking sinners this third one, while touching on God as the seeker, focuses more on the human aspect of salvation—man's sin, rejection, repentance, and return to God. It is a dramatic, moving story of the sinner's desperate penitence and of God's love and eager forgiveness for such sorrow. The story revolves around three characters: the younger son, the father, and the older son and how they acted within a culture whose ethical priority was to seek **honor** and avoid **shame**. Told to the protectors of honor and rejecters of shame, this story turns that ethical construct on its head. The younger son appears to be the extreme example of shame by his rebellion against all that is right. Then, in the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees, the father appears more shameful in accepting the son back. To all who understand the story, the older brother is the ultimate exhibition of shame, and he represents the scribes and Pharisees, who believed they were the most honorable and without shame. Those aspects of shame and honor will become clear as the story progresses. (Ibid)

**Wiersbe** - Unlike the shepherd and the woman in the previous parables, the father did not go out to seek the son, but it was the memory of his father's goodness that brought the boy to repentance and forgiveness (see Rom. 2:4). (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

**Steven Cole** introductory remarks are very helpful if you want to correctly interpret this popular parable on the prodigal - Most parents of young children have had the experience of putting their child in front of a mirror. At first the young one does not realize that it is his own reflection he is seeing there. He thinks it is another child. But then he begins to notice that when his hand moves, the hand in the mirror moves. It slowly dawns on him, "That is me!" The Bible is like that mirror. At first we look into it and think that we are reading stories about others. It's interesting to see how they are portrayed. We may chuckle at their antics or shake our heads in disbelief at their stupid ways. But the longer we look, the more we begin to notice that those characters in the Bible look more like us! Gradually, we begin to realize (with some embarrassment), "That is me!" **The parable of the prodigal son is like that mirror. At first it just seems like an interesting and touching story. But the more you look, the more you begin to see your own heart either in the prodigal or in his older brother, or in both.** But the Bible not only reveals what we are like, it also reveals what God is like. This is important, because we cannot know what God is like apart from His revealing Himself to us. We can speculate on what we think God is like, but such speculations don't mean anything, because they are just our opinions, not based in fact. Jesus Christ reveals to us what God the Father is truly like. While it is not a comprehensive picture, the father of the prodigal son gives us an important aspect of God's character, namely, His abundant mercy toward all who will repent of their sins. **To interpret the parable correctly, you must see it in light of Lu 15:1-2.** The tax gatherers and sinners were coming near to Jesus to listen to Him, which caused the Pharisees and scribes to grumble, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Jesus told the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost (or prodigal) son to affirm that the charge was correct and to show the proud, self-righteous Pharisees why it was proper for Him to associate with sinners. Also, **to interpret this and other parables correctly, you must keep in mind that they are designed to illustrate one central truth, not to give comprehensive doctrinal**

**instruction.** For example, just because there is no mention in this parable of the shed blood of Christ as the necessary means of forgiveness does not imply that it is unnecessary. It's just not the point of this story. Also, **it is a mistake to infer that the sons represent believers, since they are sons of the father. The household is not the household of faith, but of Israel. The prodigal represents the sinners who were repenting and coming to Jesus; the older brother represents the Pharisees and scribes who were grumbling about Jesus receiving the sinners. But both groups needed repentance.** Each of the three parables illustrates God's **abundant mercy** toward repentant sinners and His **great joy** when they are reconciled to Him. But while they all illustrate the same truth, there are different emphases. The first two parables focus on God's seeking lost sinners and rescuing them and on His great joy in saving them. **The emphasis in the parable of the prodigal son is on God's great love and mercy, but also on the necessary human response to experience His mercy, namely, repentance.** Each of the three main characters reflects different lessons. The prodigal shows us the devastating effects of sin and the nature of true repentance. The father shows us God's great mercy toward repentant sinners. The older brother shows us the ugliness and danger of the self-righteous pride that lurks in every human heart. The entire parable teaches us that ...God welcomes repentant sinners with abundant mercy, but the self-righteous exclude themselves from His mercy. ([Luke 15:11-32 How to Receive God's Abundant Mercy](#)) (Bolding added)

**And He said** - NET Bible translates it "Then Jesus said" since "then" indicates the implied sequence in the parable narrative. NIV has "Jesus continued." The NLT paraphrases it "To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story." While this is a third story most consider it the third component of this parable because in Lk 15:3 Luke begins "He told them this parable," implying it is one parable with three parts all having the same theme of something lost and something found resulting in the heart response of joy or rejoicing.

**Foster** - Since Jesus was seeking above all else to portray the love of God and to get the Pharisees to understand the divine purpose and result in His association with sinners, the last parable might be called "**The Parable of the Loving Father**. Because of the central theme in all three parables, they might be called "Parables of the Lost."...The principle which is constant in all three parables is the unfailing effort of the one who seeks the lost. The importance of a human soul and the joy manifest when the lost is found are seen throughout the three parables" (Studies in the Life of Christ)

**Hampton Keathley IV** offers an interesting "paraphrase" of Luke 15:11ff and entitles it **The Rebellious Son In The Key Of F**

Feeling footloose and frisky, a foolish fellow forced his father to fork over his fourth of the family farthings and flew far to a foreign field where he fast frittered his fathers fortune feasting foolishly with faithless friends. Fleeced by his fellows and folly, and facing famine he found himself a feed flinger in a filthy farm. Flushed and fairly famished he fain would have filled his frame with foraged food from farm fodder.

"My father's flunkies fair far finer." The frazzled fugitive forlornly fumbled. Frustrated and filled with forboding, he fled forthwith to his father. Falling to his father's feet he forlornly fumbled, "Father, I have flunked and frugalessly forfeited family favor." The fugitive's, faultfinding brother frowned on fickle forgiveness, but the faithful father figure filled with fidelity, cried, "The fugitive is found. What forbids further festivities. Let the flags unfurl and the fanfares flare." Father flagged a flunky who fetched a fatling from the flock and fixed a feast.

The moral of the story is: The father's forgiveness formed a foundation for the fugitive's future fortitude. ([The Lost Sheep, Coins and Sons](#)).

**A man had two sons** - He could have just said one son, but the parable teaches the reaction of two sons, because as the story unfolds, a loving, gracious father is described interacting with TWO rebellious sons - one was **prodigal**, and the other **petulant** (easily irritated and annoyed, childishly sulky or bad-tempered). So do not miss the important point that the elder son is in this story from the very beginning and his reaction teaches important truth.

**Prodigal** in English is an adjective which describes one who is recklessly wasteful or extravagant, as in disposing of goods or money; a person who squanders money lavishly and foolishly; a person characterized by profuse or wasteful expenditure. From this [Google Graph of frequency of usage](#) it is clear that the term **prodigal** is used much less today than in past times.

Matthew a distinct "two son" parable addressed to the religious leaders. In Matthew 21:23 Jesus "entered the temple" and was teaching and was again confronted by the religious leaders "the chief priests and the elders" much like He was confronted by the grumbling of the Pharisees and Scribes in Lk 15:2. And so again Jesus uses the motif of **two sons** in a story which is also about the Kingdom of God. Matthew quotes Jesus' as he tells them this story contrasting two responses to the Gospel, this time giving His opponents the opportunity to condemn themselves with words from their own mouths.

"But what do you think? **A man had two sons**, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' 29'And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. 30'The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I will, sir'; but he did not go. 31'Which of the two did the

will of his father?" They \*said, "The first." Jesus \*said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. (Mt 21:28-31)

**John MacArthur** explains "Jesus' point in this story is that doing is more important than mere saying. It is, of course, best for a person to say he will do God's will and then do it. But it is immeasurably better to at first refuse His will and then repent and do it than to hypocritically agree to do it but not. In this context, the doing of God's will relates to acceptance of the gospel, of receiving Jesus as the Messiah and as Savior and Lord." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 16-23)

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## Two Lost Sons Luke 15:11–32 John Phillips

There were two boys. Of the two, the wayward prodigal is by far the most likeable, the most attractive, the most honest and open. Both were equally lost—the prodigal amongst the pigs and the other in his pew. The father loved them both.

The context is important. The parable was addressed to two kinds of people, the scribes and Pharisees and the publicans and sinners. The publicans and sinners saw themselves in the prodigal; the scribes and Pharisees, to their rage and scorn, saw themselves in the older brother.

1. The Rebellious Son
  - a. His going-away prayer  
("Father, give me")
  - b. His coming-home prayer  
("Father, ... make me")
2. The Religious Son
  - a. His actions betrayed him  
("He was angry, and would not go in")
  - b. His argument betrayed him  
("Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry")
  - c. His attitude betrayed him  
("I," "me," "my") (100 NT Outlines)

**Luke 15:12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.**

KJV Luke 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

- **give me the share of the estate that falls to me** Dt 21:16,17; Ps 16:5,6; 17:14
- **So he divided his wealth between them** Mark 12:44
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Licentious Son](#) - John MacArthur

### **HIS DEMAND FOR INHERITANCE WAS A PERVERSION OF PRIVILEGE!**

The younger of them said to his father, Father (*pater*) **give** (command - *orist imperative* - Do this now! Do not delay!) **me the share** (*meros*) **of the estate** (*ousia*) **that falls** (*epiballo*) **to me** - Is there a hint of deception in the younger son, for he gives the father no reason for his request? Not only that but he actually commands his **father** to give him his **share**! Of course a few days later, the reason becomes obvious! One can imagine the reaction of the listening Pharisees and scribes (who would turn out to be a major target in the depiction of the elder son) who would have been appalled by the thought that a son would **shame** and **dishonor** his father with such a brazen demand. In requesting the division of the estate, he showed arrogant disregard for his father's authority as head of the family. While the Pharisees did not know all of the OT, these hypocrites surely knew the fifth commandment to

**Honor** your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. (Ex 20:12)

**NET Note** - The verb honor (see [kabad](#)) is a Piel (expresses intensive action) imperative (command); it calls for people to give their parents the respect and honor that is appropriate for them. It could be paraphrased to say, "Give them the weight of authority that they deserve. Next to God, parents were to be highly valued, cared for, and respected."

This exhortation was repeated in Leviticus

Every one of you shall reverence (literally "fear" but with the sense of "respect" now cowering fear) his mother and his father, and you shall keep My Sabbaths; I am the LORD your God. (Lev 19:3-note).

And so the legalists would have seen the younger son's request as flagrant violation of the Torah. In that sense they were not wrong, because basically when one asks for his inheritance from a father who is still alive, it is tantamount to his saying **he wished his father was already dead!** Furthermore, according to the Mosaic Law the younger son would not have even been entitled to an equal share of the inheritance. Moses records

"But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn. (Dt 21:17)

In other words, the Mosaic Law said the first born (in this case the elder son) was to receive two-thirds of that given to the younger son, which would be twice as much since there were only 2 sons. In this same passage in Deuteronomy, Moses records punishment for an insolent son

(Deut 21:18-21) "If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, 19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. 20 "They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 "Then all the men of his city **shall stone him to death**; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.

**Keener** writes that since "the father grants the request means that most of the hearers will not identify with the father in this parable; from the start, they would think of him as stupidly lax to pamper such an immoral son." (IVP NT Background Commentary)

**Mattoon** - "Give me," he says. Americans used to say, "Give me liberty." Today they just say, "Give me." We do live in a "Give Me" generation today, so there is definitely something here in this story we can apply now. This young man is consumed with SELF. There is nothing more worthless to live for than yourself. It leads to wandering, waste, willfulness, wild living, and woe as we will see in the life of this prodigal son. The repercussions of selfishness can reach far into your future. Charles Dawes stated that President McKinley was considering the appointment of a minister to a foreign country. There were two candidates, their qualifications almost equal. Which one did he appoint? The President related a story of an incident that had decided his choice. Years before, when he was a Representative, he boarded a streetcar one night and took the last vacant seat. Shortly afterward, an old washerwoman entered carrying a heavy basket. She walked the length of the car and stood in the aisle, no one offering her a seat. One of the men, whom the President was to consider later, was sitting in a seat opposite where she was standing. He shifted the paper so as not to see her. Mr. McKinley walked down the aisle, picked up her basket of washing, and gave her his seat. The candidate never knew that this little act of selfishness had deprived him of perhaps the crowning honor of a lifetime. Selfishness will deprive you of honor and blessing, too....His plea was a perversion of privilege. He was viewing the gift of his inheritance as a debt owed to him, and a right that he deserved....If this son lived in our day, his favorite song would probably be, "I Gotta Be Me!" ([Treasures from Luke](#))

As **MacArthur** points out that in the ancient culture where **SHAME** and **HONOR** were so important to the people, "Normally a son who **shamed** himself by making such a request would have been **publicly shamed** by his father, perhaps disinherited, or possibly even dismissed from the family and considered dead (**Ed**: notice that twice the father later refers to him as having been **dead** - Lk 15:24, 32!)" (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**NIV Study Bible Note** - The father might divide the inheritance (double to the older son; see Lk 12:13; Dt 21:17 see [note above](#)) but retain the income from it until his death. But to give a younger son his portion of the inheritance upon request was highly unusual. (Borrow [Zondervan NIV Study Bible](#))

The Book of Proverbs has a warning that relates to the younger son's desire for his share now (before the father's death)...

An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning will not be blessed in the end. (Pr 20:21)

**Comment:** What seems too good to be true often is. This reminds me of our saying modern slang saying "[easy come, easy go!](#)"

**Reformation Study Bible Note** - That is, prematurely, before gaining the wisdom to handle it, or by the wrong means.

**So he divided ([diaireo](#)) his wealth ([bios](#) - his "living") between them** - This would have further shocked the Pharisees who would have expected the father to severely discipline the younger son for shaming and dishonoring him. To their surprise, the father gave the son his share. And assuming that the father is a picture of God, one can see that this is exactly what God does to us at times. We desire something clearly forbidden, so God says "Okay, go for it!" **The point is that God gives sinners (ALL OF US) the freedom to choose their (our) sin. Of course the sinner is not free to choose the consequences, as we shall see in the case of the younger son!**

Thomas Huxley said, "A man's worst difficulties begin when he is able to do just as he likes."

**Gotquestions** - This is a picture of God letting a sinner go his own way (Deuteronomy 30:19). We all possess this foolish ambition to be independent, which is at the root of the sinner persisting in his sin (Genesis 3:6; Romans 1:28). A sinful state is a departure and distance from God (Romans 1:21). A sinful state is also a state of constant discontent. Luke 12:15 says, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." This son learned the hard way that covetousness leads to a life of dissatisfaction and disappointment. He also learned that the most valuable things in life are the things you cannot buy or replace.

**Mattoon** applies this section - Let me say here that you need to be careful what you pray for in your prayers. God may give it to you, not as a gesture of blessing, but as a form of chastisement. Some things that we desire are not good for us. Because you are unwilling to submit to the Lord's will, you may get what you want but lose what you had. Samson got the woman and sex that he wanted with Delilah, but lost the strength that he had. Judas got the silver he wanted, but lost his serenity and the life that he had. Jacob got what he wanted from his father through deception, but lost what he had, having to flee from his home, never seeing his mother again. The prodigal son got what he wanted, but as we will see, he will lose what he had. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

Hebrews 11:25 describes the enjoyment of the **"passing pleasures of sin."** And as we shall see the prodigal's partying produces passing pleasures (emphasis on the word "passing")! The problem is that sin is enslaving for 2 Peter 2:19 speaks of false teachers who are "promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved." In John 8:31 Jesus declared "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." A little ditty accurately describes the danger to which the younger son was now exposed:

Sin will take you further than you ever wanted to stray!  
Cost you more than you ever dreamed you would pay!  
Keep you longer than you ever thought you would stay!

**Leon Morris** has an interesting note on background that relates to this part of the story - The younger son asked for the share of property that falls to me. Deissmann notes this as a technical formula, used in the papyri of 'the paternal inheritance'. ([Bible Studies, page 230 1901](#)) A man might leave his goods to his heirs by last will and testament (cf. Heb. 9:16f.), in which case he was bound by the provisions of the Law. This meant that the firstborn received two thirds of the whole (Deut. 21:17). But he could make gifts before he died and this gave him a freer hand (SB). The rules for disposing of property are given in the Mishnah ([Baba Bathra 8](#)). If a man decided to make gifts he normally gave the capital but retained the income. He could then no longer dispose of the capital, only of his interest in the income. But the recipient could get nothing until the death of the giver, unless he chose to sell the capital, in which case the buyer could not gain possession until the death of the donor. We see this in the elder brother. The father clearly retained the managership of the property and the use of the proceeds. But he can say, 'all that is mine is yours' (Lk 15:31). The son of Sirach thought it unwise to give property away too early and he warns against it ([Eccl. 33:19-21](#) or see below). But his warning shows that the practice existed. What is unusual about the son's request is that he sought the use of the capital immediately. This could be given and it was given in this case. But it was far from common. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

Sirach 33:19-21 - Never, as long as you live, give anyone power over you—whether son, wife, brother, or friend. Don't give your property to anyone; you might change your mind and have to ask for it back. 20 As long as you have breath in your body, don't let anyone lead your life for you. 21 It is better that your children be dependent on you than the other way around. 22 Keep control over all that you do; don't let anything stain your reputation. 23 Wait until the last moment of your life, when you are breathing your last, and then divide your property among your heirs.

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**Share** ([3313](#))(**meros**) a part, share, portion. 1. part Lk 11:36; 15:12; Acts 5:2; Eph 4:16; Rev 16:19. Specialized uses: side Jn 21:6; piece Lk 24:42; party Acts 23:6, 9; line of business Ac 19:27; matter, affair 2Co 3:10; 9:3; place region, district Mt 2:22; 15:21; Acts

2:10; 19:1.—With prepositions: ana. meros - one after the other 1Co14:27.—apo meros - in part Ro 11:25; 15:15; 2Co 1:14; 2:5; for a while Ro 15:24.—ek meros - individually 1Co 12:27; in part 1Co 13:9f, 12.—en merei = in the matter of, with regard to Col 2:16.—kata meros = in detail Heb 9:5.—mero ti - as adverbial acc. in part, partly 1Cor 11:18.—2. share Rev 20:6; 22:19. Place Mt 24:51 ; Lk 12:46; Jn 13:8; Rev 21:8.

**Friberg** - with a basic meaning part, share, translated according to the context; (1) as distinct from the whole part, piece (Lk 24:42); (a) as a part of a country district, region (Mt 2.22); (b) as a component of something side (of a boat or ship) (Jn 21.6); (c) as a political or religious group party (Acts 23.9); (d) as a line of business trade (Acts 19.27); (e) adverbially, with prepositions: ana meros. in succession, one after the other (1Co 14.27); apo meros = in part, partly (Ro 11.25); with respect to time = for a while (Ro 15.24); ek meros - individually, in part (1Co 12.27); en merei = in the matter of, with regard to (Col 2.16); kata meros = in detail, part by part, point by point (Heb 9.5); (2) as a portion of the possible whole share, place (Rev 20.6) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

**Meros - 43x/40v - case(2), country(1), detail(1), district(3), districts(2), group(1), individually(1), part(11), partial(2), partially(1), parts(3), party(1), piece(1), place(3), portion(1), regions(1), respect(1), share(1), side(1), some degree(1), some points(1), trade(1), turn(1), while(1).** Matt. 2:22; Matt. 15:21; Matt. 16:13; Matt. 24:51; Mk. 8:10; Lk. 11:36; Lk. 12:46; Lk. 15:12; Lk. 24:42; Jn. 13:8; Jn. 19:23; Jn. 21:6; Acts 2:10; Acts 5:2; Acts 19:1; Acts 19:27; Acts 20:2; Acts 23:6; Acts 23:9; Rom. 11:25; Rom. 15:15; Rom. 15:24; 1 Co. 11:18; 1 Co. 12:27; 1 Co. 13:9; 1 Co. 13:10; 1 Co. 13:12; 1 Co. 14:27; 2 Co. 1:14; 2 Co. 2:5; 2 Co. 3:10; 2 Co. 9:3; Eph. 4:9; Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:16; Heb. 9:5; Rev. 16:19; Rev. 20:6; Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:19

**Meros - Septuagint** - Gen. 23:9; Gen. 47:24; Exod. 16:35; Exod. 25:26; Exod. 26:4; Exod. 26:5; Exod. 26:19; Exod. 26:21; Exod. 26:22; Exod. 26:25; Exod. 26:26; Exod. 26:35; Exod. 28:7; Exod. 32:15; Exod. 37:17; Exod. 38:4; Exod. 39:4; Exod. 39:17; Num. 8:2; Num. 8:3; Num. 11:1; Num. 20:16; Num. 22:36; Num. 22:41; Num. 23:13; Num. 33:6; Num. 34:3; Jos. 2:18; Jos. 3:8; Jos. 3:15; Jos. 3:16; Jos. 4:19; Jos. 12:2; Jos. 13:27; Jos. 15:2; Jos. 15:5; Jos. 15:8; Jos. 18:14; Jos. 18:15; Jos. 18:16; Jos. 18:19; Jos. 18:20; 1 Sam. 6:8; 1 Sam. 9:27; 1 Sam. 23:26; 1 Sam. 30:14; 2 Sam. 13:34; 1 Ki. 4:20; 1 Ki. 4:24; 1 Ki. 6:24; 1 Ki. 7:30; 1 Ki. 12:31; 1 Ki. 13:33; 2 Ki. 7:5; 2 Ki. 7:8; 2 Chr. 36:7; Ezr. 4:20; Neh. 7:70; Neh. 11:1; Job 26:14; Job 30:1; Job 31:12; Prov. 17:2; Prov. 29:11; Eccl. 5:19; Isa. 7:18; Isa. 9:1; Isa. 18:7; Isa. 37:24; Jer. 25:31; Jer. 25:33; Jer. 52:23; Ezek. 1:8; Ezek. 1:17; Ezek. 10:11; Ezek. 40:47; Ezek. 42:20; Ezek. 43:16; Ezek. 43:17; Ezek. 46:21; Ezek. 47:19; Ezek. 47:20; Ezek. 48:1; Dan. 1:2; Dan. 2:33; Dan. 2:41; Dan. 2:42; Dan. 5:7; Dan. 5:16; Dan. 5:29; Zech. 13:8+ = two parts in it will be cut off and perish (2/3's of the Jews will die)

**Estate** (3776)(ousia) means what exists as one's own and can be property, goods, wealth. **BDAG** says **ousia** is "that which exists and therefore has substance." **Zodhiates** says **ousia** means "Entity, essence, substance, nature. In the NT, it usually refers to that which belongs to someone, or what he has, his substance, property."

**Gilbrant** - The word **ousia** can be found in classical Greek of both material items that one owns and immaterial things, i.e., "substance, essence, true nature" (*Liddell-Scott*). This term is found only twice in the Septuagint and both of these are in the Apocrypha. In Tobit 14:13 a certain man inherited the "estate" of his in-laws whom he had taken exceptional care of in their old age. In the second reference King Ptolemy Philopator issued a letter to his generals and soldiers in Egypt declaring that anyone found aiding a Jew would be severely treated. The offender and his family were to be tortured to death and their "estate" was to be given to the informer (3 Maccabees 3:28). Both of these references seem to indicate that ousia was used to represent all that an individual owned, the entire estate. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**MacArthur** has an interesting note on Luke's use of this rare term ousia (only here and Lk 15:13) - Further evidence of the son's irresponsibility comes from the use of the term ousias (**estate**), used only here in the New Testament, instead of the usual term for inheritance, klēronomia (Lk 12:13; 20:14; Matt. 21:38; Mark 12:7). Ousias refers to property or material possessions, and its use suggests that he was unwilling to take the responsibility that came with his share of the estate. He evidently was not interested in managing his share for the family's future good, as those before him had done, but selfishly wanted to liquidate it to use it only for his own pleasure. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Divided** (1244)(diaireo from dia = between + haireo = to take, to choose) means to distribute, divide, apportion. To divide into parts, to part, to tear, cleave or cut asunder, (Homer and subsequent writings; Ge. 15:10; 1Ki 3:25). Division between two or more parties, as in Lk 15:12, is the ordinary force of the word. Only other use 1Cor 12:11 "one and the same Spirit works all these things, **distributing** to each one individually just as He wills." In the Septuagint - to take apart, tear away, divide; take apart, divide, make a breach. To take apart, to divide Ge 4:7; to divide for oneself (Ex 21:35) to separate Nu 31:42; to dispense Sir 27,25(Josh. 18:5;

1Chr. 23:6).

**Diareo - Septuagint** - Gen. 4:7; Gen. 15:10; Gen. 32:7; Exod. 21:35; Lev. 1:12; Lev. 1:17; Lev. 5:8; Num. 31:27; Num. 31:42; Jos. 18:4; Jos. 18:5; Jos. 22:8; Jdg. 7:16; Jdg. 9:43; 1 Sam. 15:29; 2 Sam. 19:29; 1 Ki. 3:25; 1 Ki. 3:26; 2 Ki. 2:8; 1 Chr. 23:6; 1 Chr. 24:3; 1 Chr. 24:4; 1 Chr. 24:5; Job 21:21; Ps. 68:12; Prov. 16:19; Prov. 17:2; Isa. 9:3; Isa. 30:28; Ezek. 37:22; Amos 5:9

**Wealth** (property = ESV; assets = NET)(979)(**bios** English biology) refers to everyday physical life including the daily functions such as our natural preoccupation with food, clothing and shelter (Lk 8:14-note, 2Ti 2:4-note = "everyday life"). There are three ways bios is used in the New Testament, speaking of one's lifetime, of **life's resources** (the sense in Lk 15:12), or of the manner of living. BDAG adds that **bios** refers to "Resources needed to maintain life, means of subsistence, specifically property, worldly goods." (1Jn 3:17-note)

**NIV** translates this phrase as "he divided his property," with a marginal note on an alternate translation "Or living; literally livelihood."

**MacArthur** feels that Jesus' use of **bios** in this context can refer to "all that the previous generations of the family had produced and handed down to the current generation."

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**Baba Bathra 8** says...

8:1A There are those who inherit and bequeath, there are those who inherit but do not bequeath, bequeath but do not inherit, do not inherit and do not bequeath.

B These inherit and bequeath:

C the father as to the sons, the sons as to the father; and brothers from the same father [but a different mother], [as to one another] inherit from and bequeath [to one another].

D The man as to his mother, the man as to his wife, and the sons of sisters inherit from, but do not bequeath [to one another].

E The woman as to her sons, the woman as to her husband, and the brothers of the mother bequeath to, but do not inherit [from one another].

F Brothers from the same mother do not inherit from, and do not bequeath [to one another].

**Luke 15:13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living."**

KJV Luke 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

- **went on a journey** 2 Chr 33:1-10; Job 21:13-15; 22:17,18; Ps 10:4-6; 73:27; Pr 27:8; Isa 1:4; 30:11; Jer 2:5,13,17-19,31; Micah 6:3; Eph 2:13,17
- **he squandered his estate with loose living** Lk 15:30; 16:1,19; Pr 5:8-14; 6:26; 18:9; 21:17,20; 23:19-22; 28:7; 29:3; Ecc 11:9,10; Isa 22:13; 56:12; Amos 6:3-7; Ro 13:13,14; 1 Peter 4:3,4; 2 Peter 2:13
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Licentious Son](#) - John MacArthur

## **JESUS SHOWS THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF SIN**

**And not many days later** - There is a short delay before the younger son begins his downward spiral! Lenski says "The slight delay is a fine touch; after the inward separation there comes the outward." (The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel) On the other hand it was not many days, emphasizing that the son wanted to live the way he wanted and not like he would have to live in the father's house. Mattoon adds "The life of the father was a restraint on the rebellion and wretchedness of this son. This is why people get out of church, because it restrains their flesh. Evil is not comfortable around godliness. If a church is truly preaching the Bible, sinners will be uncomfortable in the service." ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**The younger son gathered everything together** - The verb gathered together (sunago) in this context means to gather things together and turn them into cash. Gilbrant writes that sunago in the "The nonliterary papyri offers an illustration of sunagō in relationship to money or goods. "The verb is frequently used of the total amount, the full sum, received by sale or by purchase" (*Moulton-Milligan*). For example, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) it is possible that the "prodigal converted his goods into money, sold all off and realized their full value, rather than that he 'gathered all together' to take with him." That would certainly facilitate his ability to squander the inheritance.

**Leon Morris on gathered everything together** - He gathered all he had: he left nothing that would serve as an anchor and bring him back in due course. He cut his ties with home (or so he thought). Have you ever tried to run from God? Most of us have. And so this story is for us. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** explains "Although he could not take possession of his inheritance until his father died, he was permitted to sell his share (necessarily at a discounted price) to a buyer willing to wait to take possession until the father died (much like investors today buy futures, hedging against the future by paying the purchase price now)." (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Keener** somewhat contradicts MacArthur's note - Jewish law did permit a father to determine which assets (especially land) would go to which sons before he died, but they could take possession only on the father's death: the father was manager and received the land's profits until then. Thus this son could know what would be his but **could not legally sell his assets**; he does it anyway. (See [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#))

**Wiersbe** - We are always heading for trouble whenever we value things more than people, pleasure more than duty, and distant scenes more than the blessings we have right at home. Jesus once warned two disputing brothers, "Take heed and beware of covetousness!" (Luke 12:15) Why? Because the covetous person can never be satisfied, no matter how much he acquires, and a dissatisfied heart leads to a disappointed life. The prodigal learned the hard way that you cannot enjoy the things money can buy if you ignore the things money cannot buy. If the sheep was lost through foolishness and the coin through carelessness, then the son was lost because of willfulness. He wanted to have his own way so he rebelled against his own father and broke his father's heart. (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

**Gotquestions** - In verse 13 we read that he travels to a distant country. It is evident from his previous actions that he had already made that journey in his heart, and the physical departure was a display of his willful disobedience to all the goodness his father had offered (Proverbs 27:19; Matthew 6:21; 12:34).

**Went on a journey into a distant country** (a far country) - This refers to a Gentile country for any region outside of Israel was Gentile. This compounds his sin. The Jews despised the Gentiles and considered them dogs. This says a lot about the degree of depravity of his heart and mind, to wander so far from his Jewish roots. And of course in such **a distant country** he would be less likely to find anyone who would hold him accountable for his loose living, because a lascivious, immoral lifestyle was the "norm" for most Gentile nations of the day. "Many of the wealthier young men of Jesus' time went abroad to Rome or to Antioch for the gay life of the city." (Wycliffe Bible Commentary)

**Mattoon** on the **distant country** - The far country is not hard to find. In fact, you can enter it right where you are living. You do not have to go to a city known for its wickedness. You can even be a member of a good church, even teach a Sunday-school class, and live in a "far country." There have been preachers who lived in the far country, but preached in pulpits every Sunday. The far country is an attitude of a person's heart, mind, soul, will, and desires. People that live in a far country from the Father are living in rebellion against the will of God and the Word of God. The distance into the far country is measured by the distance between a person and the Lord Jesus Christ. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

He willfully **went** his way like the old Frank Sinatra song "My Way" some of the lyrics of which aptly describe the prodigal's perilous path

I planned each charted course  
Each careful step along the byway  
And more, much more than this  
I did it **my way**

For what is a man, what has he got  
If not himself, then he has naught  
To say the things he truly feels  
And not the words of one who kneels  
The record shows I took the blows  
And did it **my way**

Yes, it was **my way**

The **prophet Isaiah** gave an even more apt description of the prodigal's journey

**All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;**  
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.  
(Isaiah 53:6)

**MacArthur** observes "His action symbolizes the foolishness of the sinner trying to flee from God, to whom he does not want to be answerable." (See [Luke Commentary](#)) It reminds us of God's prophet Jonah who "rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD" (Jonah 1:3) And how successful was he as escaping the "long arm" of the Lord. This reminds me of **Wayne Watson's** old song entitled [The Long Arm of the Lord](#) which could have been the prodigal son's "theme song!"

A million dark alleys you can hide in  
Dig a tunnel to the center of the earth  
Convinced you've got nobody to confide in  
Got you questioning the sum of what you're worth  
**People label you the black sheep of the family  
Come collect upon your prodigal reward**

'Cause you can never outrun  
Or go beyond the reaches  
Of the long arm of the Lord  
And I've been ashamed--I've been humbled and forgiven  
I've been chastened by my Father's loving hand  
But still, at times, I go on with my evil  
It seems to constitute the nature of a man  
But forgiveness is as close as my confession  
And my sin amputated by His sword

'Cause you can never outrun  
Or go beyond the reaches  
Of the long arm of the Lord  
If He gave to me all that I deserve  
This could be my final breath

**But with compassion in His eyes  
He's drawing me home  
Into His arms--Into His tender arms of rest  
Into His arms of rest**

There are pagans at the corners of creation  
Making light of the salvation that we know  
And with a small, narrow mind I give them over  
To the passion of the Godless seed they sow  
But, in truth, we have just as much potential  
To be Godly and perfected by the Word

Cause no one in this world  
Can slip beyond the reaches  
Of the long arm of the Lord

Never no one in this world  
Can slip beyond the reaches  
Of the long arm of the Lord

The prophet Isaiah alludes to the loving long arm of the Lord

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Neither is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.  
(Isaiah 59:1, cf Isa 50:2)

**There he squandered (diaskorpizo) his estate (ousia) with loose (asotos) living (zao)** - Phillips paraphrases it "he squandered his wealth in the wildest extravagance." A graphic description of his wanton pursuit of sinful pleasure. He was spending his fortune thoughtlessly, throwing it away with a debauched (morally corrupt, intemperate, sensual) lifestyle (including prostitutes - Lk 15:30). And keep in mind that what he is squandering is 1/3 of his father's lifetime earnings! The prodigal's lifestyle was not saving him, it was destroying him. **Loose (asotos)** combined with the word **living (zao)** describes a debauched life-style.

**Mattoon** - He squandered his estate. He distributed his resources without any system of accounting for the distribution. Does this describe you? If so, you are on the Hog Pen Trail. Get off this path before it is too late. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Keener** notes that ancient "Moralists considered squandering very evil." (Ibid)

**Gary Inrig** - He scattered his money like a sower scatters seed, and his crop was dissipation, "wild living." Sooner or later, choices bring consequences. And so here. The young man runs out of money and into a famine. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

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**Squandered (1287)(diaskorpizo** from **dia** = an intensifies or denotes separation + **skorpizō** = to dissipate) means to scatter abroad or disperse. It is used of chaff being scattered to the wind on the threshing floor, meaning to winnow (Mt 25:24, 26). Metaphorically it means to dissipate, squander (Luke 15:13; 16:1). Mattoon says "to winnow, like a person that separates the grain from the chaff by throwing it up high into the air and letting the wind blow away the chaff." This is the way the prodigal son handled his resources. He was throwing away his substance." ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Diaskorpizo** - 9x in 9v - scattered(6), scattered abroad(1), squandered(1), squandering(1).

Matthew 25:24 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you **scattered** no seed.

Matthew 25:26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I **scattered** no seed.

Matthew 26:31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE **SCATTERED**.'

**Comment:** This passage and Mk 14:27 recall Zechariah 13:7 words that the sheep of the smitten shepherd would be "dispersed" = "'Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate," Declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones." Note the sheep that will be scattered is a reference (in context) to the Nation of Israel and not to the Church, which if you accept a pre-tribulation or even a mid-tribulation Rapture, will not present in this **time of Jacob's distress** (Jer 30:7-note) also known as the [Great Tribulation](#) (see notes on Mt 24:15-note and Mt 24:21-note).

**As MacArthur explains** the prophet Zechariah "compressed events of both the First (Zech 13:7) and Second (Zech 13:8, 9) Advents into this brief section. It spoke of Christ's crucifixion (Zech 13:7) and [the Jewish remnant](#) at His [Second Coming](#) (Zech 13:8, 9). (MacArthur Study Bible)

Mark 14:27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE **SCATTERED**.'

Luke 1:51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has **scattered** those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.

Luke 15:13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he **squandered** his estate with loose living.

Luke 16:1 Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and this manager was reported to him as **squandering** his possessions.

John 11:52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are **scattered abroad**.

Acts 5:37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him **were scattered**.

**Diaskorpizo** - 55x in 49v in the Septuagint - to winnow in Ruth 3:2-[note](#); Isa. 30:24. **Gilbrant** adds "**diaskorpizō** occurs regularly in the Septuagint where it translates some 12 Hebrew verbs. Nehemiah 1:8 links God's warning that He would "scatter" unfaithful Israel among the nations to a prophecy given to Moses hundreds of years earlier (see Lev 26:33-note). Their current state at the time of the writing was that of a vanquished, exiled people." Num. 10:35; Deut. 30:1; Deut. 30:3; Neh. 1:8; Job 37:11; Ps. 22:14; Ps. 53:5; Ps. 59:11; Ps. 59:15; Ps. 68:1; Ps. 68:30; Ps. 89:10; Ps. 92:9; Ps. 106:27; Ps. 141:7; Jer. 9:16; Jer. 10:21; Jer. 13:14; Jer. 23:1; Jer. 23:2; Jer. 50:37; Jer. 51:20; Jer. 51:21; Jer. 51:22; Jer. 51:23; Ezek. 5:2; Ezek. 5:10; Ezek. 6:5; Ezek. 10:2; Ezek. 11:16; Ezek. 12:15; Ezek. 20:23; Ezek. 20:34; Ezek. 20:41; Ezek. 22:15; Ezek. 28:25; Ezek. 29:13; Ezek. 46:18; Dan. 4:14; Dan. 9:7; Dan. 11:24; Zech. 1:19; Zech. 1:21; Zech. 11:16

**Loose** ([811](#))(**asotos** - cf **asotia** from **a** = negative + **sozo** = save which describes something devoid of saving quality) is used of living in a wild, abandoned manner. Living [profligately](#), [dissolutely](#) (unrestrained by convention or morality), recklessly, riotously, loosely. Only here in NT ([Hapax legomenon](#)) **Vincent** says that **asotia** is literally "unsavingness" and describes the "the prodigal son who lived unsavingly [asotos]." **Norman Crawford** on **asotos** - It is from this word "riotous" (asōtōs) that the word "prodigal" has been attached to this young man. As W. E. Vine has written, "the word does not necessarily signify 'dissolutely'", but it does denote wild and disorderly living without a thought for tomorrow (Kittel, Vol I, p. 507).

**Luke 15:14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished."**

BGT Luke 15:14 δαπαν σαντος δ ατο πντα γνετο λιμς σχυρ κατ τν χραν κενην, κα ατς ρξατο στερεσθαι.

KJV Luke 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

NET Luke 15:14 Then after he had spent everything, a severe famine took place in that country, and he began to be in need.

CSB Luke 15:14 After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing.

ESV Luke 15:14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.

NIV Luke 15:14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

NLT Luke 15:14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve.

- **a severe famine occurred in that country** 2 Chr 33:11; Ezek 16:27; Hosea 2:9-14; Amos 8:9-12
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Licentious Son](#) - John MacArthur

## FAMINE IN A FAR COUNTRY

**Now when** - This indicates the sequence of events in the parable and some versions (Lk 15:14NET) translate it with **then**." The prodigal runs out of money and God sends a great famine to exacerbate his sudden poverty.

His sin was beginning to cost him more than he ever could have dreamed he would have to pay! Isn't that always what sin does to us? The passing pleasure of sin (Heb 11:25) blinds us to the inevitable (cf Nu 32:23) and costly consequences of sin! O, the dreadful [deceitfulness of Sin!](#)

**He had spent** ([dapanao](#)) **everything** - He blew through his estate. As **MacArthur** says "Sin's pleasures are fleeting (Heb. 11:25), however, and when the last of his money was gone, the party was over." Willie Nelson sang an old country and western song entitled "The Party's Over," the lyrics of which are not a bad commentary on the prodigal's party....

Turn out the lights  
The party's over  
They say that  
All good things must end!

Of course there was nothing "**good**" about his riotous living, but it indeed came to a screeching halt!

**A severe** ([ischuros](#) - strong, powerful, mighty) **famine** ([limos](#)) **occurred in that country** - NIV = "there was a severe famine in that whole country." NLT = "a great famine swept over the land." The Greek for "**in that country**" is more literally "down (kata) on the country," and the implication is that the famine was widespread and obviously included the territory where the prodigal was living. Famines were bad enough but Jesus calls this famine "**severe**" which makes the pauper prodigal's state even more grim than if he had just been penniless.

**MacArthur - Famine** ([limos](#)) was a dreaded and deadly scourge that was all too common in the ancient world. **Famine** drove both Abraham (Gen. 12:10) and Jacob and his family (Gen. 47:4) to seek refuge in Egypt, Isaac to seek refuge in the land of the Philistines (Gen. 26:1), and Ruth and her family to take refuge in Moab (Ruth 1:1). There were famines throughout Israel's history (2 Sam. 21:1; 1 Kings 18:1-2; 2 Kings 4:38; 8:1; Neh. 5:3; Lam. 5:10; Acts 11:28), often with appalling consequences—including cannibalism (2 Kings 6:25-29). (See [MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

So the young man had sinned and probably thought he had gotten away with it. However the Bible is very clear about the fact that sins cannot be hidden but that eventually are like chickens that "[come home to roost](#)" so to speak (I speak from personal experience!) And so Moses writes

But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.  
(Numbers 32:23)

**Henry Morris comments** - This warning was issued specifically to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh, exhorting them to fulfill their commitment to participate with the other tribes in the campaign in Canaan. Yet, it expresses a universal principle. No sin against God or His Word will remain secret and unpunished.

**Famine** ([limos](#)) was often sent as a "visitation" from God for sin. God is sovereign, and so He either providentially sends or allows EVERY famine. But just as the famine in Egypt turned out for the good of Joseph, the famine in the far country would turn out for good for the prodigal son. We see the same Romans 8:28 dynamic in Ruth 1:1 where the famine resulted ultimately in Ruth the Moabitess coming back to Bethlehem (cf Ru 1:16), marrying the Kinsman-Redeemer Boaz (Ru 3:2, 4:10-13) and bringing forth a son who would be in the line of the Messiah! (Ru 4:17-21) I would call that a good result of a famine. God is amazing for He wastes no events in our life and truly is able to make all things work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Ro 8:28+).

**Mattoon on famine** ([limos](#)) - There are thirteen famines in the Bible, and all are significant. This one is significant both for its timing and its tenacity. When you make the choice to live in sin, Satan doesn't want you to consider what is at the end of the road. He just wants you to see the thrills at the entrance ramp to lure you into his snares. The end of the road, many times, is bumpy, unpaved, or has a dead end. A carnal life eventually leaves you with a famine in your heart. Many spiritually suffer today from spiritual famine. They are barren of spiritual fruit and blessings. They are dry, cracked, and spiritually parched because they have neglected to give their heart and ears to the Word of God. This was a problem in the days of Amos. Amos 8:11 ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Adrian Rogers** applies the **severe famine** ([limos](#)) to all who are lost and apart from their Father - No matter what you depend upon, no matter how wealthy you are, no matter how old you are, no matter how much power you have, you are going to leave it or it is going to leave you. The things of this world cannot be depended upon. There is coming a time when you are going to run out of resources. You will run out of health, out of strength, out of life itself. You will come to great depression.

Some commentators refer to this as a natural disaster in the form of a famine - I call it a "super-natural" disaster because God is in control (ALWAYS) - He either sent it or allowed it. Mother Nature did not did send or allow it! But again, be careful in seeking to interpret every detail of a parable, lest you misinterpret the details (remembering this is only a story, not an actual event) and even worse miss the "[forest for the trees](#)" (i.e., the main point of the parable)!

**Spurgeon** - And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; There generally does arise" a mighty famine" in such cases. Famines and other miseries are God's messengers, which he sends after his wandering children. ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**He began to be impoverished** ([hustereo](#)) - NLT = "began to starve." He began to be in need, that is in need of food. And so in

simple terms he began to starve. Isn't this typical of "the corruption (Greek = [phthora](#) from *phtheiro* = to shrivel, wither, spoil, ruin = so describes that which is decomposing or decaying, becoming rotten!) that is in the world by lust ([epithumia](#) = strong desire, passionate craving) " (2Pe 1:4+, cf 2Pe 2:19+)? Sin invariably corrupts us and leads us on a downward spiral, morally, physically, spiritually, etc.

His pocket book was empty,  
but even worse his heart was empty.

**Mattoon** has an interesting note on the verb **began** - The word "**began**" is from the Greek word [archomai](#) which means "to be the first to do anything. It means to be chief or leader." **This young man was the first to be in need. He was the leader in being needy because he lived each day without the anticipation of tomorrow.** He lived for "Now." He ran away from his father and the tide of his troubles was coming into shore. He lived high on the hog and is about to live with the hogs. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**MacArthur** - His own bad decisions, coupled with the severe external crisis brought about by the famine, brought him to an inconceivable level of desperation. He had forsaken his family, and his so-called friends had forsaken him. He was a stranger in a foreign land, with nowhere to go and no one to turn to for help. He was penniless, destitute, without resources. Seeking unrestrained pleasure, unabated lusts, and unrestricted behavior, he wound up instead with pain, emptiness on the brink of death. Yet despite his dire circumstances, he was not yet ready to humble himself, return home, seek restoration, and face the consequences of his shameful behavior.

**Mattoon** - Any person who wanders away from God the Father will experience a spiritual famine in his life. (AS A BELIEVER) If you run away from the Lord, our heavenly Father, don't be surprised when you wake up someday and wonder, "Why am I not happy? Why don't I have any joy? Why don't I get my prayers answered? Why am I so cranky? Why am I so bitter and angry? Why do I have constant turmoil and trouble all the time?" The answer may be the fact that you are suffering from spiritual famine and the Lord is trying to bring you back to Himself. You may be on the Hog Pen Trail and not realize it. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

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**Spent** ([1159](#)) ([dapanao](#) from [dapane](#) = expense, cost; BDAG says it is from [dapto](#) = devour, of wild beasts) means to spend freely

**Friberg** on [dapanao](#) - spend (freely); (1) of one's property - spend, waste, use up (Lk 15:14); (2) as spending on someone pay expenses (Acts 21:24; possibly 2 Cor 12:15); (3) figuratively exert great effort, - wear oneself out (possibly 2 Cor 12:15) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

**Gilbrant** on [dapanao](#) - The most common meaning of this verb is "to spend money." It is used more broadly, however, to mean spending other things, such as time, energy, or one's strength. It sometimes has the connotation of wastefulness, of using up everything in excessive indulgence. In classical Greek and in the Septuagint (only in the Apocrypha) it also has the figurative meaning "to wear out, exhaust, or destroy" as in hearts worn out to death, a water supply becoming spent (Judith 11:12), or a burnt offering being spent by the fire (2 Maccabees 1:23). In the New Testament the literal meaning of "spending money" occurs in Acts 21:24 where Paul is asked to pay the temple expenses of four men. It is also used with the bad connotation of wastefulness in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:14). The time came when all his wealth had been spent, obviously wasted indulgently. (See also James 4:3.) Both the broad literal ("spending anything") and the figurative ("being worn out, exhausted, or destroyed") were combined in one sentence by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:15 when he said, "I will very gladly spend and be spent (*ekdapanao* [1537], an emphatic form of *dapanao*) for you."

**Dapanao** - 5x in 5v - pay...expenses(1), spend(2), spent(2).

Mark 5:26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse--

Luke 15:14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.

Acts 21:24 take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.

2 Corinthians 12:15 I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

**Famine** ([3042](#)) (**limos** from **leipo** = to fall short, be destitute or be in need) can refer to a literal hunger or famine, and in a metaphoric sense one's mind might be said to be "hungry, starved." **Famines** will be part of the end times scenario according to Jesus (Mt 24:7-[note](#), Mk 13:8, Lk 21:11). **Famine** forced Jacob to take his family to Egypt where he met his lost son Joseph (Acts 7:11, cf Ge 50:20). In Romans 8 Paul assures believers that nothing, including **famine** "can separate us from the love of Christ." (Ro 8:35-[note](#)). In his ministry travels Paul said he was occasionally "in hunger" (2 Cor 11:27). In John's prophecy he saw "an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with **famine** and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth." (Rev 6:8-[note](#)). In the last NT use of **limos**, John describes the destruction of Babylon, writing "For this reason (see Rev 18:7) in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and **famine**, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong." (Rev 18:8-[note](#)) In a metaphorical use in the Septuagint of Amos 8:11 God says "I will send **afamine** on the land, Not a **famine** for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD."

**Zodhiates** adds that **limos** "is spoken of single persons suffering hunger (Luke 15:17; Rom. 8:35; 2 Cor. 11:27; Sept.: Lam. 5:10); of cities or countries experiencing famine, scarcity of grain (Mt. 24:7) where the difference between **limoi**, famines, and **loimoi** ([3061](#)), pestilences, is that the first is spelled with only i and the second with oi. (Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament)

**Limos** - 12x in 12v - NAS = famine(7), famines(3), hunger(2). Matt 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 4:25; 15:14, 17; 21:11; Acts 7:11; 11:28; Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 11:27; Rev 6:8; 18:8.

**Limos** - 114x in 103v in the Septuagint. Famine was greatly feared in the ancient world and was often a consequence of drought (e.g., Ge 12:10; 26:1) or war (e.g., 2 Ki 6:25; 7:4; 25:3). Gen. 12:10; Gen. 26:1; Gen. 41:27; Gen. 41:30; Gen. 41:31; Gen. 41:36; Gen. 41:50; Gen. 41:54; Gen. 41:56; Gen. 41:57; Gen. 42:5; Gen. 43:1; Gen. 45:6; Gen. 45:11; Gen. 47:4; Gen. 47:13; Gen. 47:20; Exod. 16:3; Deut. 28:48; Deut. 32:24; Ruth 1:1; 2 Sam. 21:1; 2 Sam. 24:13; 1 Ki. 8:37; 1 Ki. 18:2; 2 Ki. 4:38; 2 Ki. 6:25; 2 Ki. 7:4; 2 Ki. 8:1; 2 Ki. 25:3; 1 Chr. 21:12; 2 Chr. 6:28; 2 Chr. 20:9; 2 Chr. 32:11; Job 5:20; Job 18:11; Job 30:3; Job 30:4; Ps. 33:19; Ps. 37:19; Ps. 105:16; Isa. 5:13; Isa. 8:21; Isa. 14:30; Isa. 51:19; Jer. 5:12; Jer. 11:22; Jer. 14:12; Jer. 14:13; Jer. 14:15; Jer. 14:16; Jer. 14:18; Jer. 15:2; Jer. 16:4; Jer. 18:21; Jer. 21:7; Jer. 21:9; Jer. 24:10; Jer. 27:8; Jer. 32:24; Jer. 32:36; Jer. 34:17; Jer. 38:2; Jer. 38:9; Jer. 42:16; Jer. 42:17; Jer. 42:22; Jer. 44:12; Jer. 44:13; Jer. 44:18; Jer. 44:27; Jer. 52:6; Lam. 2:19; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 4:9; Lam. 5:10; Ezek. 5:12; Ezek. 5:16; Ezek. 5:17; Ezek. 6:11; Ezek. 6:12; Ezek. 7:15; Ezek. 12:16; Ezek. 14:13; Ezek. 14:21; Ezek. 34:29; Ezek. 36:29; Ezek. 36:30; Amos 8:11

#### Related Resources:

- Torrey Topical Textbook [Famine](#)
- Biblehub topic - [Famine](#) (huge list including a number of resources below)
- American Tract Society [Famine](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Famine](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Famine](#)

**Famine** - Often sent as visitations from God for sin. 2 Kings 8:1; "the Lord hath called for a famine" (Psalms 105:16), as a master calls for a servant ready to do his bidding. Compare Matthew 8:8-9; contrast Ezekiel 36:29. So associated with pestilence and the sword (2 Samuel 21; 1 Kings 17). The famine in Ruth 1:1 was probably owing to the Midianite devastation of the land (Judges 6), so severe in the Holy Land that Elimelech had to emigrate to Moab, and Naomi his widow returned not until ten years had elapsed. Isaiah 51:19; Jeremiah 14:15; Jeremiah 15:2; Ezekiel 5:12. Defects in agriculture, in means of transit, and in freedom of commerce through despotism, were among the natural causes of frequent famines anciently. Failure of the heavy rains in November and December in Palestine (Genesis 12:10; Genesis 26:1-2), and of the due overflow of the Nile, along with E. and S. winds (the N. wind on the contrary brings rains, and retards the too rapid current) in Egypt, the ancient granary of the world, often brought famines (Genesis 41:25-36; Genesis 41:42). Abraham's faith was tried by the famine which visited the land promised as his inheritance immediately after his entering it; yet though going down to Egypt for food, it was only "to sojourn," not to live there, for his faith in the promise remained unshaken. A record of famine for seven years in the 18th century B.C. has been found in China, which agrees with the time of Joseph's seven years of famine in Egypt.

- Holman Bible Dictionary [Famine and Drought](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Famine](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Famine \(2\) Famine](#)

- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Famine](#)
- Wikipedia - [Famine](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Famine](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Famine](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Famine](#)

**Impoverished** (be in need) (5302) (**hustereo** from **husteros** = last, latter, terminal, hindmost) has the basic meaning to come too late (in time) or to come after (in terms of space) and thus it means to fail in something, come short of, miss, not to reach. Here **hustereo** means to want, be without, lack. **Gilbrant** adds that "Eight of the sixteen New Testament uses of **hustereo** reflect the concept of "lacking," or "being in need." The idea of this verb is "to be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal. It means to fall short of the end. It means to be wanting or lacking, to be devoid of something."

Jesus used **hustereo** of the rich young man in Mt 19:20 - Although the rich young man had kept the commandments since his youth, he still sensed some "lack" that would deny him eternal life. Jesus revealed to him that he lacked proper priorities, for he loved his riches more than he loved God (Mark 10:21). Physical needs are amply represented. The Prodigal Son was "in want" when his resources were spent and the famine hit (Luke 15:14). The apostles did not "lack" anything when Jesus sent them out to evangelize (Luke 22:35), and Paul's "needs" were met by fellow Christians from Macedonia (2 Corinthians 11:9)."

**Severe** (mighty) (2478) (**ischuros** from **ischuo** = to be able) is an adjective which means strong, powerful, mighty (usually referring to inherent physical strength), able, forcible. Strong, having moral power. Inherently strong. **Ischuros** denotes power or ability and places "stress on the actual power that one possesses rather than on the mere principle of power."

**Luke 15:15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine."**

BGT Luke 15:15 κα πορευθε ς κολλθη ν τ ν πολιτ ν τ ς χ ρας κε νης, κα πεμψεν α τ ν ε ς το ς γρο ς α το β σκειν χο ρους,

KJV Luke 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

NET Luke 15:15 So he went and worked for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

CSB Luke 15:15 Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

ESV Luke 15:15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

NIV Luke 15:15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

NLT Luke 15:15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs.

- **So he went** Lk 15:13; Ex 10:3; 2 Chr 28:22; Isa 1:5,9,10-13; 57:17; Jer 5:3; 8:4-6; Jer 31:18,19; 2 Ti 2:25,26; Rev 2:21,22
- **his fields to feed swine** Lk 8:32-34; Ezek 16:52,63; Nahum 3:6; Mal 2:9; Ro 1:24-26; 6:22; 1 Co 6:9-11; Eph 2:2,3; 4:17-19; 5:11,12; Col 3:5-7; Titus 3:3
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Licentious Son](#) - John MacArthur

## SERVING THE SWINE

**So he went and hired ([kollao](#)) himself out to one of the citizens of that country** - Just imagine the shame he must have felt! For a Jewish man to work for a Gentile was the height of shame and the depth of dishonor! But to feed pigs added [insult to injury](#)! An

already bad situation was made worse and extremely humiliating.

**Wiersbe** - This scene in the drama is our Lord's way of emphasizing what sin really does in the lives of those who reject the Father's will. Sin promises freedom, but it only brings slavery (John 8:34); it promises success, but brings failure; it promises life, but "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The boy thought he would "find himself," but he only lost himself! When God is left out of our lives, enjoyment becomes enslavement. (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

**Hired himself** - Literally "was joined to" or "joined himself to." He clings to this man. Unfortunately, he is clinging to the wrong person. He should have been clinging to his father and the Lord.

As **MacArthur** says "The word **hired** is a stretch for what Jesus meant, since it translates a form of the verb *kollaō*, which literally means "glued." This was not a job contract. He was a beggar and like persistent beggars the world over, he probably latched on to this man and would not let go. To get rid of him, the man would send him to feed the pigs, perhaps with no intention to pay him anything." (Ibid)

**Mattoon on hired** (glued) - This rebel finds a man who has a job opening, even though it is a detestable, dirty, and smelly kind of job. He glues himself to this man. What a picture of folks today that are clinging to the wrong things. They end up wallowing in the wickedness, waywardness, and worldliness of this sinful world. Their wallowing eventually leaves them empty and living in circumstances that are absolutely repulsive. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

Feeding pigs would be a detestable job for a Jew

Leviticus 11:7 and the pig, for though it divides the hoof, thus making a split hoof, it does not chew cud, it is unclean to you.

Deuteronomy 14:8 "The pig, because it divides the hoof but does not chew the cud, it is unclean for you. You shall not eat any of their flesh nor touch their carcasses.

Isaiah 65:4; Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places; Who eat swine's flesh, And the broth of unclean meat is in their pots.

Isaiah 66:17 "Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens, Following one in the center, Who eat swine's flesh, detestable things and mice, Will come to an end altogether," declares the LORD.

**He sent him into his fields to feed swine** ([choiros](#)) - Not exactly the "field of dreams" for a Jewish boy, but a nightmare come true! From the pit of poverty he is thrown into the pen of pigs! Unconfessed sin is like the gift that "[keeps on giving](#)."

**Keener** - At this point, Jesus' Jewish hearers are ready for the story to end (like a similar second-century Jewish story): the son gets what he deserves—he is reduced to the horrendous level of feeding the most unclean of animals. The son is cut off at this point from the Jewish community and any financial charity it would otherwise offer him. (IVP)

Today we talk about people [going to the dogs](#). In that day they **went to the hogs**.

**Leon Morris** - For a Jew no occupation could have been more distasteful. A rabbinic saying runs, 'Cursed be the man who would breed swine' (Baba Kamma 82b - see below). The pig was unclean (Lev. 11:7+) and the Jew under normal circumstances would have nothing to do with it at all. The young man must have been in desperate straits even to consider this job. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** applies this section - The younger son's behavior exemplifies the sinner's wretched desires and his predicament graphically illustrates the sinner's desperate plight. To sin against God is to rebel against His fatherhood, disdain His honor and respect, spurn His love, and reject His will. Unrepentant sinners shun all responsibility and accountability to God. They deny Him his place, hate Him, wish He did not exist, refuse to love Him, and dishonor Him. They take the gifts He has given them and squander them in a life of self-indulgence, dissipation, and unrestrained lust. As a result they find themselves spiritually bankrupt, empty, destitute, with no one to help, nowhere to turn, and facing eternal death. And when all the self-help strategies fail, the sinner hits rock bottom (See [The MacArthur Commentary](#))

**Ray Pritchard** quotes Paul writing "**Do not be deceived** ([present imperative with a negative](#) = stop something already going on, in this case deception - if you are deceived by definition you do not even know it!). God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." (Gal. 6:7-8<sub>±</sub>) There will always be a famine in the far country. In the end he lost everything. He ended up with the pigs. This son of a wealthy father has now thrown it all away. He who had it all has lost it all. He who came from a good family now sleeps with the pigs. The prodigal son has hit rock bottom. O, how the mighty are fallen. God often lets that happen because many of us won't look up until we start to eat with the pigs. When we finally hit rock bottom, then and only then do we begin

to think about returning home again. ([Trapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

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**Hired** (2853) (**kollao** from **kolla** = glue) means literally to glue, cement, join or fasten together and thus to unite (someone with or to someone or some thing). To fasten firmly together. **Kollao** is used to describe **joining** oneself to a harlot in a sexual union in (1Co 6:16). **Kollao** as in this verse means to attach oneself to a master in a job and thus to hire oneself out as a servant. The derivative verb **proskollao** is used in Ge 2:24 of Adam becoming **joined (glued)** to his wife."

**Swine** (5519) (**choiros**) refers to a pig, a hog, a pooker, a young swine. Pigs were unclean animals to the Jews - Lev 11:7-8-note, Dt 14:8. Most of the NT uses are in the story of Jesus casting out the demons and sending them into the swine (Mt 8:30, 31, 32, Mk 5:11, 12, 13, 16, Lk 8:32, 33-note) To protect themselves from defilement for worship on the Sabbath day, Jews would not even touch pigs.

In an act of brazen disrespect to the Jews, the despicable ruler [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) raided the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, stealing its treasures, setting up an altar to Zeus, and **sacrificing swine on the altar**. When the Jews expressed their outrage over the profaning of the temple, Antiochus responded by slaughtering a great number of the Jews and selling others into slavery. He issued even more draconian decrees: performing the rite of circumcision was punishable by death, and Jews everywhere were ordered to sacrifice to pagan gods and eat pig flesh.

**Gilbrant** on **choiros** - "Swine" were detestable creatures being classified with the dog (cf. Luke 8:32ff.; 15:15). They were considered **unclean** according to the laws of purification (Leviticus 11:7-8-note). As well, the ancient Canaanites sacrificed and ate them before the gods (Redditt, "Swine," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 4:673). Despite their being a popular sacrificial animal among the Greeks at special events, the Old Testament paints them as destructive, undesirable creatures (Psalm 80:13; Proverbs 11:22). The New Testament references to "swine" reflect the Jewish idea that swine were "unclean." Swine were considered to be worthless by the Jews and an appropriate place for demons to reside once they had been cast out of humans (Matthew 8:32; Mark 5:11-16; Luke 8:32f.). In Matthew 7:6 Jesus may have been quoting a popular proverb concerning discrimination when He said, "Do not throw your pearls to pigs" (NIV; cf. Proverbs 9:7-9).

**Choiros** - 12x in 12v (no uses in Septuagint) - swine (12)

Matthew 7:6-note "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before **swine**, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Matthew 8:30 Now there was a herd of many **swine** feeding at a distance from them.

Matthew 8:31 The demons began to entreat Him, saying, "If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of **swine**."

Matthew 8:32 And He said to them, "Go!" And they came out and went into the **swine**, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.

Mark 5:11 Now there was a large herd of **swine** feeding nearby on the mountain.

Mark 5:12 The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the **swine** so that we may enter them."

Mark 5:13 Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the **swine**; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

Mark 5:16 Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the **swine**.

Luke 8:32 Now there was a herd of many **swine** feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission.

Luke 8:33 And the demons came out of the man and entered the **swine**; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

Luke 15:15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed **swine**.

Luke 15:16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the **swine** were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

**Related Resources:**

- Torrey Topical Textbook [Swine](#)
- American Tract Society [Swine](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Swine](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Swine](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Swine](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Swine](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Swine](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Swine](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Swine](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Swine](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Swine](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Swine](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He said to not cast your pearls before swine \(Matthew 7:6\)?](#)
- [Why did the Old Testament Law command against the eating of pork?](#)

**Mattoon** - The sentiment of this prodigal son was "I want to be free to do what I want." Yet, his life of wickedness has led to bondage to another man. That is what sin does to a person.

- Sin doesn't *free* you, it *shackles* you.
- It does not *favor* you, it *slays* you.
- It promises *fun*, but ends in *sorrow*.
- It does not *forward* your life into blessing, it *spawns* slips, slides, and it staggers and sinks your character.

That's what happens when you runaway from God the Father. This son reached depths of desperation, *leading* him to loneliness, *bleeding* him of his blessings, *feeding* him with fodder, *kneading* him like dough that is pounded by a baker, and *breeding* nothing but burdens, and a belly that was empty and dissatisfied. He has lost his home, his food, his so called "friends," and his testimony. The Hog Pen Trail is a bumpy one at that! ([Treasures from Luke](#))

#### Baba Kamma 82b

F. At that time they ruled, "It is cursed for someone to raise pigs, and it is cursed for anyone to teach Greek learning to his son."

**Luke 15:16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him."**

KJV Luke 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

- **he would have gladly filled his stomach** Isa 44:20; 55:2; Lam 4:5; Hosea 12:1; Ro 6:19-21
- **that the swine were eating** Ps 73:22
- **no one was giving anything to him** Ps 142:4; Isa 57:3; Jonah 2:2-8
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:11-16 The Licentious Son](#) - John MacArthur

Carob Pod

## THE PRODIGAL SON'S GNAWING HUNGER

**And he would have gladly** ([epithumeo](#)) **filled** ([gemizo](#)) **his stomach with the pods** ([keraton](#)) **that the swine** ([choiros](#)) **were eating** - NET = "He was longing to eat the carob pods the pigs were eating (Lk 15:16NET)" There is an old saying "beggars can't be choosy" and he would. When the pigs eat better than the prodigal, the need of the prodigal is great. While he presumably was given

some ration from his new master, it fell far short of filling his stomach, for who else but a starving person would long for pig food! And the word **have gladly** ([epithumeo](#)) means he was longing for the pods and the imperfect tense indicates this was a longing which came again and again! And who had allowed him to be brought to such a low state regarding his lost estate? Clearly God, even as a manifestation of His infinite mercy and great kindness had allowed him to be brought to this place of shame, dishonor and great need. This reminds us of Jesus' first beatitude "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:3+)

**Adrian Rogers** applies this picture of the prodigal's gnawing hunger writing that "the husks of this world and the swineswill of this world will never satisfy the deepest longing of your heart. It matters not how much money you have, how famous you are, how many friends around you, how handsome, beautiful, charming or witty you may be, down in your heart there is a hunger that only God can meet. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." You may be wearing a mask this morning; but, friend, down in your heart there is a wretchedness if you are without God."

We see at least some degree of humility beginning in his mind, for he was now willing to eat the same food the unclean swine ate. Sin will force you to alter your tastes, so that what was once absolutely abhorrent is now gladly welcomed! **Epithumeo** is the same verb Luke uses in the next chapter describing the rich man and Lazarus who was "**longing** ([epithumeo](#)) to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores." (Luke 16:21+).

**Mattoon** - When a Christian starts to **long for** and **crave** the filth of this world, you mark it down, he is heading for pig living and wallowing in the world's pig sty. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**No one was giving anything to him** - Once his wealth was gone, so were his fair weather *friends* (friends in *italics*)! Everyone was in the famine and it was severe. He was a foreigner, a Jew. His reputation may have been sullied by all his partying. The point of the story is that he was running on empty - empty pockets, empty stomach, empty soul! There was only one way and it was to look up, in this case to look to his father.

**Craig Keener** - Animals ate these carob pods raw; people ate them roasted, but depended on them for sustenance only in times of famine. (Some later rabbis remarked that whenever Israel was reduced to eating carob pods, they repented.) no one gave him anything. Moralists commonly observed that those who were friends only for the sake of pleasure would abandon one when the money ran out. A normal ancient story might have ended here, with an obvious moral for listeners: don't disrespect and abandon your father, or you might end up like this! Yet Jesus' story continues. (See [NKJV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible](#))

**Steven Cole** - The prodigal's rebellion and downward course illustrate the **terrible toll of sin in human lives**. Sin always alienates the sinner from fellowship with the loving and merciful Father. We sin because we stupidly think that it will bring us lasting happiness and fulfillment, and for a short time, it seems to deliver. But rebelling against God and plunging into sin is like buying things on credit when you have no money to pay. At first, it's fun. You can go to Europe, stay in first class hotels, eat at the finest restaurants, and live like a king. But then the bills start coming due and it isn't fun anymore. Invariably, a famine hits in the far country. The worldly friends who told you that you were the greatest when you had money start avoiding you when the famine sets in. You're left alone, down and out, with seemingly no where to go. But, thankfully, there is a way to go, namely, to repent or turn back to God. ([How to Receive God's Abundant Mercy](#))

**Gary Inrig** - Had the Lord stopped at this point, his critics would have risen up with enthusiastic approval. "That's right. That's what happens to a sinner. He ends up degraded, with the stench of pigs upon him. He's getting what he deserves." But the Lord did not end there. The Pharisees were content to leave sinners in the pigpen. The Savior wants them to find the way back to the Father's house. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

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**Have gladly** (better translated "he was longing") ([1937](#))([epithumeo](#) from **epí** = upon, used intensively + **thumós** = passion) means literally to fix one's desire upon, to have a strong desire to secure something, to desire greatly.

**Filled** ([1072](#)) [gemizo](#) means filling a vessel with a solid object. To "put something into an object to the extent of its capacity (the procedure of filling)" (BDAG). To fill an object with something (Jn 2.7). Passive voice, be filled, become full (Mk 4.37)

**Gemizo - 8v - fill(1), filled(7), filling(1)**. Mk. 4:37; Mk. 15:36; Lk. 14:23; Lk. 15:16; Jn. 2:7; Jn. 6:13; Rev. 8:5; Rev. 15:8

**Pods** ([2769](#))(**keraton** diminutive of **keras** = a horn) literally means "little horn" and apparently refers to the horn-shaped edible pods from a [carob tree](#). Only here in NT ([Hapax legomenon](#)). They were bean-like in nature and were commonly used for fattening pigs, although they were also used for food by poor people. One poor prodigal wished he could have eaten the pods!

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## Ray Pritchard - Five Steps to the Pigpen

**1. He was selfish.** His fall began with a selfish act, a disregard for his father. He said, "I want my money and I want it now." All he

could see was the dollar signs. “Dad, give me my money. Forget you and forget my family. Forget my brother. Forget my reputation. Give me my money. I want to get out of here.”

**2. He acted hastily.** The Bible says that when he got his money he went to a far country. When you hear that phrase, you shouldn't think of somewhere thousands of miles away. Do you know where the far country is? It's one step outside of God's will. You could be living in your own home and be in a far country. You could be working at your job and be in a far country. You could be going to high school and still be living in a far country. You could be in church every Sunday and still be living in a far country. Because the far country is not that far away. It's just one step outside the will of God.

**3. He wasted everything he had.** The word prodigal means “to waste.” When he left, he never intended to come back home. After all, he took all the money with him. If he was planning on coming back, he would have taken some spending money with him and left some back there. But, no, he deliberately did what he did. He wasn't tricked into spending his money. He left home intending to spend it all.

**4. He separated himself from every relationship that was important to him** By leaving he broke his relationship with his father and his brother. He also left his family and his friends. He rejected everything that was good and right and holy. All of that went out the window.

**5. He made a long string of bad decisions.** Sin always works that way. One bad decision leads to another. First you tell a lie, then you have to tell another one to cover up the first one, then another one to cover up the second one, and then another one to cover up the third one. Sin always leads to more sin. Once you start making bad decisions, it's easier to make them as you go along. But pretty soon you are about 15 bad decisions down the road. At that point it seems like you are so far away from where you used to be that it is just easier to keep going the wrong way than it is to think about turning around. ([Luke 15:11-32 Tapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

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## Avoid The Husks

He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate. —Luke 15:16

Ah, the life of a pig! Each new day brings nothing but slopping through the mud and snorting happily at mealtime. And what meals they have! Crunchy corn husks—or whatever leftovers get tossed into the pen.

Sound good? No? It probably didn't sound good to the prodigal son either.

Before he started eating with pigs, he had a warm bed, a rich inheritance, a loving father, a secure future—and probably good food. But it wasn't enough. He wanted “fun.” He wanted to run his own life and do whatever he desired. It resulted in a pig's dinner.

Whenever a young person ignores the guidance of godly parents and the instruction of God's Word, similar results occur. It always shocks me when someone who professes to know Jesus chooses a life that rejects God's clear teaching. Whether the choices include sexual sin, addictive substances, a lack of ambition, or something else, any action that leaves God out risks ending badly.

If we ignore clear biblical morals and neglect our relationship with God, we can expect trouble. Luke tells us that the young man turned things around after he came to his senses (Luke 15:17). Keep your senses about you. Live for God by the guidance of His Word—unless you have a hankering for the husks. By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When we are lured to turn away  
To follow sinful lust,  
Lord, help us to resist the pull  
And in You put our trust.  
—Sper

If sin were not deceitful, it wouldn't seem delightful.

**Luke 15:17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!"**

KJV Luke 15:17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

- **But when he came to his senses** Lk 8:35; 16:23; Ps 73:20; Eccl 9:3; Jer 31:19; Ezek 18:28; Acts 2:37; 16:29; Acts 16:30; 26:11-19; Eph 2:4,5; 5:14; Titus 3:4-6; James 1:16-18

- **How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread** Lk 15:18,19; Lam 1:7
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-21 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-24 The Loving Father](#) - John MacArthur

## THE FIRST STEP OF REPENTANCE

**But when he came to his senses** (literally "came to himself") - This marked the turning point. A personal "**reality check**" is the first step on the road of repentance! Before this moment he had been out of touch with reality, "**beside himself**" enslaved to and deceived by his sin, but now he "came to himself." As alluded to above, he was at the bottom in every way. The locals would not help him. He was unable to help himself. The only one he would look to was his father. When you are the end of your rope, you begin to face the facts! When a sinner comes "to himself" he is at the place where grace can abound "all the more" (Ro 5:20-[note](#)).

**Gotquestions** - His painful circumstances help him to see his father in a new light and bring him hope (Psalm 147:11; Isaiah 40:30-31; Romans 8:24-25; 1 Timothy 4:10). This is reflective of the sinner when he/she discovers the destitute condition of his life because of sin. It is a realization that, apart from God, there is no hope (Ephesians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:25-26). This is when a repentant sinner "**comes to his senses**" and longs to return to the state of fellowship with God which was lost when Adam sinned (Genesis 3:8-note).

**Wiersbe** - There is an "insanity" in sin that seems to paralyze the image of God within us and liberate the "animal" inside. Students of Shakespeare like to contrast two quotations that describe this contradiction in man's nature. (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!

*(Hamlet, II, ii)*

When he is best, he is a little worse than a man; and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast. *(The Merchant of Venice, I, ii)*

**Mattoon** - It is amazing how the growl of our stomach gets our attention like the roar of a lion. God has a way of speaking to our hearts when we are hungry, hurting, helpless, homeless, hapless, and hopeless. Our Lord uses our desperation to wake us up and draw us back to Himself. Have you made choices in your life that have left you on the bottom of the barrel looking up? If so, realize you are finally looking in the right direction for the first time in a long time. You are looking up! That is a key step in escaping from the pig pen. D.L. Moody used to share the following story: Dr. Andrew Bonar told me how, in the Highlands of Scotland, a sheep would often wander off into the rocks and get into places that they couldn't get out of. The grass on these mountains is very sweet and the sheep like it, and they will jump down ten or twelve feet, and then they can't jump back again and the shepherd hears them bleating in distress. They may be there for days, until they have eaten all the grass. The shepherd will wait until they are so faint that they cannot stand, and then they will put a rope around him, and he will go over and pull that sheep up out of the jaws of death. "Why don't they go down there when the sheep first gets there? I asked. "Ah!" he said, "they are so very foolish they would dash right over the precipice and be killed if they did." Moody concludes his story by saying: "And this is the way with men; they won't go back to God till they have no friends and have lost everything." The prodigal son has lost everything and he finally awakened. He came to himself! He was probably thinking, "What am I doing here?" This young man had traded sweet for bitter and light for darkness. He has been living a life without common sense and reasoning because He has wandered away from God. It is bad news for Satan when we begin to think about what we are really doing and the consequences of our actions. This was a crucial step in escaping the pig pen. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Robertson on came to his senses** - As if he had been far from himself as he was from home. As a matter of fact he had been away, out of his head, and now began to see things as they really were.

**How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread** - Note first that the father still had many hired men even with his son taking one-third of the estate. Notice also that the son recalls his father's kindness and generosity in taking care of those who were **hired** by him. As MacArthur says "as the son knew well and recalled, his father generously exceeded the requirements of the law by making sure that the men he hired had **more than enough bread.**" (Ibid) Note that **bread** here symbolizes food of various kinds that were available in his father's house, not just bread. His low state brings him face to face with reality of his true condition.

**Inrig** - The prodigal had left home to find his freedom. Instead he had found servitude, a bondage far worse than anything his father's hired men experienced. Sadly, it is often not until we reach the pigpen that we come to understand the glory of the Father's house. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

**But I am dying** ([apollumi](#)) **here with hunger** ([limos](#)) - "But" is a marker of contrast (see [term of contrast](#)). The contrast here is between hunger in a far country and satisfaction of even the hired help in his father's home. **Dying** is the same verb [apollumi](#) earlier translated lost. Was he literally **dying**? Imminent death from starvation was certainly a possibility. We do not know how long he had gone without nutrients, but medically most doctors agree that healthy humans can go up to eight weeks without food as long as they have water. Of course, given his dissolute lifestyle, the prodigal would hardly be classified as healthy. The point that Jesus is making is the striking contrast between conditions in the foreign land with a severe famine and condition in his father's home with ready rations. His sinful choices had the potential to cost him his life. And isn't that what unabated, unhindered [profligacy](#) will do to a soul "for the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption ([phthora](#) = rotteness, decay of one's soul!)" (Gal 6:8-note)? This brings to mind the decaying effect of methamphetamines on a human body (e.g., "[meth mouth](#)," cf the strikingly sad "[before and after pictures](#)"). Sin kills! And he was "**dying...with hunger**" because of his sin!

**Ray Pritchard** - When the prodigal son hit bottom, his life began to change. Five words tell the story. (Awakening, Repentance, Honesty, Humility, Resolution) First, there was an **awakening**. Luke 15:17 says, "**When he came to his senses.**" That's a great phrase—"He came to his senses." **Sin is senseless**. Sin is a form of temporary spiritual insanity. Turning away from God is insanity because you are turning away from that which is good to that which is bad, from that which is worth everything to that which is worth nothing, from that which has eternal value to that which has no value. You are turning away from living water so you can drink out of a sewer. **That is the definition of insanity**. What was it that brought him to his senses? He was hungry. His stomach made him come back to his father. That's not a very exalted motive. Nothing suggests he turned back to his father because he realized what a terrible thing he had done. Why would a father take back a son whose only motive for coming back home is because he is hungry? Because that's what it means to be a father. If you're hungry, I know where you can be fed. If you are tired of eating with the pigs, I know where you can join a banquet that never ends. If you are thirsty and tired of the sewer water of sin, I know where you can get a drink of fresh, clear, flowing, living water. All you have to have is the desire. That's all. ([Luke 15:11-32 Tapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

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## It Makes Sense

When he came to himself, he said, ". . . I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned.'" —Luke 15:17-18

In his book *Life After God*, Douglas Coupland writes about Scout, a member of "the first generation raised without religion." Scout lost his wife and son because she "just stopped being in love." He trafficked in drugs and lived in a spiritual wasteland, but for an instant at least he "came to his senses."

Scout confessed, "My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love."

Scout may not know it, but he has taken his first step toward God.

In the story Jesus told about the prodigal son, a young man left home and wasted his inheritance. When his money was all gone, he took a job tending pigs. He had hit bottom. There he sat, surrounded by pigs, feeling the gnawing hunger in his belly. He thought about home, his dad, and his father's hired men. And "he came to himself" (Lk. 15:17). Changing his mind about the direction his life had been going, he decided to go back home and admit how wrong he had been.

How about you? Have you come to your senses? By Haddon W. Robinson [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Think About It

Have you ever decided to trust Christ as your Savior?

Is there sin in your life that needs to be confessed?

Doesn't it make sense to accept the Father's love?

A broken heart is the first step to spiritual wholeness.

**Luke 15:18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;**

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KJV Luke 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

- **I will get up and go to my father** 1 Ki 20:30,31; 2 Ki 7:3,4; 2 Chr 33:12,13,19; Ps 32:5; 116:3-7; Jer 31:6-9; 50:4,5; Lam 3:18-22,29,40; Hosea 2:6,7; 14:1-3; Jonah 2:4; 3:9
- **Father** Lk 11:2; Isa 63:16; Jer 3:19; 31:20; Mt 6:9,14; 7:11
- **I have sinned** Lk 18:13; Lev 26:40,41; 1 Ki 8:47,48; Job 33:27,28; 36:8-10; Ps 25:11; Ps 32:3-5; 51:3-5; Pr 23:13; Mt 3:6; 1 John 1:8-10
- **against heaven, and in your sight;** Lk 15:21; Daniel 4:26
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-21 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-24 The Loving Father](#) - John MacArthur

## THE PRODIGAL SON HAD "HIT ROCK BOTTOM"

**I will get up** - Indeed he was down. He had "[hit rock bottom](#)," and was as low as he could go. The rude awakening of his poverty and the famine, the latter representing a providential effect from God, are now morphing into a spiritual awakening of his soul. And isn't this what had to happen to every one of us who have been saved by grace through faith? We had to come to the point where we recognized we were going to perish because of our sin and the consequences wrought by that sin. As **Norman Crawford** says "It is a necessity for the salvation of every sinner whether he has walked the road of the prodigal, who illustrates the publicans and sinners, or the road of the Pharisees, who are pictured in the elder brother." ([What the Bible teaches – Luke](#))

**Robertson on get up...go** - This determination is the act of the will after he comes to himself and sees his real condition.

**Go to my father** - From the preceding context (**my father's hired men have more than enough bread...I am dying here with hunger**) it seems that initially starvation motivated his desire to return. However, as we see below, a attitude of genuine [contrition](#) began growing in his heart.

## THE PRODIGAL REHEARSES HIS CONFESSION

**And will say to him** - Surely this was a humbling "reunion!" He is prepared to fall at his father's feet in the hope he would receive mercy (what he did not deserve) rather than justice (what he did deserve). This is what conversion is all about: ending a life of slavery to sin through confession to the Father and faith in Jesus Christ and becoming a **slave to righteousness**, offering one's body as a living sacrifice (1 John 1:9; Ro 6:6-18; 12:1).

**Father, I have sinned against heaven** - **Against heaven** is another way of saying against God (cf Da 4:26-[note](#) "your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is **Heaven** that rules"). His confession turned his entire life around! Notice that he said it while he was still living with the pigs. He said it while he was still far away from home. He said it while he was still totally broke and desperately hungry. And he has good theology, for he recognizes his sin is first **against heaven, against God**. Recall Joseph's words when being tempted by Potiphar's wife "How then could I do this great evil and **sin against God?**" (Ge 39:9) After David's adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah, he came to his senses and cried out "**Against Thee, Thee only I have sinned**, And done what is evil in Thy sight." (Ps 51:4-[note](#)).

**I have sinned** ([hamartano](#)) means "I have missed the mark of your will for my life father."**Robertson** adds **I have sinned** "is the hard word to say and he will say it first..... I shot my bolt and I missed my aim (compare the high-handed demand in Lk 15:12-[note](#)).

**NET Note** on **sinned against heaven** - The phrase **against heaven** is a [circumlocution](#) for God.

Notice that the prodigal could have come back to the father and said "*I am so sorry for having squandered all of my estate*" But Jesus says his sorrow was not for his loss, but for his sinful actions. He admitted that what he had done was sin, specifically sin against God, the One "to Whom we must (ALL) give account." (Heb 4:13NIV-[note](#)).

**And in your sight** - He then acknowledges his sin against his father. The NLT paraphrases it "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you."

**Leon Morris** feels that the son "recognized that he had forfeited all claim to be treated as a son and he looked only for the possibility of being made like one of the paid servants, i.e. he would ask for a job. At least then he would get a living wage in congenial surroundings." (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** - The younger son's actions picture the kind of repentance that can lead to salvation. He came to his senses and realized that his situation was desperate. He remembered his father's goodness, compassion, generosity, and mercy and trusted in them. In the same way, the repentant sinner takes stock of his situation and acknowledges his need to turn from his sin. He realizes that there is no one to turn to except the Father whom he has shamed and dishonored and by faith, with nothing to offer, turns to Him for forgiveness and reconciliation on the basis of His grace. Repentance is the sinner's part in the process of being restored to God, and there is no true gospel apart from it. The call for sinners to repent is at the heart of all biblical evangelism, beginning in the Old Testament (cf. Ps 32:5; 51:1-4, 14, 17; Isa. 1:16-18; 55:6-7; Ezek. 18:30, 32; 33:19; Jonah 3:5-10). In the New Testament repentance was central to the gospel preaching of John the Baptist (Luke 3:3-9), Jesus (Matt. 4:17; Luke 5:32; 13:3, 5; 24:46-47), the apostles (Mark 6:12), and the early church (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; 2 Cor. 7:9-11). Repentance must not be misconstrued as a meritorious, pre-salvation work since, though required of the sinner, it must be granted by God (Acts 11:18; Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25). (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Pritchard** writes that this "is a parable of your life and of mine. When we have sinned, we are so ashamed to find ourselves in the pig pen that we dare not tell anyone where we are. So we try to clean ourselves up, we try to be presentable, we brush our teeth and comb our hair, but we still have pig slop under our fingernails. Everybody knows we've been with the pigs!" This story is for everyone who is tired of eating with the pigs. If you are ready to go home, I've got good news for you. The Father is standing in the road waiting for you. His arms are open wide. He knows where you've been, and he is still waiting for you. The only thing that matters is for you to come home. That's what the grace of God is all about. You can come home. You can start over. You can be forgiven. The slate can be wiped clean. You don't have to live the rest of your life in hiding. You don't have to live in fear that someone will find you out. You don't have to eat with the pigs forever. It is possible, and it depends on one thing. You have to do what the Prodigal Son did. You have to come to your senses and say, "Father, I have sinned." When you do, you will find the mercy that Proverbs 28:13 talks about. When you do, you will discover 1 John 1:9 is true. He is faithful. He is just. He will forgive your sin and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. ([Luke 15:11-32 Tapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

**Ray Pritchard** - Second, there was **repentance**. He said to himself, "I will go back to my father." Do you know what repentance is? The word means "to change your mind." Repentance is what happens when you've been going one direction and finally you hit the bottom, and you say, "I've gone long enough this way. I'm going to turn around, and I'm going to go this way now." Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life. It means to change the direction of your life. Third, there was **honesty**. The young man says, "I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you." You will know that you are really serious about changing your life when you stop making excuses for your behavior. Think what the prodigal son could have said. "It was really my older brother's fault. He always picked on me, and Daddy always liked him best." Or he might say, "If Daddy had given me more money I wouldn't be in this fix." Or, "Those cheap women seduced me and then stole my money. And that farmer never gave me a good job." He could have found a thousand excuses. But he didn't. He simply said, "I have sinned." Those three little words—simple, so short, yet so profound—mark the beginning of a new life for this young man. When you stop making excuses for your failures, you are not far from a brand-new life. ([Luke 15:11-32 Tapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

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### **Spurgeon - "Father, I have sinned."—Luke 15:18**

It is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in his precious blood need not make a confession of sin, as culprits or criminals, before God the Judge, for Christ has for ever taken away all their sins in a legal sense, so that they no longer stand where they can be condemned, but are once for all accepted in the Beloved; but having become children, and offending as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess their sin, and acknowledge their iniquity in that character? Nature teaches that it is the duty of erring children to make a confession to their earthly father, and the grace of God in the heart teaches us that we, as Christians, owe the same duty to our heavenly Father. We daily offend, and ought not to rest without daily pardon. For, supposing that my trespasses against my Father are not at once taken to him to be washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence? If I have not sought forgiveness and been washed from these offences against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from him; I shall doubt his love to me; I shall tremble at him; I shall be afraid to pray to him: I shall grow like the prodigal, who, although still a child, was yet far off from his father. But if, with a child's sorrow at offending so gracious and loving a Parent, I go to him and tell him all, and rest not till I realize that I am forgiven, then I shall feel a holy love to my Father, and shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord. There is a wide distinction between confessing sin as a culprit, and confessing sin as a child. The Father's bosom is the place for penitent confessions. We have been cleansed once for all, but our feet still need to be washed from the defilement of our daily walk as children of God.

**Luke 15:19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."**

KJV Luke 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

- **I am no longer worthy to be called your son** Lk 5:8; 7:6,7; Ge 32:10; Job 42:6; 1 Co 15:9; 1 Ti 1:13-16
- **make me as one of your hired men** Joshua 9:24,25; Ps 84:10; Mt 15:26,27; James 4:8-10; 1 Peter 5:6
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-21 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-24 The Loving Father](#) - John MacArthur

**I am no longer worthy (axios) to be called your son** - As John Bunyan might say he is in the [slough of despond](#). This self-assessment is a sign of his humility, which is an important step in his return to the father, because we know from James that "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6-note). The prodigal was placing himself in an advantageous position to receive grace from his father.

**Robertson** says that in his words we see his "Confession of the facts. He sees his own pitiful plight and is humble."

**Mattoon** - The young man saw something that is hard to see. He saw himself. Second, he said something that is hard to say, "I have sinned." Third, he did something that is hard to do. He went home. He would be unable to return broken and defeated, unless he had conquered his pride that caused him to leave his father in the first place. Humility would also be required to say those three difficult words, "I have sinned." This young man did not have a "You Owe Me" attitude anymore. It has been replaced with an "I Am Unworthy" attitude. Beloved, we are unworthy of all that God has given to us. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

As **MacArthur** says the son's "empty lifestyle had filled him with remorse for the past, pain in the present, and the bleak prospect of even more suffering in the future as he worked the rest of his life to earn acceptance. But as it turned out, he drastically underestimated his father."

**Wiersbe** - Had he stopped there, the boy would have experienced only regret or remorse (2 Cor. 7:10), but true repentance involves the will as well as the mind and the emotions—"I will arise... I will go... I will say... ." Our resolutions may be noble, but unless we act on them, they can never of themselves bring about any permanent good. If repentance is truly the work of God (Acts 11:18), then the sinner will obey God and put saving faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

**Make me as one of your hired men** - His expectations were not high. He would be satisfied to simply work for his father, for at least then he would be eating better than the swine. He had a proper opinion of his dismal condition as a sinner. He would soon have a better understanding of grace.

**Ray Pritchard** - Fourth, there was **humility**. While he is still in the pigpen, he mentally rehearses what he will say to his father. "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men." What a tremendous statement that is. He didn't make any deals with his father. He came back home with no pre-conditions. He didn't say, "Dad, before I'll come back, we've got to make a deal." He didn't say, "You have to give me exactly what I had. I'm coming back, but I want that fortune I lost. You have to replace it." That's not real repentance. This man was so deeply hurt over the way he lived that he said, "Father, I'm not worthy to be called your son. I've disgraced you. If you will take me back, I will work like a hired hand. I won't even call myself your son any more." Real repentance doesn't make deals with God. ([Luke 15:11-32 Tapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

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Play this upbeat song [Prodigal](#) - Sidewalk Prophets

**PRODIGAL**

It's been a long time since you felt peace  
In the valley you made where you're not meant to be  
Where the shame throws shadows on you  
But don't you forget

That you're headed to more  
But you've settled for less  
Don't buy the lie "it's as good as it gets"  
The same feet that left you lost and alone  
Are the very same feet that can bring you back home

**Wherever you are, whatever you did  
It's a page in your book, but it isn't the end**

**Your Father will meet you with arms open wide  
This is where your heart belongs  
Come running like a prodigal**

There will be nights, when you hear whispers  
Of the life you once knew, don't let it linger  
Cause there's a grace that falls upon you  
Don't you forget  
In the places your weak  
He is very strong  
Don't ever believe "you don't deserve love"  
The same God that protects you when you're lost and alone  
Is the very same God that is calling you home

Wherever you are, whatever you did  
It's a page in your book, but it isn't the end

Your Father will meet you with arms open wide  
This is where your heart belongs  
Come running like a prodigal

Oh...  
Let your life be made new  
Oh...  
As you come into view  
Your Father's not waiting, no he's running too  
He's running straight to you

Wherever you are, whatever you did  
It's a page in your book, but it isn't the end

Your Father will meet you with arms open wide  
This is where your heart belongs  
Come running like a prodigal  
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## **Deal, Or No Deal**

I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. —Luke 15:19

If you're like me, you love a good deal. Not just bargain shopping, but when you manage to cut a great deal for yourself without giving anything up in return. So if you can identify with these kinds of deals, you'll understand the prodigal son's scheme when he decided to return home.

There were three kinds of servants in those days: day workers who were paid on a day-to-day basis; hired servants who worked long hours on the estate but lived in town with their independence intact; or bond servants who lived on the estate and gave all of themselves to serving the family.

When the prodigal son hit rock bottom, it's interesting that his planned apology involved asking if he could be like a hired servant. Why not a grateful bond servant? Some commentators suggest that perhaps he was trying to negotiate a deal—a way to get a paycheck and keep his independence as well.

Often we approach God like, "I'll serve You but You can't take away my freedom." It may seem like a good deal at the time, but God's deal is so much better. Just like the boy's father, His arms are ready and willing to receive repentant sinners as part of His family. There could be no better deal and no better way to serve Him! By Joe Stowell

Lord, take my life and make it wholly Thine;  
Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine.  
Take all my will, my passion, self, and pride;  
I now surrender, Lord—in me abide.  
—Orr

True freedom is found in surrender to Christ.

**Luke 15:20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.**

KJV Luke 15:20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

- **But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him** Dt 30:2-4; Job 33:27,28; Ps 86:5,15; 103:10-13; Isa 49:15; 55:6-9; Isa 57:18; Jer 31:20; Ezek 16:6-8; Hosea 11:8; Micah 7:18,19; Acts 2:39; Eph 2:13,17
- **ran and embraced him and kissed him.** Ge 33:4; 45:14; 46:29; Acts 20:37
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-21 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-24 The Loving Father](#) - John MacArthur

Gustave Dore's Woodcut

## THE FINAL STEP OF THE PRODIGAL'S REPENTANCE

**So he got up and came to his father** - Notice that it does not say he came "home" but that he "**came to his father.**" When we have sinned, we must confess and repent and return to fellowship with our Father. John writes about this in his first epistle

If we say that we have **fellowship** with Him and yet walk ([present tense](#) - continually) in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk ([present tense](#) - continually) in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses ([present tense](#) - continually cleanses) us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess ([present tense](#) - continually) our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn 1:6-9)

**Mattoon** - The story is told about two frogs that sat on the edge of the water. One decided to jump. How many did that leave on the edge? If somebody says, "One," the correct reply is, "It leaves two. I did not say one jumped; I only said he decided to jump." See, there is a big difference in deciding to do something and actually doing it. The decision to do something is vain unless it leads to action. In this story, the prodigal son put action to his decision and returned home to his father. He escaped the pig pen. When he made up his mind to return, he departed immediately with urgency. If you want to escape from the pig pen, then take immediate steps once you make up your mind to get out. Delaying your decision will make matters more difficult to put feet to your decision. When you delay, there is a tendency to lose the seriousness of your situation or to make excuses for your faults. If you are under conviction about something in your life, then act on the conviction and get the matter right now. If you need to trust Christ as your Savior, then do it today. Paul said, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." If you are living in sin, cease immediately. The prodigal son did not wait to clean up his life and make himself presentable. He did not wait to get better clothes and a better job. He came in humility, just as he was. This is the way a person should come to Jesus Christ. Come as you are. God is not impressed with our "cleanup" programs. He saves those folks who are good and moral. They need saving. He runs toward those who are filthy, seeking His forgiveness and cleansing, just like this father. The Lord wants us to come to Him just as we are right now. Play the song [Come Just as You Are](#). ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Steven Cole** describes how the prodigal's thoughts and action are a picture of true repentance - The prodigal finally comes to his senses and realizes that even his father's hired hands have it better than he does (Lk 15:17-[note](#)). So he determines to go back to his father, confess his sin (Lk 15:18-[note](#)), acknowledge his own unworthiness to receive anything from his father, and yet appeal to his mercy so that he could become like one of the hired men (Lk 15:19-[note](#)). **He had left demanding his rights; he returned in**

**humility and brokenness.** So he got up and went to his father, probably not quite sure how his dad would respond. **The prodigal shows us a number of things about true repentance.**

**It always begins by seeing our true condition for what it is** “He came to himself [or, his senses].” (Lk 15:17-[note](#)) He realized what he had done. It took him a while to come to this awareness. We don’t know how long he was slopping pigs before he realized how low he had sunk, but finally his eyes were opened to his true, awful condition and he thought, “What am I doing here?” He thought about the fact that even the servants in his father’s house were happier than he was.

**He determined to return to his father. That is the next thing about repentance, that it is a turning from our sin to God Himself.** No one else can help. “I will get up and go to my father.” His friends had abandoned him. He had run out of his own resources. **As long as you have anything in yourself that you think will meet your needs, you will avoid going directly to God.** If the young man had thought, “I’m going to turn over a new leaf. I’ll get a better job. I’ll save some money. I dug myself into this pit; I’ll pull myself out by my own bootstraps!” he would not have gone back to his father. If he had clung to his own pride, he would have thought, “I’m not going to let him see me in this condition. I have too much dignity for that! I’ll return to my father after I’ve cleaned up and gotten a new suit of clothes.” **The Gospel always brings us to the end of ourselves, our resources, our schemes, and everything else that we rely on, until we must come directly to God Himself. All we can plead for is His mercy.** We can’t come and show Him how well we’ve done without Him. We can’t splash the cologne of our good works over the stench of the pigsty and hope that He doesn’t notice how badly we smell. We can’t send a friend or a gift to try to patch things up. We can only come directly to the Father in our wretched condition and appeal to His mercy: “I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” **Repentance must be directed personally toward the God whom we have sinned against. True repentance includes an honest confession of our sins, without any excuses.** “I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.” He didn’t say, “I wouldn’t have sinned if you hadn’t been such a demanding and insensitive father.” “I wouldn’t have gotten into trouble if you hadn’t given me all that money when you knew that I wasn’t mature enough to handle it properly.” He didn’t blame the fact that he had to live in the shadow of his high-achieving brother. He said, “I have sinned.” **True repentance always involves accepting responsibility for what we have done. Implicit in the prodigal’s repentance is also a measure of faith that the father would show him mercy.** If he had thought that his dad would beat him black and blue and order him never to set foot on his property again, he wouldn’t have bothered to go home. He had a hope, however slim, that his father would grant his request that he become like one of the hired men. (Lk 15:19-[note](#)) If you come to God with just an inkling of faith that He will receive you because of His great mercy, He will not disappoint you!

**ILLUSTRATION:** Spurgeon tells of being in his garden when he saw a dog amusing himself among his flowers. He knew that the dog was not pulling weeds and since it wasn’t his dog, he threw a stick at it and yelled at it to chase it away. Well, the dog very quickly made Spurgeon ashamed for treating it so harshly. It fetched the stick and, wagging its tail, dropped it at Spurgeon’s feet. He says, “Do you think I could strike him or drive him away after that? No, I patted him and called him good names. The dog had conquered the man.” Then he applies it: “And if you, poor sinner, dog as you are, can have confidence enough in God to come to him just as you are, it is not in his heart to spurn you” (*12 Sermons on the Prodigal Son* [Baker], pp. 105-106).

**Also, note that the prodigal’s repentance was not just thought, but action.** He didn’t just sit there in the pigsty thinking, “I should go back to my father some day.” He didn’t just feel bad about what he had done, although he must have felt terrible. But he didn’t just sit there feeling depressed. He got up and made that long journey back. **Some say that repentance is merely a change of mind. It is a change of mind, but not merely a change of mind. It is a change of mind that results in our turning from our sin to God.** In going back to his father, the young man was leaving his friends and his loose way of life. **He put a great deal of distance between himself and those old temptations. Repentance involved the action of leaving his sin and returning to his father.**

**This story shows that no matter how low you may have sunk into sin, there is hope if you will turn from your sin to God. If you say, “No, I’m too far gone,” you are only making excuses and you’re not believing the invitation that God extends to every guilty sinner. If you are living a life of sin, Jesus is saying to you, “No matter how awful, defiant, and wretched your sin, if you will come to the Father in true repentance, He will welcome you.”** (Bolding added for emphasis) ([Luke 15:11-32 How to Receive God’s Abundant Mercy](#))

**MacArthur** on His father running to meet him - The scribes and Pharisees would have expected that if the son did return, the father,

to maintain his own honor, would initially refuse to see him. Instead, he would make him sit in the village outside the gate of the family home for days in shame and disgrace. When he did finally grant his son an audience, it would be a cool reception as the son humbled himself before his father. He would be expected to tell his son what works he would need to perform to make full restitution for his prodigality, and for how long, before he could be reconciled as a son to his father. All of that was consistent with the rabbis' teaching that repentance was a good work performed by sinners that could eventually earn God's favor and forgiveness. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion ([splanchnizomai](#)) for him** - Here we have one of the most moving pictures in all of Scripture! We know this was not an accidental sighting because **he was still a long way off**. Clearly his father had been keeping a hopeful vigil, watching and waiting (praying) for such a return.

**THOUGHT** - I understand this father, for my youngest son got into the drug scene in high school and was in and out of treatment centers for the next 20 years. But for 20 years my wife and I pleaded with God almost daily for his soul as he was not a believer during this time in the far country. Near the end of his time in the far country, he called one day to tell me he was going to hang himself and had the rope and the tree picked out in the cemetery he had been visiting for several months. There was nothing I could do but pray, for I did not even know which cemetery he was staging his suicide. I cannot explain how or why, but he did not hang himself that day. Over the next weeks he subsequently ended up sleeping on a dirty, cold garage floor of a friend who owned a car repair shop and had mercy on him for it was the middle of winter and he was homeless. It was on the filthy garage floor that he **came to his senses** and it was not long after that, that he repented and confessed Christ as His Savior and Lord. He has been drug free for the past six years and God is restoring the 20 lost years as we have had some of the most wonderful spiritual conversations we have ever had. And in contrast to this story in Luke 15, his elder brother, an elder at a local church, was overjoyed to see him come home to His heavenly Father. Perhaps you have a "prodigal." Many (most) of us do. Let me to encourage you to do what we did -- to keep waiting and watching, keep pleading with our Father to save your prodigal, a prayer we prayed for 20 years (always asking others to pray for him also). There were many times when we thought it was hopeless, but we kept praying, and on one glorious day, the Spirit of God swept him into the Kingdom of God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." (Gal 6:9)

Note the timing. The son is too far away to express his repentance, but already the father's grace is present. Here is a picture of our God who shouts to the returning rebel, "Welcome home!"

**Gotquestions** - He had been transformed from a state of destitution to complete restoration. That is what God's grace does for a penitent sinner (Ps 40:2; 103:4). Not only are we forgiven, but we receive a spirit of sonship as His children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, of His incomparable riches (Ro 8:16-17; Eph 1:18-19).

**Saw him...felt compassion for him...ran...embraced him... kissed him ([kataphileo](#))** - The piling up of verbs presents a vivid picture of the love of the father for the prodigal. For an older man to run in the Near East would have been unusual and striking for it was considered undignified, but it serves to emphasize the father's heart for his lost son. In the grander scheme, the father's running emphasizes how God the Father passionately and persistently pursues those who are His children (though they may not realize they are His children during the time He is pursuing them)! **Kissed him** - Like David did his son Absalom "So when Joab came to the king and told him, he called for Absalom. Thus he came to the king and prostrated himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom." (2 Sa 14:33) **Embraced him** - **Embraced** is three words in Greek - [epi](#) (upon) + [trachelos](#) (neck) I like the picture presented by the old KJV he "fell on his neck." This is "an idiom for showing special affection for someone by throwing one's arms around them. The picture is of the father hanging on the son's neck in welcome." ([NET Note](#)). Ponder the picture of his impoverished filthy, smelly son, dressed in dirty rags. Such was the father's love, that despite his filthy state the father welcomed him with open arms! Who does this sound like? Our Heavenly Father has embraced us and replaced our filthy rags (cf. Isa 64:6) with the robes of Christ righteousness. Amazing grace!

**Cole** reminds us that we need to think of how the father could have acted - "It's about time! Here comes that no good son of mine! I'm going to let him crawl up to me on his hands and knees and beg for mercy. Then I'll tell him to go clean up and make himself presentable before he sets foot in my house. I'm going to put him on restriction and lay down the rules! He's going to have to toe the line from now on!" (**Ed**: This is what the Pharisees who were listening expected Jesus to say!)

**Ran** - Oriental clothing usually consisted of a long robe so that in order to run his father would have to pull up (gird up) his skirt to run, which would expose his legs which was considered shameful.

**Wiersbe** has an interesting thought on why the father **ran** - In the East, old men do not run; yet the father ran to meet his son. Why?

One obvious reason was his love for him and his desire to show that love. But there is something else involved. This wayward son had brought disgrace to his family and village and, according to Deuteronomy 21:18-21, he should have been stoned to death. *If the neighbors had started to stone him, they would have hit the father who was embracing him!* What a picture of what Jesus did for us on the cross! (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

**MacArthur** - To the utter amazement of the Lord's hearers, the details of the story convey that the father took the son's shame upon himself and then immediately reconciled him to the full honor of sonship. Incredibly, this shameful humbling is seen in his eagerness to reach him, because he **ran** to meet his son. Middle Eastern noblemen do not run....He (the father) became at that timethe **object of shame—taking shame on himself to prevent shame on his son** (See [Luke Commentary](#))(Bolding added)

**NET Note** - The major figure of the parable, the forgiving father, represents God the Father and his compassionate response. God is ready with open arms to welcome the sinner who comes back to him.

**Mattoon** - Kissing was an act of forgiveness or acquittal. It was a pledge of reconciliation and peace. What a wonderful reunion. Jesus will embrace you too, if you will put your faith in Him. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**MacArthur** on repeatedly **kissed him** - That gesture of acceptance, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation would have further shocked the scribes and Pharisees. Here in this father the Lord Jesus Christ presents Himself, the one who left the glory of heaven, came to earth and bore the shame and humility to embrace repentant sinners, who come to Him in faith, and give them complete forgiveness and reconciliation. (See [Luke 11-17 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Adrian Rogers** imagines and applies this incredible scene - The father has never stopped loving him. I picture the father on the porch of the old, family, home place. He is sitting there, thinking of his son. He has been to the mailbox many times, but there is no mail. He had asked strangers, "Have you seen my son?" There is no word. But as he is looking down the old road that runs past the house, with his keen eye he sees a figure, a man walking. He is dressed in rags. He is thin and emaciated. Perhaps, he is riddled with disease. The father's eye recognizes his son. There is something about the gait of that young man, perhaps the way he swings his arms or tosses his head. "That's my boy." And over the banister he goes. I see the old man as he gathers up those robes and runs down that road to meet his son. In the Bible we say that God is never in a hurry and never late. God moves with deliberate majesty. Here's a time, however, that pictures God running. It's the only place I know in the Bible where God is shone to be running. He is literally running to meet this one. He is running to receive him, to gather him into His arms as a son. **It is the nature of God the Father to receive. No matter what you have done, how bad you have been, how far away you have gone, how you have disgraced and dishonored your Father, He will receive you back.** Jesus said, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37KJV) And again the Bible says, "Whosoever will may come."

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**Felt compassion** (4697)([splanchnizomai](#) from [splanchnon](#) = bowel, viscera) means to experience a deep visceral feeling for someone, to feel compassion for, to feel [sympathy](#), to take [pity](#) on someone. [Compassion](#) is the sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it. This verb expresses an outward flow of one's life in contrast to our natural tendency toward self centeredness.

**Gilbrant** adds this background note on [splanchnizomai](#) - Often appearing as *splanchnēō* in classical literature (in the active form *splanchnizō*), this term depicts the act of eating the internal organs (*splanchna*) of a sacrifice (cf. *Liddell-Scott*). The middle form *splanchnizomai* means "to feel compassion, pity, mercy." The *splanchna* (plural of *splanchnon*) are the internal organs of an animal or person, such as the heart, liver, or lungs. The "inner parts" were regarded by the ancient Greeks as the site of emotions, thus the verb form emerged. The "inner parts" were especially seen as the source of the emotions of anger and anxiety but also of pity and mercy (ibid.).

This verb is used only in the synoptic Gospels. Mt 9:36 describes Jesus "gut reaction" - "Seeing the people, **He felt compassion** for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd." Mark 1:41 uses this verb of Jesus - "**Moved with compassion**, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him (see Mk 1:40), and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."

Luke uses [splanchnizomai](#) two other times

Luke 7:13-note When the Lord saw her, **He felt compassion** for her, and said to her, "Do not weep."

Luke 10:33-note "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, **he felt compassion**,

**Fall upon** (1968)([epiipto](#) from **epi** = upon + **pipto** = fall) means literally to fall upon (someone) or to press against (Mk

3:10). **Epiipto** described falling upon in order to embrace, as when the father embraced his repentant prodigal son (Lk 15:20) or as when the Ephesian elders "**embraced** Paul" knowing this was the last time they would see him (Acts 20:37, cp Acts 20:38, cp Lxx - Ge 45:14 = Joseph "**fell** on his brother Benjamin's neck" and then in Ge 46:29 Joseph "**fell** on [Jacob's] neck" and Ge 50:1 he "**fell** on his father's face.").

**Epiipto** - 13v - Mk. 3:10; Lk. 1:12; Lk. 15:20; Jn. 13:25; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:10; Acts 10:44; Acts 11:15; Acts 13:11; Acts 19:17; Acts 20:10; Acts 20:37; Rom. 15:3

**Neck** (5137)(**trachelos**) literally means the neck (or throat Mt 18.6). Trachelos is used in several idioms - (1) Literally to fall on the neck, i.e. embrace, hug (Lk 15.20). (2) To lay one's neck under the executioner's sword, i.e. risk one's life (Ro 16.4). (3) Literally put a yoke on the neck which pictures imposing burdensome rules, load down with obligations (Acts 15.10). Three times Jesus uses the picture of a heavy millstone literally hung around someone's neck if he causes a little one to fall. The idiom **fell on one's neck** means to embrace and was used in Lk 15:20, Acts 20:37 (Paul and Ephesian elders), Ge 33:4 (Esau and Jacob), Ge 45:14 (Joseph falling on Benjamin's neck) In Joshua 10:24 the phrase "put your feet on the **necks** of these kings" demonstrates conquest of the enemy. Dt. 31:27 " I know your rebellion and your stubbornness (idiom - literally "stiffness of neck") (cf Jer 7:26, 17:23, 19:15) A neck under the yoke was an idiom describing one country conquered by another (Jer 27:11, 12, see Jer 28:10-14, Jer 30:8).

**Trachelos** - 7x in 7v - Mk. 3:10; Lk. 1:12; Lk. 15:20; Jn. 13:25; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:10; Acts 10:44; Acts 11:15; Acts 13:11; Acts 19:17; Acts 20:10; Acts 20:37; Rom. 15:3

Matthew 18:6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his **neck**, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

**John MacArthur** explains that Jesus "is not referring to physical but to spiritual children. The phrase **these little ones who believe in Me** makes clear that He has in mind the children He had just spoken of in the phrase "one such child" (Mt 18:5), which refers to the children mentioned in Mt 18:3-4. Jesus is speaking of moral and spiritual stumbling, that is, of sinning. The verb **skandalizo (to stumble)** literally means "to cause to fall," and the Lord is therefore speaking of enticing, trapping, or influencing a believer in any way that leads him into sin or in any way makes it easier for him to sin. A person who is responsible for causing a Christian to sin commits an offense against Christ Himself as well as against the Christian. In the most vivid and sobering language indicating the seriousness of such an act against one of God's children, Jesus declared that a person who does such a thing would be better off dying a terrible death. It would be **better for him**, in fact, **that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.** **Heavy millstone** translates mulos onikos, which refers to the large upper millstone that was turned in a grinding process by a donkey and often weighed hundreds of pounds. The Romans sometimes practiced this form of execution by tying a heavy stone around a criminal's neck and dropping him overboard in deep water. Such a pagan form of execution was unimaginably horrible to Jews, perhaps in some respects more fearful even than crucifixion. Yet Jesus said that suffering such a terrifying death would be better than causing even one of His people to sin." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 16-23)

Mark 9:42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his **neck**, he had been cast into the sea.

Luke 15:20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and **embraced** (fell on his neck) him and kissed him.

Luke 17:2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his **neck** and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.

Acts 15:10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the **neck** of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

**MacArthur** - The description of the law as a heavy, chafing yoke was an apt one. Describing the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said, "They tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matt. 23:4; cf. Luke 11:46). It was foolish of the legalists to expect Gentiles to shoulder a burden they themselves found too heavy to bear and rejoiced to be freed from. It was equally fallacious to impose on the Gentiles what had not worked for the Jews. Not one of Peter's Jewish listeners had been saved by the law, purified from their sins by the law, or received the Holy Spirit by keeping the law (cf. Gal. 3:2-3). Since keeping the law could not do any of those vital things for them, why require it of the Gentiles? (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts 13-28)

Acts 20:37 And they began to weep aloud and **embraced** (fell on his neck) Paul, and repeatedly kissed him,

Romans 16:4 who for my life risked their own **necks**, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;

**Comment:**The phrase "risked their own necks" is literally two Greek words, hupotithemi meaning to place under (as placing one's neck under the executioner's sword) plus trachelos (neck). Paul is referring to "Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Ro 16:3) who placed their own lives in jeopardy to protect Paul.

**Trachelos** - 83x in 81v in the Septuagint - Trachēlos is often used figuratively: of burdens (Ge 27:40), of falling on one's neck in greeting (Ge 33:4, Ge 45:14; Ge 46:29;), of stubbornness (Dt 10:16; Isa 48:4), of a point of mortal danger (Isaiah 30:28), of personal struggle (Nehemiah 3:5), of victory (Joshua 10:24), and of the place where one wears truth and/or wisdom (Pr 3:3, 3:22, 6:21). Ge. 27:16 = Rebekah "put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his (Jacob's) neck" to deceive Isaac; Ge. 27:40; Ge. 33:4; Ge. 41:42; Ge. 45:14; Ge. 46:29; Deut. 10:16 = "stiffen your **neck** no longer."; Dt. 28:48 = "He will put an iron yoke on your neck"; Dt. 31:27 " I know your rebellion and your stubbornness (idiom - literally "stiffness of neck"); Deut. 33:29; Jos. 10:24; Jdg. 5:30; Jdg. 8:21; Jdg. 8:26; 2 Chr. 30:8; 2 Chr. 36:13; Neh. 3:5; Neh. 9:16; Neh. 9:17; Neh. 9:29; Est. 5:2; Job 39:19; Job 41:22; Pr 1:9; Pr 3:3; Pr 3:22; Pr 6:21; Song 1:10; Song 4:4; Song 4:9; Song 7:4; Isa. 3:16; Isa. 9:4; Isa. 30:28; Isa. 48:4; Isa. 52:2; Isa. 58:5; Jer. 7:26; Jer. 17:23; Jer. 19:15; Jer. 27:2; Jer. 27:8; Jer. 27:11; Jer. 27:12; Jer. 28:10; Jer. 28:11; Jer. 28:12; Jer. 28:14; Jer. 30:8; Lam. 1:14; Lam. 5:5; Ezek. 16:11; Ezek. 21:29; Dan. 1:10; Dan. 5:7; Dan. 5:16; Dan. 5:29; Hos. 10:11; Mic. 2:3; Hab. 3:13;

Genesis 27:16 And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his **neck**. (Rebekah's deception of Isaac)

**Kissed** (2705) (**kataphileo** from **kata** = intensifies the verb + **phileo** = to love, kiss, cp **philos** = loved, dear, friend) means to kiss fervently, eagerly . **Liddell Scott** says "to kiss tenderly, to caress, Xen." The word means he smothered him with kisses. This clearly was not a manifestation of "perfunctory politeness" (L. Morris) Robertson adds "Note perfective use of kata kissed him much, kissed him again and again."

Kataphileo - 6v - Matt. 26:49; Mk. 14:45; Lk. 7:38; Lk. 7:45; Lk. 15:20; Acts 20:37

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**Ray Pritchard** - Fifth, there was **resolution**. "So he got up and went to his father." After awakening comes repentance, then honesty, then humility. It all leads to the resolution to go home. That's where you take the step. It's certainly easy to criticize the prodigal son. But I will tell you at least one good thing about this young man. When the time came to move, he moved. He didn't let the grass grow under his feet. So many people say, "Tomorrow I will arise and go to my father. Next week I will arise and go to my father. Next year, next day, next month. Give me some time to think about it." Not this man. This man said, "I am going to go." And he got up and went right then. How hard is it to come from the far country back to God? It is not hard. But the hardest step is the first step. A journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step. As you read these words, you may be living in the far country away from God. You need to do what this young man did—take a first step back home. The hardest step is the first step. And that's the one that brings you half way home.

"Yet a great way off He saw me,  
Ban to kiss me as I came;  
As I was, my Father loved me,  
Loved me in my sin and shame."

"To His blessed inner chamber,  
Ground no other foot can tread,  
He has brought the lost and found one,  
Him who liveth, and was dead."

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## A Father Who Runs

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. —Luke 19:10

Every day a father craned his neck to look toward the distant road, waiting for his son's return. And every night he went to bed disappointed. But one day, a speck appeared. A lonesome silhouette stood against the crimson sky. Could that be my son? the father wondered. Then he caught sight of the familiar saunter. Yes, that has to be my son!

And so while the son was “still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). It is remarkable that the family patriarch did something that was considered undignified in Middle Eastern culture—he ran to meet his son. The father was full of unbridled joy at his son’s return.

The son didn’t deserve such a reception. When he had asked his father for his share of the inheritance and left home, it was as if he had wished his father dead. But despite all that the son had done to his father, he was still his son (v.24).

This parable reminds me that I’m accepted by God because of His grace, not because of my merits. It assures me that I’ll never sink so deep that God’s grace can’t reach me. Our heavenly Father is waiting to run to us with open arms.

Father, I’m so grateful for all Your Son did for me at the cross. I’m thankful for grace. I offer You a heart that desires to be like Jesus—merciful and gracious. By Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We deserve punishment and get forgiveness;  
we deserve God’s wrath and get God’s love.  
—Philip Yancey

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### The Beauty Of Forgiveness

When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran . . . and kissed him. —Luke 15:20

What started out as a collection has grown into a ministry opportunity for Larry and Mary Gerbens. For the past 10 years they’ve been collecting artistic works based on the story of the prodigal son from Luke 15. Their collection includes a painting by Rembrandt and a number of items by other artists depicting this story.

The Gerbens wanted to share their collection, so they put it on display at a local college. Larry said, “The artists have ministered to us, and we hope their work will minister to others.”

As I wandered through the displays, I was touched by the deep need of the prodigal, his honest repentance, and the beautiful forgiveness of the father portrayed in the variety of art pieces—paintings, etchings, engravings, glasswork, sketches, and silk screens.

We have all been like the son in this story, who had other plans for his life than what his father had for him. We have all run away from our heavenly Father (Rom. 3:10-12). But He welcomes us when we come to Him.

You too will see the beauty of forgiveness in your heavenly Father’s face when you cry out to Him, “Father, I have sinned . . .” (Luke 15:18). If you’re away from Him, head home now and experience His love. By Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, I now admit my guilt,  
And I accept Your grace;  
Transform my life and help me grow  
Until I see Your face.  
—Hess

When God forgives, He removes the sin and restores the soul.

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### Open Arms

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. —Luke 15:20

At the funeral of former US First Lady Betty Ford, her son Steven said, “She was the one with the love and the comfort, and she was the first one there to put her arms around you. Nineteen years ago when I went through my alcoholism, my mother . . . gave me one of the greatest gifts, and that was how to surrender to God, and to accept the grace of God in my life. And truly in her arms I felt like the prodigal son coming home, and I felt God’s love through her. And that was a good gift.”

Jesus’ parable about a young man who asked for and squandered his inheritance and then in humiliation returned home leaves us amazed at his father’s response: “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” (Luke 15:20). Instead of a lecture or punishment, the father expressed love and forgiveness by giving him a

party. Why? Because "this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (v.24).

Steven Ford concluded his tribute with the words, "Thank you, Mom, for loving us, loving your husband, loving us kids, loving the nation, with the heart of God."

May God enable us to open our arms to others, just as His are open wide to all who turn to Him. By David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Lord, help me be kind and forgiving—  
Your loving forgiveness You've shown  
To me for the sins I've committed;  
Lord, grant me a love like Your own.  
—Anon.

Forgiven sinners know love and show love.

**Luke 15:21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'**

KJV Luke 15:21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

- **Father** Lk 15:18,19; Jer 3:13; Ezek 16:63; Ro 2:4
- **I have sinned against heaven and in your sight** Ps 51:4; 143:2; 1 Co 8:12
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-21 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

## THE PRODIGAL SON'S CONFESSION

**And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned (hamartano) against heaven and in your sight** - He did not say "If I offended you," but addressed his sin head on "I have sinned." **Against heaven** means against God (See [preceding comments](#)) **In your sight** means against you (against the father).

**Mattoon** explains that "This is the meaning of the word **"confession."** It is from the Greek word **homologeō** which means "to say the same thing as another; to agree with." When we confess our sin to God or our offenses toward others, we are agreeing with them about what we did wrong. When we confess to the Lord, we find His forgiveness. If we are unwilling to confess our faults, then we will continue to struggle.

John writes "If we **confess** ([homologeō](#) in the [present tense](#) = as our lifestyle!) our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9+)

In Proverbs we read "He who conceals his transgressions (refusing to acknowledge them in confession, perhaps rationalizing them away.) will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes (~repents of) them will find compassion. (Pr 28:13+)

Notice that when we compare to the speech he had rehearsed earlier, he omitted "make me as one of your hired men." Why? because he recognized the father's welcome was one of restoration and reconciliation, and he would not have to attempt to work in an attempt (futile) to merit such a welcome. The father had granted it independent of the son's merits (really demerits in this case).

As **John MacArthur** says "The son's reception is a true illustration of believers, who come in by repentance and faith directed toward God, pleading for His grace and forgiveness apart from works—and receiving full sonship." (Ibid)

**ILLUSTRATION** - Ernest Hemingway wrote a story about a father and his teenage son. In the story, the relationship had become somewhat strained, and the teenage son ran away from home. His father began a journey in search of that rebellious son. Finally, in Madrid, Spain, in a last desperate attempt to find the boy, the father put an ad in the local newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, Meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father." The next day, in front of the newspaper office, eight hundred Pacos showed up. They were all seeking forgiveness. They were all seeking the love of their father. The

prodigal wanted forgiveness, like all these boys named Paco.

**I am no longer worthy ([axios](#)) to be called your son** - This statement reflects his assessment of himself in light of his shameful behavior. But as the passage soon shows, the father treated him with **grace** (in this case truly unmerited favor) and not according to what he deserved.

Notice that either the son had a change of heart when he saw the father's compassionate reaction or the father interrupted his rehearsed speech so that he did not have time to say **Make me as one of your hired men.** (Lk 15:19)

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**I have sinned** ([264](#)) ([hamartano](#)) literally means to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize). Hamartano means to act contrary to the will and law of God. His dishonoring of his father was a clear violation of the will and law of God (cf Ex 20:12).

**Worthy** ([514](#)) ([áxios](#) from [ágō](#) = to weigh) strictly speaking means bringing up the other beam of the scales. Having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much. Thus the idea was that which was "equal" or "equivalent." **Axios** could refer to someone's "worth" or "value." A tunic "worth" ("equal to") six drachmas is an example in the Greek literature from Moulton-Milligan.

**Gilbrant** adds that "**Axios** presents an interesting picture in the New Testament. In the context of the Kingdom, being "**worthy**" in a religious sense becomes defined in terms of a response to Jesus. It has nothing to do with deeds or acts that make one worthy. One is worthy because Jesus has made "worth" before God possible (e.g., Mt 10:37 = "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not **worthy** of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not **worthy** of Me."). Any "*doing*" follows rather than precedes "**worth**"; thus repentance must be demonstrated by fruit corresponding to **axios**, "bear fruit in keeping with (worthy of) repentance," (Mt 3:8; Lk 3:8-note). The Cross must be taken up; in other words a total response to Jesus' message must be demonstrated (cf. the uses of the related adverb [axiōs](#) which Paul employed to urge a life-style "worthy" of God; e.g., Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27; Col 1:10; 1 Th 2:12)." (Ibid)

**All of Luke's uses of axios** - Lk. 3:8; Lk. 7:4; Lk. 10:7; Lk. 12:48; Lk. 15:19; Lk. 15:21; Lk. 23:15; Lk. 23:41; Acts 13:25; Acts 13:46; Acts 23:29; Acts 25:11; Acts 25:25; Acts 26:20; Acts 26:31

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## I'm Sorry

Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. —Luke 15:21

A meaningful apology can be the first step toward forgiveness. Colleen O'Connor writes in The Denver Post: "The successful apology dissolves anger and humiliation. It shows respect, builds trust, and helps prevent further misunderstanding. A sincere apology makes it much easier to forgive."

And author Barbara Engel says that a true apology depends on the three Rs: regret, responsibility, and remedy.

In Jesus' story of the prodigal son, the headstrong young man who returned home after squandering his inheritance approached his father with humility and remorse: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21). He expressed regret for the pain he had caused, took responsibility for what he had done, and was prepared to work as a hired servant (v.19).

As Christians, we have a responsibility to repent and sincerely say "I'm sorry" whenever we wrong another person. In a spirit of humility and love, we can help those who need to forgive us by offering a genuine apology.

A sincere apology doesn't compel others to forgive, but it's the right thing to do. We must take the first step on the pathway toward the freedom of forgiveness. By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Have you hurt a friend or brother?  
Go at once and make things right;  
From your heart say, "I am sorry."  
How these words bring God delight!  
—D. De Haan

A heartfelt apology can't change the past, but it can brighten the future.

**Luke 15:22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet';**

KJV Luke 15:22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

- **Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him** Ps 45:13; 132:9,16; Isa 61:10; Ezek 16:9-13; Zech 3:3-5; Mt 22:11,12; Ro 3:22; 13:14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:22-24; Rev 3:4,5,18; 6:11; 7:9,13,14; Rev 19:8
- **put a ring on his hand** Ge 41:42; Esther 3:10; 8:2; Ro 8:15; Gal 4:5,6; Eph 1:13,14; Rev 2:17
- **and sandals on his feet** Dt 33:25; Ps 18:33; Song 7:1; Ezek 16:10; Eph 6:15
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-24 The Loving Father](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:22-24 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

Return of the Prodigal Son  
Murillo

## **PENITENT PRODIGAL CLOTHED WITH THE BEST ROBE**

**But** - Don't miss the strategic [term of contrast](#). The son has just stated he was unworthy to even be called his son. **BUT** (here is the contrast) the father's actions speak "loud words" to the contrary! The father is saying in essence "No, I won't receive you back as a servant. I'll receive you as my son." Those listening to the parable would have been utterly shocked by this turn of events. A son who had dishonored his father and brought shame to the family is now actually being shown favor by being honored as he was in this verse!

**Mattoon** - The father's forgiveness was immediate. That is what grace is all about, beloved. God's forgiveness is immediate and complete when we put our faith in Him. This father not only demonstrates grace to his son, but bestows upon him wonderful gifts that his son did not deserve. **Mercy** is when we don't get what we do deserve... judgment. **Grace** is when we receive what we do not deserve, God's gift of eternal life. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Wiersbe** - In the far country, the prodigal learned the meaning of **misery**; but back home, he discovered the meaning of **mercy**. Had the boy been dealt with according to the Law, there would have been a funeral, not a feast. What a beautiful illustration of Psalm 103:10-14! (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

**Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him**- What a glorious picture of grace, mercy and forgiveness by God our Father when we repent and believe in Jesus. This is a beautiful picture of the righteousness of Christ [imputed](#) to a sinner's account. When a [penitent](#) sinner recognizes he can't achieve his own righteousness by works and repents and calls on the mercy of God, the Lord covers him with Christ's own perfect righteousness by grace through his faith. And just as the prodigal was restored to full privileges in the family, the penitent believing sinner is regenerated and brought into a new relationship with God the Father even to the point of becoming "children of God, and if (since) children, heirs also, heirs of God and **fellow heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him." (Ro 8:16-17-note)

Paul alluded to the **righteousness** with which the Father clothes us in His Son...

Ro 3:21-22-note But now apart from the Law (PICTURED BY THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS SCRIBES AND PHARISEES) **the righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction;

2 Corinthians 5:21-note He (THE FATHER) made Him Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him**

Philippians 3:8; 9-note More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law (AS PAUL DID WHEN HE WAS A ZEALOUS PHARISEE) but that which is through faith in Christ, **the righteousness** which comes from God on the basis of faith,

Isaiah's words foreshadow this **imputed robe of righteousness** with which every believer is now forever clothed:

I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a **robe of righteousness**, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

What a striking contrast with the **righteousness** in Isaiah's later prophecy describing us as if we were clothed with a **"filthy garment"**

For all of us (NOTE ISAIAH INCLUDES HIMSELF IN THIS CONFESSION OF UNWORTHINESS TO BE IN THE FATHER'S PRESENCE) have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment (CLOTHES STAINED BY MENSTRUAL BLOOD AND THUS RENDERED UNCLEAN TO BE IN GOD'S PRESENCE); And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

**The best robe** - This would undoubtedly be the robe that belonged to the father himself, and was worn only on important occasions such as a grand celebration. Instead, the father gives the son the very robe he would have worn at such a celebration!

**NET Note on quickly...** - With the instructions Hurry! Bring the best robe, there is a total acceptance of the younger son back into the home.

**Put a ring** - Some interpret this as likely the family [signet ring](#), which would demonstrate clearly to all that the father had not only received his son, but had even restored him to a position of authority within the family ([Wikipedia says signet rings](#) were "used to attest the authority of its bearer").

**MacArthur** says the **ring** was the "father's signet ring, which bore the family crest and was used to stamp the wax seal on documents to authenticate them. It signified the father's bestowing of privileges, rights, and authority on his son."

**Sandals ([hupodema](#)) on his feet** - The fact that he was barefoot attested to his destitute state in the far country. Poor people in the Near East often could not even afford sandals. As **MacArthur** says "Just as the son returned to his father with nothing, so repentant, empty-handed sinners approach their heavenly Father, who justifies not the self-righteous, but the ungodly (Ro 4:5)."

**Mattoon** - Shoes signified that a man was a freeman and a master of the house, for slaves went barefoot and guests removed their shoes upon arrival. These shoes are another symbol of the son's position in the home. He is not a slave, but a beloved son. The son did not deserve any of these gifts, but the grace of the father bestowed them upon him. We do not deserve God's wondrous gift of salvation, but because of His love and grace, we enjoy them. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Gotquestions** - All these things represent what we receive in Christ upon salvation: the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), the privilege of partaking of the Spirit of adoption (Ephesians 1:5), and feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, prepared to walk in the ways of holiness (Ephesians 6:15)

Notice the parallels of the father's reception of his son and Pharaoh's reception of Joseph...

Then Pharaoh took off his signet **ring** from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and **clothed** him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. (Ge 41:42)

**Leon Morris** - The best robe was a sign of position and the ring also, especially if, as many hold, a signet ring is meant (cf. Gen. 41:42; Esth. 3:10; 8:2); such a ring conveyed authority. In his destitution the son went barefoot. But this was fitting only for a slave and the shoes marked him out as a freeman. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** comments that "The father's giving the robe and ring to his younger son would have shocked Christ's hearers. They knew that the robe and the ring by rights should have gone to the older brother. He would have first worn the father's formal robe at his own wedding—the single greatest event that could happen in a family. He should have received the ring as a symbol of his right as the firstborn to act on behalf of his father. But now, incredibly, his father had given them to his younger brother. Such lavish love and grace bestowed on a penitent, trusting sinner is incomprehensible to the legalistic mind. Legalism hates grace." (See [Luke Commentary](#))

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**Sandals** ([5266](#))(**hupodema** from **hupodeo** = to bind under) means a shoe bound under (the foot). To unbind someone's sandals is an expression which implies deep humility since this was usually done only by menial servants. And so John said "I am not fit to remove His (referring to Jesus) sandals." (Mt 3:11, cf Mk 1:7, 3:16, Jn 1:27, Acts 13:25). **Gilbrant** adds "This is the primary word for shoes. It is related to the verb hupodeomai (5102), "to bind under." In the nonbiblical writings this word is used for sandals, shoes, and half-boots (see *Liddell-Scott*). These were generally leather soles fastened to the foot by means of straps."

**Hupodema** - 10x in 10v - Matt. 3:11; Matt. 10:10; Mk. 1:7; Lk. 3:16; Lk. 10:4; Lk. 15:22; Lk. 22:35; Jn. 1:27; Acts 7:33; Acts 13:25

**Hupodema** - 26x in 26v in the Septuagint - Ge. 14:23; Ex 3:5 = "Do not come near here; remove your **sandals** from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."; Exod. 12:11 = "Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded [which is what the father had to do to run to meet the prodigal], your **sandals** on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD'S Passover."; Dt. 25:9; Dt. 25:10; Deut. 29:5; Deut. 33:25; Jos. 5:15; Jos. 9:5; Jos. 9:13; Ruth 4:7-8; 1 Sam. 12:3; 1 Ki. 2:5; Ps. 60:8; Ps. 108:9; Song 7:1; Isa. 5:27; Isa. 11:15; Ezek. 24:17; Ezek. 24:23; Dan. 3:21; Amos 2:6; Amos 8:6;

There was a unique custom in Israel in the OT related to the removal of one's sandal

Ruth 4:7-8-see notes - Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. 8So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." And he removed his sandal.

Deuteronomy 25:9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his **sandal** off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' 10 "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose **sandal** is removed.'

**MacArthur** on Dt 25:5-10 - Levirate marriages (from Latin, levir, "husband's brother" or "brother in law") provided that the brother of a dead man who died childless was to marry the widow in order to provide an heir. These were not compulsory marriages in Israel, but were applied as strong options to brothers who shared the same estate. Obviously, this required that the brother be unmarried and desired to keep the property in the family by passing it on to a son. Cf. Lv 18:16; 20:21 where adultery with a living brother's wife is forbidden. Though not compulsory, this practice reflected fraternal affection, and if a single brother refused to conform to this practice, he was confronted with contempt and humiliation by the elders (**ED: SANDAL REMOVED AND SPIT IN FACE - RECALL THE ANCIENT CULTURE WAS ONE OF SHAME/HONOR**). The perpetuation of his name as a member of the covenant people witnessed to the dignity of the individual. Since Nu 27:4-8 gave daughters the right of inheritance when there were no sons in a family, it is reasonable to read "no child" rather than "no son" in v. 5. Cf. Tamar, Ge 38:8-10, and the Boaz-Ruth marriage, Ru 4:1-17. (MacArthur Study Bible)

**NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible** - The Family of the Unsandaled. Sandals of various types were worn in Canaan, Syria and Mesopotamia from the most ancient times. They could be used in a symbolic way at Nuzi, perhaps as token payments. At Nuzi the seller removed his foot from a piece of land he was selling and placed the buyer's foot in its place. Then shoes were transferred. A pair of shoes and garments are presented as a fictitious payment to "accommodate" some unusual transactions. The brother-in-law (here) who refused to honor his dead brother by preserving his seed and inheritance brought shame on himself and his house. Honor, shame and covenant relations were central concerns in the ancient Near East.

**NET Note** - The removal of the sandal was likely symbolic of the relinquishment by the man of any claim to his dead brother's estate since the sandal was associated with the soil or land (cf. Ruth 4:7-8). Spitting in the face was a sign of utmost disgust or disdain, an emotion the rejected widow would feel toward her uncooperative brother-in-law (cf. Num 12:14; Lev 15:8).

**Luke 15:23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;**

KJV Luke 15:23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

- **Bring the fattened calf** Ge 18:7; Ps 63:5; Pr 9:2; Isa 25:6; 65:13,14; Mt 22:2-14
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-24 The Loving Father](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:22-24 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

## A CELEBRATION INSTEAD OF A FUNERAL

**Gotquestions** - Had the boy been dealt with according to the Law, there would have been a funeral, not a celebration. "The Lord does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." (Ps 103:10-13). Instead of condemnation, there is rejoicing for a son who had been dead but now is alive, who once was lost but now is found (Romans 8:1; John 5:24). Note the parallel between "dead" and "alive" and "lost" and "found"—terms that also apply to one's state before and after conversion to Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5). This is a picture of what occurs in heaven over one repentant sinner (Luke 15: 7, 10).

**Bring the fattened (siteutos) calf, kill it and let us eat and celebrate (euphraino)** - "The calf of the stall." The "prize calf" that was grain fattened and was reserved for special occasions, usually religious celebrations. In a sense, this was a "religious" celebration of a dead son who was now alive!

Abraham called for such a celebration when "the LORD (Jehovah) appeared to him" (Ge 18:1), mostly likely a Christophany (see [Angel of the LORD](#). Note that His prophecy in Ge 18:10 identifies this "Man" as a pre-incarnate appearance of Jehovah)...

Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. (Ge 18:7)

**Craig Keener** on **fattened calf** - fattened calf. Would feed the entire village. Calves would be fattened with a special occasion in mind, such as a wedding, a son's coming of age, or some other celebration beyond the purview of the parable. A fattened calf offered more meat than a young goat (Lk 15:29). (See [NKJV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible](#))

**Leon Morris** on **the fattened calf** - The fatted calf was clearly an animal carefully looked after for some special occasion. Its use now shows that the father felt that there could scarcely be a more special occasion than this. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**Vincent** - The article (**Ed**: Definite article "the" before calf - "the specific calf") denoting one set apart for a festive occasion.

**MacArthur** -The **fattened**, grain-fed **calf** was reserved for events of utmost significance, such as the wedding of the firstborn son (cf. Mt. 22:2-4), or the visit of an important person (cf. 1 Sa 28:24). By ordering his servants to prepare it so that the guests could **eat and celebrate**, the father revealed how important his son had become. Since a fattened calf could feed up to two hundred people, the entire village would have been invited. (See [The MacArthur Commentary](#))

**Robertson** - **Kill** (thusate). Not as a sacrifice (**Ed**: Thuo often used to kill something as a sacrificial offering), but for the feast.

**Mattoon** - The father and servants rejoice in the arrival of this young man. They rejoice over this *reunion*, his *repentance*, and his *restoration* with the family. His escape from the pig pen is something worth celebrating. Your escape is worth celebrating, too. We are reminded here that there is hope for the repentant sinner, no matter how far away he has drifted from God. Our Lord is a master at helping us get back on our spiritual feet and helping us to get a new start. Jonah drifted from God's plan. When he got right with God, Jonah 3:1 states that the word of the Lord came unto Jonah a second time. Thank God for second, third, and fourth chances. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

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**Fattened (4618)**(**siteutos** from **siteuo** = to feed or fatten with grain from **sitos** = grain - wheat or corn) is an adjective describing a calf that was raised with special care specifically for consumption at feasts. Only 3 uses in the NT - Lk 15:23, 27, 30.

**Siteutos** - 4x in 4v in the Septuagint - Jdg. 6:25; Jdg. 6:28; 1 Ki. 4:23 (used literally of "fattened fowl"); Jer. 46:21 has a figurative use describing the paid mercenaries of Egypt as "like fattened calves" because they are on the verge of being slaughtered.

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**Vincent** - The Prodigal Son is a favorite subject in Christian art. The return of the penitent is the point most frequently chosen, but the dissipation in the far country and the degradation among the swine are also treated. The dissipation is the subject of an interesting picture by the younger Teniers in the gallery of the Louvre.

The prodigal is feasting at a table with two courtesans, in front of an inn, on the open shutter of which a tavernscore is chalked. An old woman leaning on a stick begs alms, possibly foreshadowing the fate of the females at the table. The youth holds out his glass, which a servant fills with wine. In the right-hand corner appears a pigsty where a stable-boy is feeding the swine, but with his face

turned toward the table, as if in envy of the gay revellers there. All the costumes and other details of the picture are Dutch. Holbein also represents him feasting with his mistress, and gambling with a sharper who is sweeping the money off the table. The other points of the story are introduced into the background. Jan Steen paints him at table in a garden before an inn. A man plays the guitar, and two children are blowing bubbles—"an allegory of the transient pleasures of the spendthrift." Mrs. Jameson remarks that the riotous living is treated principally by the Dutch painters. The life among the swine is treated by Jordaens in the Dresden Gallery.

The youth, with only a cloth about his loins, approaches the trough where the swine are feeding, extends his hand, and seems to ask food of a surly swineherd, who points him to the trough. In the left-hand corner a young boor is playing on a pipe, a sorrowful contrast to the delicious music of the halls of pleasure. Salvator Rosa pictures him in a landscape, kneeling with clasped hands amid a herd of sheep, oxen, goats, and swine. Rubens, in a farm-stable, on his knees near a trough, where a woman is feeding some swine. He looks imploringly at the woman. One of the finest examples of the treatment of the return is by Murillo, in the splendid picture in the gallery of the Duke of Sutherland. It is thus described by Stirling ("Annals of the Artists of Spain"): "The repentant youth, locked in the embrace of his father, is, of course, the principal figure; his pale, emaciated countenance bespeaks the hardships of his husk-coveting time, and the embroidery on his tattered robe the splendor of his riotous living. A little white dog, leaping up to caress him, aids in telling the story. On one side of this group a man and a boy lead in the fatted calf; on the other appear three servants bearing a light-blue silk dress of Spanish fashion, and the gold ring; and one of them seems to be murmuring at the honors in preparation for the lost one."

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**Ray Pritchard** - Then we have the five signs of the father's welcome:

1. The kiss, the sign of forgiveness.
2. The robe, the sign of honor.
3. The ring, the sign of authority.
4. The sandals, the sign of freedom. Why? Because the slave went barefoot.
5. The feast, the sign of a joyful welcome.

### **How much does God love you?**

- He loves you enough to let you go.
- He loves you enough to let you hit bottom.
- He loves you enough to let you come back.
- He loves you so much that he will run to meet you.

That's how much God loves you.

The way back to the Father is always through the far country. Where is the far country? The far country is anywhere you are outside the will of God. That's all. The far country may be for you like it was for the prodigal son, deep in sexual sin, deep in wild living, but for most of us it is not going to be that. The far country is any place where your life seems empty and you look up and say, "Is that all there is?" And the Father says, "Of course not. Come home."

Are you hungry? Come home. Are you thirsty? Come home. Are you weary? Come home. Are you tired of the life you are living? Come home. Have you wandered away from God? Come home.

The first step is the hardest. It's also the step that brings you halfway back home. Many of us need to respond. Perhaps you are away from God. You didn't mean for that to happen. But it has happened in your life. So you need to come back. And I give the invitation to you. If you feel that you have drifted away from God, this is the day and this is the place for you to come home.

Maybe this morning you feel a tugging in your heart. And maybe you don't know who it is. And you don't know what it is. That's the Holy Spirit calling you to come.

When I preached this sermon at Calvary, we gave a public invitation—something we don't ordinarily do. Dozens of people came forward in both service. The front of the church was filled with people getting right with God. Whole families came forward to re-dedicate themselves to Jesus Christ. Seven or eight people trusted Christ. My brother and his wife were in the service. He hadn't been up to visit us in three years. When we got to the third verse of "Softly and Tenderly," they came forward and said, "We want to re-dedicate our lives to Jesus Christ."

I say to those who are reading exactly what I said to those who were in the service that day. It's time to come home. If you've been living in the far country, it's time to come home. If you want a new life, come home. If you're ready for a change, come home. Take

the first step and the Father will run to meet you. ([Trapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

**Luke 15:24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.**

KJV Luke 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

- **for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again** Lk 15:32; Mark 8:22; John 5:21,24,25; 11:25; Ro 6:11,13; 8:2; 2 Co 5:14,15; Eph 2:1,5; 5:14; Col 2:13; 1 Ti 5:6; Jude 1:12; Rev 3:1
- **he was lost and has been found** Lk 15:4,8; 19:10; Ge 45:28; Jer 31:15-17; Ezek 34:4,16; Mt 18:11-13
- **they began to celebrate** Lk 15:7,9; 10:19; Isa 35:10; 66:11; Jer 31:12-14; Ro 12:15; 1 Co 12:26
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:17-24 The Loving Father](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:22-24 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

## WELCOME HOME: NOT DEAD BUT ALIVE

**For** - [term of explanation](#) - Explaining the reason for the celebration.

**Craig Keener** has an interesting note - Ancient narratives sometimes bracketed off a special section by framing it with repeated wording. The father's words of Lk 15:32 repeat the words here, setting off the account of the elder brother, which supplements the conclusion of celebration in the previous parables. (See [NKJV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible](#))

**This son of mine was dead and has come to life again** - Clearly he is using **dead** metaphorically. He was **dead** spiritually speaking, but now is alive. We see this same dynamic in Jesus' words in John's Gospel...

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)

**He was lost** ([apollumi](#)) **and has been found** ([heurisko](#)). **And they began to celebrate** ([euphraino](#)) - Like the lost sheep and the lost coin (Lk 15:6,9), clearly linking these three stories together. **Celebrate** is in the [present tense](#) = continuous celebration. The father's celebratory attitude depicts the way in which God the Father receives repentant sinners. This contrasts with the contempt the Pharisees and scribes displayed for sinners who came to Jesus (Lk 15:2).

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**Come to life again** (326)([anazo](#) from **ana** = again + **zao** = to live) means to recover life, live again, revive (here figuratively of the prodigal - in [Textus Receptus](#) [anazo](#) is used also in Ro 15:32). In Ro 7:9 **anazo** is used figuratively in Paul's description of the effect of the commandment coming, for when it came "[sin](#) (personified) **became alive** ([anazo](#))" and he died (he recognized that he was spiritually dead, bankrupt!) Paul's point is that when the Law came in, sin (which was already present but in one sense was "dormant" in that he was not aware of it) began to exert its pernicious, evil effects on his heart, just like it did in all of us. That's why it is so important to present the Gospel in such a way that the hearer realizes that [sin](#) is active in their life (no matter how righteous they think they are) and that they are spiritually dead and in need of new life found only in Christ by grace through faith (i.e., they need to come to life spiritually).

In Rev 20:5 (in [Textus Receptus](#) only) **anazo** refers to the resurrection of the dead, specifically the unbelievers who would not **come to life** after the 1000 year reign of Christ. In Ro 14:9 (in [Textus Receptus](#) only) Paul says "Christ died and **lived again** ([anazo](#))," i.e., He came to life again after being crucified, dying and being buried.

There are no uses of **anazo** in the Septuagint.

As alluded to above there are 3 uses of **anazo** in the [Textus Receptus](#) (source of the King James).

KJV Luke 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is **alive again**; and was lost, and is found.

KJV Romans 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and **revived**, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

KJV Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead **lived** not **again** until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

**Celebrate** (2165)(**euphraino** from **eu** = well, good + **phren** = mind, intellect, disposition) means in active sense to make someone glad, to cheer someone up, to make them joyful in mind, to cause them to be glad (2 Cor 2:2, Lxx = Ps 19:8, Pr 23:15). In the middle voice or passive voice (as here in Lk 15:23, 24, 29, 32) **euphraino** means to be glad, to be joyful, to celebrate or be jubilant, to feast in token of joy. Euphraino in active voice = gladden, cheer 2Cor 2:2. Passive be glad, enjoy oneself, rejoice, be merry Lk 12:19; 15:32; Ac 2:26; 7:41; Ro 15:10. [euphrasy, an herb] Friberg - (1) active make glad, cheer up someone (2Co 2.2); (2) passive, of social and festive enjoyment be merry, enjoy oneself ( Lk 16.19); of religious and spiritual jubilation rejoice, celebrate, be jubilant (Acts 2.26)

**Euphraino** - 14v- **celebrate(5), glad(1), joyously living(1), makes...glad(1), merry(1), rejoice(4), rejoicing(1)**. Lk. 12:19; Lk. 15:23; Lk. 15:24; Lk. 15:29; Lk. 15:32; Lk. 16:19; Acts 2:26; Acts 7:41; Rom. 15:10; 2 Co. 2:2; Gal. 4:27; Rev. 11:10; Rev. 12:12; Rev. 18:20

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**LOST AND FOUND** - Three Mexican fishermen who disappeared while on a short shark fishing trip were rescued in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, after spending 9 months on the open sea. The men said they survived by eating raw fish, ducks, and seagulls, drinking rainwater, and reading the Bible. They were picked up halfway between Hawaii and Australia after drifting 5000 miles from a fishing village north of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Antonio Aguayo, a local sport-fishing guide said the men took only enough fuel for a few days and ran into an unexpected storm. He thought they might have used up their fuel traveling in the wrong direction, thinking they were headed back to shore. Aguayo said the people of the tiny fishing village are celebrating the men's survival. He said, "God is so great that he helped them all the time. Everybody is excited. They don't know how it happened that they are alive." Aguayo added, "Nobody has ever been lost for so long and been alive to tell about it. Not even Christopher Columbus stayed on the ocean so long." (Fresh Illustrations - Jim Wilson)

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## Lost And Found

This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. —Luke 15:24

A Wall Street Journal article by Jennifer Saranow chronicled the extraordinary efforts of middle-aged American men who are trying to find the favorite car they once owned and loved, but lost. They are searching on-line car ads, phoning junkyards, and even hiring specialists who charge \$400 an hour to help them search for an automobile that once symbolized their youth. These men want the actual car they owned, not one just like it.

Some would call their efforts frivolous—a waste of time and money. But the value of a car, like many things, is in the eye of the beholder.

In Luke 15, people who were despised by their society came to hear Jesus. But some religious leaders complained, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them" (v.2). To affirm how valuable these "sinners" are to God, Jesus told three memorable stories about a lost sheep (vv.4-7), a lost coin (vv.8-10), and a lost son (vv.11-32). Each parable records the anguish of losing, the effort of searching, and the joy of finding something of great worth. In every story, we see a picture of God, the loving Father, who rejoices over every lost soul who is found.

Even if you feel far from God today, you are highly valued by Him. He's searching for you. By David C. McCasland [Our Daily Bread](#). [Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

I once was lost, but now I'm found;  
Praise God! Christ died for me;  
He valued me, redeemed my soul;  
From sin, He set me free. —Sper

Those who have been found should seek the lost.

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**Luke 15:25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.**

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KJV Luke 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

- **his elder** Lk 15:11,12
- **he came and approached the house** Lk 7:32; Ex 15:20; 2 Sa 6:14; Ps 30:11; 126:1; 149:3; 150:4; Eccl 3:4; Jer 31:4
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-28 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 4](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:28-32 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 5](#) - John MacArthur

**Now his older son was in the field** - In this parable the older son represents the religious legalists, the scribes and Pharisees. Outwardly they lived blameless lives, but inwardly their attitudes were abominable (Matthew 23:25-28). This was true of the older son who worked hard, obeyed his father, and brought no disgrace to his family or townspeople.

**Leon Morris** writes that "It has sometimes been argued that the concluding section (Lk 15:25-32) should be deleted as no part of the original parable. No good reason is put forward and there is much against it. There is not the slightest evidence that the parable ever existed without it, and the point it makes is important. **Indeed it is quite possible to hold that the main aim of the parable is to contrast the reactions of the father and the elder son to the prodigal.** And in the situation in which Jesus found himself, while it was important to make the point that God welcomes sinners, **it was also important to emphasize that those who reject repentant sinners are out of line with the Father's will.** The parable says something to 'the tax collectors and sinners'. But it also has a message for 'the Pharisees and the scribes'." (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#)) (Bold added for emphasis)

**Craig Keener** - Normally an elder brother would be expected to help reconcile a father and a younger brother. That the entire village would attend the party and the elder brother alone would be unaware of it is unlikely in real life but this incongruity further drives home the point: the self-righteous critic alone fails to join the party (cf. Lk 15:1–2, 6–7, 9–10). (See [NKJV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible](#))

**Music** is the Greek word **sumphonia** (Eng - symphony) (syn/sun = together + phone = sound), used only here in the NT and once in the Septuagint (Da 3:5).

**Mattoon on dancing** (Greek = choras > English choral) - The dancing here was not the sensual dancing that is practiced today. The word for "dancing" means that it was a celebration of people dancing together in a circle. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Luke 15:26 "And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be.**

- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-28 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 4](#) - John MacArthur

**And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be** - The estate must have been large for him to have been in a field and be totally unaware of the prodigal's return. "In terms of his relationship to his family he was metaphorically, as well as literally, far away in a field." (MacArthur) **Began inquiring** is in the imperfect tense which pictures him asking over and over indicating the sense of urgency of his question.

**Luke 15:27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'**

KJV Luke 15:27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

- **Your brother** Lk 15:30; Acts 9:17; 22:13; Phile 1:16
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-28 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 4](#) - John MacArthur

**Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf** -As the elder brother note (1) this would have been from his estate because the father had divided between the brothers and (2) it was generally the elder brother who would play a major role in planning such a huge celebration. These facts help understand why in the next verse he reacted with anger.

**Because he has received (apolambano) him back safe and sound (hugiaino)** - In this passage apolambano clearly pictures the father receiving the prodigal back with "no strings attached!" The father's full and gracious welcome back home would only serve to add fuel to the fire already burning in the elder son's bosom! This would have added insult to injury. Not only a party for the prodigal but reception, restitution and restoration for the one who squandered his estate!

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**Received...back (618) (apolambano)** from apo = from + lambáno = to receive, take) means to receive fully, receive in full what is one's due, to take again or back, to recover. **BDAG** says "to receive back something that one previously possessed."

**Apolambano** - 8v - receive(3), receive back(1), received(1), received...back(1), receiving(2), took...aside(1). Mk. 7:33; Lk. 6:34; Lk. 15:27; Lk. 16:25; Lk. 23:41; Rom. 1:27; Gal. 4:5; Col. 3:24; 2 Jn. 1:8

**Safe and sound (5198)(hugiaino)** verb from noun **hugies** = whole, healthy; Eng = hygiene, hygienic = making sick folk whole) means to be in good health, to be healthy and wholesome, referring to literal, physical health.

**Hugiaino** - 12v - Lk. 5:31; Lk. 7:10; Lk. 15:27; 1 Tim. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; Tit. 1:13; Tit. 2:1; Tit. 2:2; 3 Jn. 1:2

Luke is the only Gospel writer to use this word

Lk 5:31+ And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are **well** who need a physician, but those who are sick.

Lk 7:10+ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in **good health**.

**Luke 15:28 "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.**

KJV Luke 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

- **he became angry and was not willing to go in** Lk 15:2; 5:30; 7:39; 1 Sa 17:28; 18:8; Isa 65:5; 66:5; Jonah 4:1-3; Mt 20:11; Acts 13:45,50; 14:2,19; 22:21,22; Ro 10:19; 1 Th 2:16
- **his father came out and began pleading with him** Lk 13:34; 24:47; Ge 4:5-7; Jonah 4:4,9; 2 Co 5:20
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-28 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 4](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:28-32 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 5](#) - John MacArthu

**But** - Upon hearing his brother was safe and sound, one would expect him to rejoice. BUT marks his opposite reaction of resentment and outright anger! Notice that he attacks his dad and justifies himself (just like the Pharisees whom he depicted)!

**Mattoon** - We find this older brother entertaining the sentiments of the "*Not Fair*" *Syndrome*. We have all felt this way at one time or another and can relate to him very well. Most of us are just like this guy. We have felt the sting of incidents that are unfair and we complain, just like he did to his dad. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**He became angry (orgizo) and was not willing (thelo) to go in** - "Ironically the attitude of the older son has left him outside and without joy." ([NET Note](#))

**Inrig** - This son would rather not have fellowship with his father than accept his father's treatment of his brother. He will not accept someone who has been the companion of pigs and prostitutes. If that costs him fellowship with his father, so be it. The relevance of this to the context of Luke 15 is obvious. The Pharisees would not have fellowship with Jesus because of His treatment of people the Pharisees considered prodigals. Thus, they were putting themselves outside the Father's house. Refusal to accept all those whom the Lord accepts is no small matter. It reveals our relationship to God Himself. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

**Mattoon** - He is so angry that he will not go into the house. He shared his father's house, but not his father's heart. He is so close to his father, yet, so far away from him. He would rather not have fellowship with his father than to accept his father's acceptance of his

brother. This is exactly the same way the Pharisees treated Jesus who accepted and forgave sinners. The people in the house are having a great time, but not this man. His brother and the servants have joy, but he is miserable because he feels he has been treated unfairly. He could use the rest and refreshment. He could use the fellowship and fun. His bitterness, however, have distorted his values of what is important. This is what bitterness does to a person. It robs you of your joy while those who are the target of your bitterness are enjoying life and are happy. The bitterness of this older brother may have been a factor why the prodigal son left home. Anger and bitterness distort our view on what is important in life. What is considered a wonderful blessing is looked upon as a burden. This man's repentant brother has returned home in safety and he is angry about it. He could have been a huge blessing to his returning brother, but is throwing away the opportunity. He is no different than people in the church that get angry when God blesses the church, and people are getting saved and right with God. When you are bitter, you are the biggest loser. You deeply hurt yourself. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**MacArthur** explains that "For years that older rebel had managed to conceal his true feelings of resentment toward his father and brother. All along, though, he had been wicked like his brother, only inwardly, not outwardly. But this event exposed his real attitude. In a burst of public display from long-cultivated private hatred, **he became angry and was not willing to go in** to celebrate with the others. He could not rejoice over the recovery of his lost brother because he had no love for his father. He failed to understand unmerited favor, free forgiveness, and deliverance from shame by the actions of the offended one endowed with the authority to forgive." (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Leon Morris** - The elder son's reaction was anger. He would have no part in all this and he refused to go in. The likeness to the Pharisees is unmistakable. We can easily imagine the elder brother saying of his father, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them' (2). But there was no false pride about the father. He had already gone out to meet one son and he now went out to plead with the other. But he was met by a torrent of words as the pent-up feelings of years came tumbling out. The elder son was conscious of his own rectitude. He was completely self-righteous. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

Keeping in mind that the ancient culture placed great emphasis on **shame and honor** "Refusing to enter the home during a village-wide celebration made an intrafamily dispute public gossip and **shamed** the father in the midst of celebration. Ancient hearers might have expected the father to discipline this son (cf. Lk 15:12). That the father is reduced to going outside to entreat him reinforces the **humiliation**." (NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible). (Bolding added)

**Spurgeon** - I hardly know which to admire most, the **love of the father** when he fell upon the neck of the prodigal, or **the love of the father** when he went out to talk with his elder son: "Therefore came his father out, and treated him." **Oh, our God is very good to us when we give way to naughty tempers!** If we begin to think that we are very holy people, that we have been long the servants of God, and that there ought to be some little fuss made over us as well as over great sinners that come into the church, then our Father is very gentle, and he comes out and entertains us. ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**And his father came out and began pleading with him** - The verb **pleading** is **encourage** (exhort, comfort, implore) ([parakaleo](#)) which pictures one coming alongside to comfort or encourage, which the father was undoubtedly doing. The other sense of parakaleo was also active in the father's response to his elder son as he pleaded, implored, begged and appealed to him, sadly all to no avail.

**Mattoon** notes that parakaleo "is the same word used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter. This father is not chewing out his son. This gracious father is gently speaking and appealing to his son to rejoice over the arrival of his brother and to join the celebration. His older son, however, is very upset." ([Treasures from Luke](#))

The father's reaction pictures God's pleading through his Son for sinners to be reconciled and come to salvation. As Jesus said "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk 19:10). The lost younger brother came to his senses and recognized he was lost while the older brother failed to recognize that he was also lost. He was like the hypocritical Pharisees and like them he was externally doing all the "right behavior" to merit his father's pleasure, but internally he was filled with anger, jealousy, etc, just like the Pharisees, about whom Jesus declared "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Mt 23:28). The lost younger son was found, while the lost older son was lost. His self-righteousness like the Pharisees blinded him and prevented him from seeing he was just as wretched a sinner as his younger son. And as Jesus said "I did not come to call the **righteous** (SELF-RIGHTEOUS), but **sinners**." (Mt 9:13).

**MacArthur on the father...began pleading with him** - "This yet again would have surprised the self-righteous Jews, who would have expected the older son to be honored for his unwillingness to mingle in a celebration for a sinner led by a host whose love overpowered his devotion to the law."

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**He became angry** (enraged) ([3710](#))([orgizo](#) from [orge](#) = wrath) describes a brooding, simmering anger that is nurtured and not allowed to die. It is seen in the holding of a grudge, in the smoldering bitterness that refuses to forgive. It is the anger that cherishes

resentment and does not want reconciliation.

**Luke 15:29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;**

BGT Luke 15:29 ὁ αποκριθε ς επεν τ πατρ α το · δο τοσα τα τη δουλε ω σοι κα ο δ ποτε ντολ ν σου παρ λθον, κα μο ο δ ποτε δω κα ς ριφον να μετ τ ν φ λων μου ε φρανθ ·

KJV Luke 15:29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

NET Luke 15:29 but he answered his father, 'Look! These many years I have worked like a slave for you, and I never disobeyed your commands. Yet you never gave me even a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends!

CSB Luke 15:29 But he replied to his father, 'Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

ESV Luke 15:29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.

NIV Luke 15:29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

NLT Luke 15:29 but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends.

- **'Look! For so many years I have been serving you** Lk 17:10; 18:9,11,12,20,21; 1 Sa 15:13,14; Isa 58:2,3; 65:5; Zech 7:3; Mt 20:12; Ro 3:20,27; 7:9; 10:3; Phil 3:4-6; 1 John 1:8-10; Rev 3:17
- **yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends** Lk 15:7; 19:21; Mal 1:12,13; 3:14; Rev 2:17
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:28-32 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 5](#) - John MacArthur

## THE ELDER BROTHER'S EMOTIONAL OUTBURST

**Leon Morris** - The proud and the self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**Look** - In the Near East in this culture it was an offensive, grievous insult to greet one's father in such an impertinent manner beginning his address with "**Look!**". Notice that even the younger son had earlier greeted him with the title "**Father**" (Lk 15:12). The elder son shows his lack of love and respect for his father. However the father with great patience does not rebuke him for his disrespectful address. This reminds me of Paul's description of 3 attributes of God in the context of salvation...

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His [kindness](#) and [tolerance](#) (forbearance) and [patience](#) ([makrothumia](#) = His "long fuse" so to speak!), not knowing that the [kindness](#) of God leads you to repentance? (Ro 2:4-[note](#))

The father (like God our Father when we were lost) was kind, forbearing and longsuffering!

**Cole** - He is bitter, accusing his dad of being stingy and unfair. He is saying, "Just give me what I deserve for all my hard work!"

**Inrig** - The older son has only contempt for such a response. In the light of the father's appeal, the heart of the son is exposed. He speaks angry words that reveal who he really is. Appearances suggest a son respectful of his father, totally different from his rebellious brother; anger unveils attitudes every bit as contemptible as the attitudes that led his brother to leave home. In fact, what we learn about this older brother may explain why the younger brother wanted to go to the far country! (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

**Mattoon** - The fact that it is mentioned first reveals how important it is to the elder brother as he states, "I have been responsible for many years." Where is this heading? The answer is the fact that his younger brother was not faithful, he was not responsible, yet, he has a party thrown for him. This is not fair to the older brother! He does not understand why his father did this. The elder brother is focused on his achievements. They are the basis of what he feels he deserves. Folks also have this same attitude about going to Heaven. They feel their good works entitle them to eternal life. They feel they have earned their way to Heaven. God, however, has made it very clear what He feels about our good works. He does not want to hear us bragging in Heaven about them. Ephesians 2:8-9 ("not as a result of works, so that no one may boast"). ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**For so many years I have been serving (douleuo) you** - NET - "I have worked like a slave!" He uses the verb [douleuo](#) which means to serve as slave and in present tense pictures this as his habitual practice. Clearly he was not serving out of love, but out of a sense of duty, even drudgery. He considered his servitude of his father as slavery. He was going through the motions, waiting for his father to die so that he would gain full control of the estate.

**Mattoon** - The older brother now addresses his purity and obedience toward his father's commands. He is promoting his self-righteousness, "I have not done anything wrong. I have been obedient. I have been good. I deserve to be rewarded." This is in contrast to the wild, wasteful lifestyle of his younger brother. When you get into "comparison mode" you feel cheated if someone, whom you feel beneath you, is blessed or prospers in some way, but you don't prosper. Outwardly, these things may have been true about this older son, but inwardly, the elder brother has not been so pure. His consistent temper reveals problems with bitterness, hate, pride, and selfishness, to name a few. The fact that no one notified him of the celebration is a big indication that he was known for being explosive. There are folks today that are just like this older brother. They believe they are pure when they are not. They believe their righteousness entitles them to a home in Heaven or rewards. God, however, is not impressed with our self-righteousness. Self-righteous people do not feel that others should go to Heaven because they do not deserve eternal life, just like the younger brother did not deserve this celebration. Like the older brother, self-righteous people look down upon sinners. Do you do this? If so, you are like the older brother and the Pharisee. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**I have never neglected a command of yours** - Here he gives a blatant declaration that reflects his true heart attitude of self-righteousness! In the context of this parable in Luke 15, the elder son was in essence placing himself in the group of the "ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Lk 15:7<sup>±</sup>)

**Wiersbe** - he was *self-righteous*. He openly announced the sins of his brother, but he could not see his own sins (see Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisees defined sin primarily in terms of outward actions, not inward attitudes. They completely missed the message of the Sermon on the Mount and its emphasis on inward attitudes and holiness of heart (Matt. 5-7). (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

**Keener** remarks that "The elder brother here is a transparent metaphor for the Pharisees, and the younger brother for the sinners with whom Jesus was eating (Lk 15:1-2)." (See [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#))

**NET Note** on **given me a young goat** - You never gave me even a goat. A goat was less valuable and would have fed far fewer guests. So the son is saying "And you wouldn't even give me this lesser gift!" The older son's complaint was that the generous treatment of the younger son was not fair: "I can't get even a little celebration with a basic food staple like a goat!"

**Mattoon** - When we become ungrateful for what we have, we start griping, and this is what this older son did. With his inheritance from his father, he could have killed a goat and thrown his own party any time he wanted. He owned all the goats and calves. When we are jealous and ungrateful, we fail to see the blessings we possess. God wants us to learn to be thankful for and content with His provisions and blessings. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

**Yet you have never given me a young goat** - Not even a **goat** much less a fattened calf! Notice his complaint was "that he had not been celebrated for his legalism. Heaven never holds a party for a self-righteous man." ([MacArthur Commentary](#))

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**Serving** (1398) [douleuo](#) from **doulos** = slave or one who is in bondage or bound to another, in the state of being completely controlled by someone or something) means to be in bondage or in the position of servant and to act accordingly, dutifully obeying the master's commands. The [present tense](#) signifies this was the elder's son habitual practice.

**Douleuo** - 23v - **bondage(1), enslaved(3), render service(1), serve(10), served(1), serves(1), serving(4), slavery(1), slaves(3)**. Matt. 6:24; Lk. 15:29; Lk. 16:13; Jn. 8:33; Acts 7:7; Acts 20:19; Rom. 6:6; Rom. 7:6; Rom. 7:25; Rom. 9:12; Rom. 12:11; Rom. 14:18; Rom. 16:18; Gal. 4:8; Gal. 4:9; Gal. 4:25; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 6:7; Phil. 2:22; Col. 3:24; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:2; Tit. 3:3

**Luke 15:30** but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf

KJV Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

- **when this son of yours came** Lk 15:32; 18:11; Ex 32:7,11
- **who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes** Lk 15:13,22,23
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:28-32 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 5](#) - John MacArthur

## ELDER SON'S CONTEMPT FOR HIS BROTHER

**When this son of yours came** - Notice not "this brother of mine!" The elder brother's description is distinctly [pejorative](#) (expressive of his disapproval). The elder brother in essence "disowns" his younger brother. And then he proceeds to denigrate him with a cascade of accusations.

**Steven Cole** - He despised his brother and resented the fact that while his brother went off to party, he stayed home and got stuck with all the work. ([How to Receive God's Abundant Mercy](#))

**Rod Mattoon** - He is so bitter, he refers to his brother as "thy son." He feels that his lazy, wasteful brother does not deserve the forgiveness, compassion, or the respect that his father gave to him. He feels he needs to be punished, not honored or forgiven. **The problem of this older brother is he lacks love for his brother, but also for his father.** When you struggle to love someone, you focus on what you think are their faults. This is what the elder brother did. Let me ask, "Do you find yourself nit-picking people, constantly criticizing them? How do you treat your wife or husband? Are you gentle and loving, or constantly harping at them?" If you are critical and picky, is it because you feel that you have been treated unfairly? If so, realize that your spouse may have not done anything wrong at all. The problem may be with you. ([Treasures from Luke](#))

The **Apostle John** explains that the lack of love for his brother demonstrated that his spiritual eyesight was blind and he was in spiritual darkness (the irony is the elder brother complaining about the brother who was lost and now had been found was himself lost!)

The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:9-11+)

**Gotquestions** - Just like the Pharisees, the older brother was defining sin by **outward actions**, not **inward attitudes** (Luke 18:9-14). In essence, the older brother is saying that he was the one worthy of the celebration, and his father had been ungrateful for all his work. Now the one who had squandered his wealth was getting what he, the older son, deserved.

**Who has devoured (katesthio) your wealth (bios) with prostitutes (porne)** - Figuratively [katesthio](#) means to destroy. What an incredible word picture of the younger son greedily and ravenously "eating up" his father's life earnings like a "immoral [glutton](#)." How does he know the younger brother was with prostitutes? This description may be true but the elder brother does not know it. The truth is he is only surmising. Remember that the younger brother has been in a far country and he has not even spoken with his brother.

**NET Note** - The charge concerning the prostitutes is unproven, but essentially the older brother accuses the father of committing an injustice by rewarding his younger son's unrighteous behavior.

**Spurgeon** - I do not read that the prodigal had devoured his father's living with harlots; that is the elder brother's version of it. I dare say that it was true, but it is always a pity to give the roughest interpretation to things. He had spent his substance "in riotous living." When we are cross, we generally use the ugliest words we can; we may think that we are speaking forcibly, but indeed we are speaking naughtily, and not as our Father would have us speak. ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**You killed the fattened calf for him** - In spite of all the younger brother's transgression. For this rebel, this profligate, this sinner!

**MacArthur** sums this up - The picture is striking. The legalistic older brother stood alone in the dark reviling his gracious father, who at the same time was being honored at the joyous celebration of his lost son's recovery. His actions graphically picture the scribes

and Pharisees. **They were unrepentant, self-righteous, hypocritical externalists, choosing to revile and scorn Jesus Christ, God incarnate, for reconciling sinners whom all Jewish religious society had rejected, instead of joining the heavenly banquet with those praising God for their salvation.** (See [MacArthur Commentary](#))

**Devoured** (consumed) (2719)(**katesthio** from **kata** = down + **esthio** = to eat) means to eat up, consume, devour (Lk 8:5). **Friberg - Katesthio** - (1) literally eat up, consume, devour (Mt 13.4); (2) figuratively destroy; (a) of fire consume, burn up (Rev 11.5); (b) of illegal exploitation rob, take complete advantage of (Mk 12.40); (c) of strife within a group cause great division, destroy (Gal 5.15) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

**Katesthio - 15v - ate(4), consume(1), devour(5), devoured(2), devours(2), eat(1).** Matt. 13:4; Matt. 23:14; Mk. 4:4; Mk. 12:40; Lk. 8:5; Lk. 15:30; Lk. 20:47; Jn. 2:17; 2 Co. 11:20; Gal. 5:15; Rev. 10:9; Rev. 10:10; Rev. 11:5; Rev. 12:4; Rev. 20:9

**Luke 15:31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.**

KJV Luke 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

- Lk 19:22,23; Mt 20:13-16; Mark 7:27,28; Ro 9:4; 11:1,35
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:28-32 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 5](#) - John MacArthur

## THE FATHER'S TENDER WORDS

**And he said to him** - Instead of slapping him for his blatant disrespect and wicked accusations, he responded with gentleness.

**Son ([teknon](#))**, **you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours** - **Son** is not **huios** (the noun used in Lk 15:11, 13, 19, 21, 24, 25 30) but **teknon**, which is explained below. "The father reassures his son of his fellowship and financial security." (Mattoon [Treasures from Luke](#))

**POSB** - The religionist has the same privileges as the repentant prodigal. Note the words, "All that I have is thine." He has the worship, the Word, the promises, the preaching, and the teaching. He has constant exposure to all that is God's (see outline—<sup>\*</sup>Romans 9:1-5 and notes—<sup>\*</sup>Romans 9:1-5 for more discussion). He can enter God's "house of salvation" anytime. All he has to do is repent, and turn from trusting the field of religion, and enter God's house. He simply needs to believe in and trust the love of God. He is to stop opposing God's love to the prodigal sinner and come in himself. (Borrow [Luke Commentary](#))

**Leon Morris** on **all that is mine is yours** - He had it all. But he, like the Pharisees, did not realize the extent of his privileges. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**Crawford** - The response of the father shows a tenderness toward this elder son which gives us a vivid picture of the yearning of God over Israel. We are reminded of Hos 11:4, 8: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love ... How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?". Even toward the Pharisees the Lord Jesus expresses a tender love and concern.

**All that is mine is yours** - The inheritance had been divided, so the elder brother was assured of his share of the estate when his father died (Lk 15:12).

**THOUGHT** - Does this passage not make your heart jump for joy in anticipation of our Blessed Hope's return and our entrance into our inheritance (cf Eph 1:18b+) which Peter described as "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.(1Pe 1:4-5+) and Paul described as "if (SINCE WE ARE) children, **heirs** also, **heirs** of God and **fellow heirs** with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." (Romans 8:17+) Amazing truths which should motivate us powerfully to like holy, "other worldly (heavenly)" lives during our short sojourn on planet earth.

**Spurgeon** - Oh, what a word was that! How it reminds Christians of their privileges, if they would but appropriate them! It is yours, beloved, to live always with your God, and to know that all that he has is yours. You ought to live in a perpetual festival; for you there

should be one joyful Christmastide that lasts from the beginning of the year to the end of it: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**Steven Cole** - This part of the parable shows us that the sins of self-righteousness and pride can be just as fatal as sins of the flesh. Jesus is holding the older brother up as a mirror to the Pharisees, who prided themselves in their observance of the law. They looked with contempt on others who were not outwardly as good as they were. But, as Jesus so penetratingly shows, they were not keeping either of the two greatest commandments: They were not loving the Father and serving Him out of joy; and, they were not loving others as they loved themselves. If they had been doing so, they would have rejoiced to see sinners coming to Jesus. There's a supreme irony in this story. The brother who was outside comes home and is welcomed inside to a feast. The brother who had never strayed, but who is probably hungry after working all day, remains outside, sulking. Everything that he needed was inside the house, but his anger and self-righteous pride kept him from the bounty and joy of the father's table. So, the first has become last and the last, first. ([How to Receive God's Abundant Mercy](#))

**MacArthur** applies this to the Jews - Although the father retained control over the estate, he had already given it to his son. Here is a picture of God's magnanimity, especially to the Jews, who were given the Scripture, the most generous common grace, and years of gospel opportunity (cf. Rom. 9:4-5). God's riches were given in greatest abundance and clarity to the Jews, and especially those very leaders who prided themselves on their knowledge of Scripture. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** - In my years of preaching and pastoral ministry, I have met elder brothers (and sisters!) who have preferred nursing their anger to enjoying the fellowship of God and God's people. Because they will not forgive, they have alienated themselves from the church and even from their family; they are sure that everyone else is wrong and they alone are right. They can talk loudly about the sins of others, but they are blind to their own sins. "I never forgive!" General Oglethorpe said to John Wesley, to which Wesley replied, "Then, sir, I hope you never sin." Don't stand outside! Come in and enjoy the feast! (Borrow [Be courageous](#) Luke 14-24)

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**Son** ([5043](#)) ([teknon](#) from [tikto](#) = bring forth, bear children, be born) is strictly a child produced, male or female, son or daughter. **Teknon** is thus a child as viewed in relation to his or her parents or family. In the plural, **teknon** is used generically of descendants, posterity or children. It would generally be considered a more affectionate term than [huios](#).

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## Who Gets The Love?

Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. —Luke 15:31

A sociologist was writing a book about the difficulties of growing up in a large family, so he interviewed the mother of 13 children. After several questions, he asked, "Do you think all children deserve the full, impartial love and attention of a mother?"

"Of course," said the mother.

"Well, which of your children do you love the most?" he asked, hoping to catch her in a contradiction.

She answered, "The one who is sick until he gets well, and the one who is away until he gets home."

That mother's response reminds me of the shepherd who left 99 sheep to seek the one that was lost (Luke 15:4), the woman who searched for the one coin (v.8), and the father who threw a party when his wayward son returned (vv.22-24).

The religious leaders of Jesus' day resented the way He gave so much attention to sinners (vv.1-2). So He told those stories to emphasize God's love for people who are lost in sin. God has more than enough love to go around. Besides, those who are "well" and are not "lost" experience the Father's love as fully as those to whom He gives special attention (v.31).

Father, forgive us for feeling slighted when You shower Your love on needy sinners. Help us to see how needy we are and to abide in Your boundless love. By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The One who made the heavens,  
Who died on Calvary,  
Rejoices with His angels  
When sinners are set free.  
—Fasick

God loves every one of us as if there were but one of us to love. —Augustine

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**A. W. Tozer** in his book *Knowledge of the Holy* describes the love of God...

Because God is **self-existent**, His love had no beginning; because He is **eternal**, His love can have no end; because He is **infinite**, it has no limit; because He is **holy**, it is the quintessence of all spotless purity; because He is **immense**, His love is an incomprehensibly vast, bottomless, shoreless sea."

[O the deep, deep love of Jesus,](#)

Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free!

Rolling as a mighty ocean

In its fullness over me.

—Thomas J. Williams

**Luke 15:32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun to live*, and was lost and has been found.'**"

KJV Luke 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

- **we had to celebrate and rejoice** Lk 7:34; Ps 51:8; Isa 35:10; Hosea 14:9; Jonah 4:10,11; Ro 3:4,19; 15:9-13
- **for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live** Lk 15:24; Eph 2:1-10
- [Luke 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Luke 15:11-32 The Tale of Two Sons](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:25-32 The Legalistic Son](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 15:28-32 The Tale of Two Sons - Part 5](#) - John MacArthur

## JESUS' STORY LEAVES US HANGING!

Jesus abruptly ends the parable without telling us what happened to the elder brother. The Pharisees, of all people would want to know, because the elder son clearly represented them.

**John MacArthur** explains "The ending simply isn't there. We're *supposed* to notice that. Since the story stops abruptly with such a tender appeal, every hearer ought to take that plea to heart, meditate on it, personalize it, and see the gentle reasonableness of embracing the father's joy in the salvation of sinners. And, frankly, no one needed that sort of honest self-examination more than the legalistic scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus told the story. The parable was an invitation first of all for them to forsake their pride and self-righteousness and reconcile with God's way of salvation. But furthermore, the same principle applies to everyone else, too—from wanton sinners like the Prodigal Son to sanctimonious hypocrites like the elder brother, and all kinds of people in between. Thus everyone who hears the story writes his or her own ending by how we respond to the kindness of God toward sinners....Don't forget that Jesus told this parable—including the abrupt ending—chiefly for the benefit of the scribes and Pharisees. It was really a story about them. The elder brother represented them. The hanging resolution underscored the truth that the next move was theirs. The father's final tender plea was Jesus' own gentle appeal to them. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**J C Ryle** - The application of the words to the case of our Lord's hearers is clear and plain. However much the Pharisees might murmur at Him for receiving sinners, they must confess it was better for sinners to be saved than lost. If publicans and sinners were made alive unto God through His ministry, the Pharisees, if they had had a right spirit, would have been glad. Instead of finding fault they would have been thankful. Instead of murmuring they would have rejoiced. ([Luke 15](#))

**But we had (dei) to celebrate (euphraino) and rejoice (chairo)** - It was necessary. We were obligated, constrained to rejoice. **Joy** is the recurrent theme of all three lost/found stories, which all picture God's joy at finding (saving) lost sinners. In this context the use of had (dei) says it is inevitable that there will be celebrating and rejoicing when a sinner repents and comes into the Kingdom of God, eternally safe and secure from the wrath to come. Such a glorious outcome warrants such a celebratory response!

**Gary Inrig** - The father's grace persists despite this outburst. A normal father would be furious at such an attack. But this father is different. He explains carefully, and says, in effect, "We had to celebrate and be glad; we had no choice. Because of who I am, a father, I rejoice over lost sons who return. Joy is the only possibility. Not to rejoice would be to deny who I am." The father is clear. He will not cancel the party, because he cannot. He is a gracious father who rejoices over children found. Neither will the heavenly Father cancel the celebration. His heart aches, too, over the lost son—whether he is partying in the far country or working in the family's fields. When sinners repent and come home, He must welcome them with outstretched arms, and He must share a joyful meal with them. What Jesus is doing with tax collectors and sinners (Lk 15:1-2) is what the Father does in heaven. The deity of the

Lord Jesus and the grace of God are the themes of this story. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

**C H Spurgeon** - It was the fit thing, and the proper thing, and the right thing, that there should be extraordinary joy over a returning sinner. There ought to be, there must be, there shall be, special music and dancing over sinners saved by the grace of God. The Lord give us some such tonight, and make us glad over them! Amen. ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**For this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live (zao) and was lost (apollumi) and has been found (heurisko)**- (see [note](#) on Lk 15:24) A sheep, a coin and now a son. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk 19:10+) - **For** (hoti) means because and functions here as a term of explanation. Always pause to ponder, asking what is the Spirit explaining, a discipline which will usually force you to re-read the preceding verse or verses to establish the context. Such repetition is always a good thing, for it facilitates a more accurate interpretation, it helps you memorize the text (see [Memorizing His Word](#)) and it functions as a form of meditation on the text (see [Meditation](#)). Not "my son was dead" but "**your brother.**" The father would not let him forget their relationship.

**And has begun to live (zao)** - This is a beautiful picture of conversion as Paul describes in Ephesians 2

And **you were dead** in your trespasses and sins....even **when we were dead** in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (Eph 2:1-[note](#), Eph 2:5-[note](#))

Peter speaks of living after "dying"...

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might **die to sin** and **live to righteousness**; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1 Peter 2:24-25+)

**NET Note** - Jesus argued that sinners should be pursued and received back warmly when they returned.

**Keener** - The final response of the elder brother is never stated, providing the Pharisees with the opportunity to repent if they are willing.

**Inrig - Did the older brother enter or not? We are not told because that is precisely the issue the Lord sets before the Pharisees and before us.** To reject the Father's gracious treatment of the most unworthy of sinners is to deceive ourselves about our need for grace and to forfeit the fellowship with God that is based on grace alone. As long as the Pharisees stayed angry at the grace shown to sinners, they stood outside the Father's house. The awful possibility is that we, too, can be in the Father's fields as servants but not really in His house as sons or daughters. We may be moral and respectable, but, because we have never truly known the Father who is loving, gracious, and welcoming, we are "older brothers." To such, the Father's appeal is "Come in." Or we may be in the far country, scattering the resources of which He is ultimately the Giver. Perhaps the money has run out and the famine has come in, and we have reached the pigpen. We despair of ever being accepted in the Father's house. To all such, the Lord's story shouts, "Come home." The bottom line is this. What we know of God is seen in how we view ourselves as lost and how we deal with others as lost. God's heart aches over those who are lost; God's heart rejoices over those who are found. How well we know Him is revealed by whether or not we ache and rejoice as He does. (Borrow [The Parables : Understanding What Jesus Meant](#))

**Steven Cole** - Jesus leaves the story there to make us consider our own response. If we are like the older brother, if we pride ourselves in being good, church-going people, if we see ourselves as better than prostitutes and drug dealers and thieves and other obvious sinners, then we need to judge our self-righteous pride. We would be greatly wrong to go out and join in the sins of the prodigal, so that grace might abound. But also, we would be greatly wrong to get angry at God for His grace toward such sinners and to demand that He give us what we deserve. *Never* ask God to give you what you deserve! We're all sinners, desperately in need of mercy, not justice. Perhaps we started laboring in God's field at sunrise and someone else comes in at 5 p.m. and gets the same pay as we do. Don't begrudge him; just be glad that God is a God of great mercy, even toward the proud if they repent. If you, like the prodigal, have rebelled against God and have come to see your wretched condition, your response should be like his: Get up, leave your sin, go to the Father and appeal for His mercy. You will find it in abundance. J. C. Ryle (*Foundations of Faith* [Bridge Publishing], p. 218) tells of a mother whose daughter ran away and lived a life of sin. For a long time no one knew where she was, but finally she came back, turned to Christ in repentance, and believed in Him. Someone asked the mother what she had done to bring her daughter back and she replied, "I prayed for her day and night." But that was not all. She went on to say how she always left the front door unlocked, even at night. She didn't want her daughter to come home in the middle of the night and find the door locked. And it just so happened that one night the girl came home, tried the door, found it open, and went in, never to go out and sin again. That open door is a beautiful picture of God's heart toward sinners. It's open for you if you will come back to Him! ([How to Receive God's Abundant Mercy](#))

**MacArthur** - The younger son symbolizes those who seek God's salvation by grace, the older son those who seek salvation by works....The invitation to be part of the great celebratory banquet is still open to all. It extends even to you, dear reader. And it

doesn't matter whether you are an open sinner like the Prodigal Son, a secret one like his elder brother, or someone with characteristics from each type. If you are someone who is still estranged from God, Christ urges you to acknowledge your guilt, admit your own spiritual poverty, embrace your heavenly Father, and be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20). And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17) Now, enjoy the celebration (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Leon Morris** applies this parable - Jesus does not go on to tell us whether the elder son responded or not. Nor does he say how the younger son lived in response to his father's welcoming love. In leaving these points unresolved he throws out a challenge to all his hearers, be they like the elder brother or like the younger. We tend to see ourselves as the prodigal and rejoice in the welcoming love of God. This is good, and it is even better if we go on to make the appropriate response to that love. But we might also profitably reflect that, unless we are very unusual, we can also see ourselves in the elder brother. It is a common human failing to think that we are not appreciated as we ought to be, that people do not give us credit for what we have done. And whether we be religious or irreligious, we are usually somewhat censorious towards those we see as having failed to live up to our standards, even if our standards are not theirs. That Jesus leaves the elder son's reaction open is encouraging. We can still do the right thing. God's love is a continuing challenge to all our self-seeking. (Borrow [The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** - "The truth here taught is just this: that mercy stretches forth her hand to misery, that grace receives men as sinners, that it deals with demerit, unworthiness and worthlessness; that those who think themselves righteous are not the objects of divine compassion, but the unrighteous, the guilty and the undeserving, are the proper subjects for the infinite mercy of God; in a word, that salvation is not of merit but of grace." ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

**Spurgeon** - So if there be any here that do not take the joy which they ought in the conversion of great sinners, let them hear the gentle persuasive voice of God. You, as believers, have everything. Christ is yours. Heaven is yours. You are always with God, and all that he has belongs to you. But it is proper and fit that, when a sinner returns from the error of his ways, they should ring the bells of heaven and make a fuss over him, for he was dead and is alive again. I hope that you and I will never catch the spirit of the elder brother. Yet I remember that Krummacher says that he found that same spirit in himself sometimes. There was a man in the village where Krummacher lived, who was a great drunkard and everything that was bad; and on a sudden he came into a very large sum of money and became a wealthy man. Krummacher felt, "Well, this hardly looks like the right thing — so many good, honest, hard-working people in the parish still remaining poor, and this worthless man has suddenly become wealthy and well-to-do." It seemed a strange way in the order of providence. Oh! we ought to rejoice and be glad when another person prospers, and wish that his prosperity may be blessed to him. I remember a minister years ago, when first Mr. Moody came, saying that he did not believe that Mr. Moody was sent of God "because," said he, "I find that many of the people who are converted under him never went to a place of worship before. It is only the riff-raff that are brought in." There is a nasty elder brother spirit. The riff-raff were just the people that we wanted to bring in, and if they had never been to a place of worship before, it was time that they should go. It was a mercy that they were brought in. Oh! instead of ever sniffing at sinners as if we were better than they, let us welcome them with all our heart and praise the heavenly Father that he so lovingly takes them in. ([Luke 15](#) - exposition)

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**Had** (must, it is necessary) [1163](#)) (**dei** from **deo** = to bind or tie objects together) refers to what is not optional but needful (binding) out of intrinsic necessity or inevitability. **Dei** refers to inward constraint which is why it is often translated 'must'. **Dei** describes that which is under the necessity of happening or which must necessarily take place, and conveys a sense of inevitability.

**Dei uses in Luke and Acts** - Lk. 2:49; Lk. 4:43; Lk. 9:22; Lk. 11:42; Lk. 12:12; Lk. 13:14; Lk. 13:16; Lk. 13:33; Lk. 15:32; Lk. 17:25; Lk. 18:1; Lk. 19:5; Lk. 21:9; Lk. 22:7; Lk. 22:37; Lk. 24:7; Lk. 24:26; Lk. 24:44; Acts 1:16; Acts 1:21; Acts 3:21; Acts 4:12; Acts 5:29; Acts 9:6; Acts 9:16; Acts 14:22; Acts 15:5; Acts 16:30; Acts 17:3; Acts 19:21; Acts 20:35; Acts 23:11; Acts 24:19; Acts 25:10; Acts 25:24; Acts 26:9; Acts 27:21; Acts 27:24; Acts 27:26;

**Live** ([2198](#)) (**zao**) can refer to physical life (and often in the Old Testament sense), or it can refer to spiritual existence. When **zao** is used of spiritual life, it is joined with many other words to help shape its meaning—such as being with or in Christ or God, with power, good, faith, love, light, and holiness. It is also contrasted with separation from Christ or God, evil, powerlessness, death, darkness, hate, unbelief, and sin. **Zao** means to **live**—**1. of natural, physical life** Mt 4:4; Lk 24:5; Ro 7:1, 2, 3; 1Co 15:45; Phil 1:22. Of the conduct of life Lk 2:36; Ac 26:5; Ro 14:7; 2Co 5:15. Be well, recover Mk 5:23. Of God Mt 26:63; Heb 3:12; zo ego = as surely as I live Ro 14:11. to zon = life 2Co 1:8. Figuratively = Jn 4:10, 11; Acts 7:38; Pe 1:3; 2:4.—**2. of the life of the child of God** Lk 10:28; Jn 5:25; Ro 1:17; 2Co 13:4; Gal 2:20; 1Th 5:10.

**Friberg** - live; **(1) of natural physical life**; (a) live, be living, be alive ( 1Co 15.45), opposite (die); **(b) of return from death become alive again** (Mt 9.18); **(c) of recovery from sickness**- get well, recover, be well (Jn 4.50); **(d) with mention of the sphere or basis of life**- live in (Acts 17.28); live by (Mt 4.4); **(2) of supernatural, spiritual life**, including resurrected life for the body and eternal life for the soul (Jn 11.25, 26);

**(3) of the conduct of life** = live (as) (Gal 2.14); continue (to sin) (Ro 6.2); live (for) (2Cp 5.15); **(4) participle zon = living**, of things deriving from God as the source of life (1Pe 1.3) (Borrow [Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament](#))

**Zao uses in Luke and Acts** - Lk. 2:36; Lk. 4:4; Lk. 10:28; Lk. 15:13; Lk. 15:32; Lk. 20:38; Lk. 24:5; Lk. 24:23; Acts 1:3; Acts 7:38; Acts 9:41; Acts 10:42; Acts 14:15; Acts 17:28; Acts 20:12; Acts 22:22; Acts 25:19; Acts 25:24; Acts 26:5; Acts 28:4;

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**Ray Pritchard** has an interesting application of the parable of the prodigal - I begin with a very simple observation: It is possible to know God and yet be far away from him. Most Christians know what that is like. Perhaps you have had the experience of drifting away from God. You never meant it to happen. You didn't start intending to drift away from the Lord. But somewhere along the way, you made some wrong choices and one day you woke up to find that God was far away from you. This is something that happens irrespective of your spiritual pedigree. You might be an elder or a deacon and still be a long way from God. You might be a Sunday School teacher, a youth leader, an usher, a member of the choir, a Moody Bible Institute student, and still be far away from God. You may have been raised in a Christian home only to grow up and reject your heritage. You may have been deeply hurt by someone who claimed to be a Christian and that deep hurt has kept you from coming close to God. You may have decided that no one can truly live up to what the Bible commands. Perhaps you feel discouraged over repeated personal failure. You tried and tried and tried ... and finally, exhausted, you gave up.

**A Crucial Distinction** - So I want to talk to you about what you do when you find yourself out of God's will. Before I do that, we need to carefully distinguish between two different ways we use that phrase: "out of God's will." Sometimes we use it to describe decisions we would like to make over again. You bought that house but now you don't like it. You bought a Ford Aerostar but you're having trouble making the payments. You got your master's degree and then quit school, but if you had to do over again you would have stayed until you got your doctors degree. You blew \$10,000 on IBM stock because you thought it was going to go up. It didn't.

Those examples describe non-moral decisions, defined as decisions about which the Bible gives no direct guidance. You are free to make those decisions any way you like. You can stay in school or quit, buy the stock or not, buy an Aerostar or a MPV or a Cherokee or just keep the Caravan you already have. The Bible doesn't tell you what to do in situations like that. There is, however, a second common use of the phrase "out of God's will." It also refers to those times when you suffer because you have done that which is wrong in the eyes of the Lord. You are suffering personally, internally, relationally, emotionally and in every other area of your life because you have done that which is wrong. You committed adultery and now you are out of God's will. You had an abortion and now you are out of God's will. You assassinated somebody's character and now you are out of God's will. You are nursing a grudge and a bitter spirit and you are out of God's will. You killed somebody. You lied. You're a thief. And now you are out of God's will. You wonder, "What do I do now?" Somewhere along the way you walked through the wrong door. The only way back to God's will is back through that same door. You decided to leave God's will; you must now decide to return to God's will. You left on purpose; you must return on purpose. ([Luke 15:11-32 Tapped On a Dead-End Street](#))

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**Webster** - Prod'i-gal a. [L. prodigus, from prodigere to drive forth, to squander away; pro forward, forth + agere to drive; cf. F. prodigue. See Agent.] Given to extravagant expenditure; expending money or other things without necessity; recklessly or viciously profuse; lavish; wasteful; not frugal or economical; as, a prodigal man; the prodigal son; prodigal giving; prodigal expenses.

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Remember that Jesus used only 504 words to tell the Parable of the Prodigal Son, judged by some to be the greatest story ever written. (Luke 15:11-24) —James Hastings

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**David Murray** - [read full article here - Prodigal Son](#)

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

If you're fed up, tired of your parents' strictures, and just waiting for the first opportunity to go to the far country, I beg you to reconsider your plans. Most prodigals don't come back. Some find success and don't come back. Many find death and can't come back. Your restlessness is rebellion against love. Don't minimize it by renaming it "sowing your wild oats," "my time in the world," or "trying it out." It's sin, and it's sin against love.

If you're now living "free," you're probably not reading this; but you might be. Though you're probably not in the normal places where Tabletalk is found, God has found many a faraway prodigal in faraway countries with this little magazine.

I ask you this: How free are you really? Free enough to walk away from your habits and lifestyle right now if you wanted? You're not, are you? What you call freedom is made up of multiple invisible chains, all the more deadly because they are rarely seen or felt.

If you're famished, you know it's because the more you've consumed, the hungrier you've become; the more you've drunk, the thirstier you've become; the more pleasure you've sought, the sadder you've become. Guilt has hollowed out and dried up your soul. Now nothing satisfies. Feel it. Sense it. Admit it.

Look at the filthy mess you're in. Sin sickens you, doesn't it? It didn't once. It used to taste so sweet and satisfying, for a moment or two at least. Now it disgusts you and makes you sick. The good news is that such sickness is a sign of returning health.

If you're seeing how foolish you are, that's a good sign, too. It actually means that you are coming to your senses, and that's the first step of coming to Christ. You are seeing the insanity of sin. Now and then you say, "I must be going crazy." But these are the most sensible thoughts you've had in a long time. Seeing your foolishness is the first sign of wisdom.

You're finished with sin, aren't you? You're finished with yourself, even. You've had enough. You've drawn a line in the sand and said, "I'm going no further. I'm done with my sin, and I'm going to retrace my steps to see if I can find a way back to the Father."

The good news is that you're already on the way back. To finish with sin is to start with salvation. To repent is to believe, and to believe is to repent.

Forgiveness awaits. Beg for it and be assured that you will receive it. You think you're heading home to your Father, but your Father has already left home to find you and bring you the rest of the way. Look, He's running, He's coming, He's hugging, He's kissing, He's calling, He's enjoying, He's celebrating. There's nothing He enjoys more than forgiving. Why not enjoy it, too, through His perfect Son, Jesus Christ?

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**Vance Havner - The Prodigal Son** The parable is the third in a series about lost things. Many times we have been told that the coin was lost, but did not know it was lost; the sheep knew it was lost, but did not know how to get home; the prodigal was lost and knew the way home.

#### **The prodigal came first to his father.**

"And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living" (Luke 15:11, 12).

#### **In the second place, the prodigal came to the far country.**

The far country is not hard to find. You can enter it right where you are; you do not have to go to Las Vegas.

#### **In the third place, the prodigal son came to want. "**

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want" (Luke 15:14).

#### **At the end of his trail of woe, the prodigal came to himself.**

This prodigal saw himself as a sinner and resolved to say when he got home, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight.

#### **The prodigal came back home.**

You know the blessed details of his return: the father's greeting, the robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, the feast, and the music and dancing. Our Lord made His message joyous good news. God's grace does not set up a funeral on one hand or a frolic on the other but a feast. There is joy on earth and in heaven over repentant sinners who come home.

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#### **QUESTION - What is the meaning of the Parable of the Prodigal Son?[WATCH VIDEO](#)**

**ANSWER** - The Parable of the Prodigal Son is found in Luke 15:11–32. The character of the forgiving father, who remains constant throughout the story, is a picture of God. In telling the story, Jesus identifies Himself with God in His loving attitude toward the lost, symbolized by the younger son (the [tax collectors](#) and sinners of Luke 15:1). The elder brother represents the self-righteous (the [Pharisees](#) and teachers of the law of Luke 15:2).

The major theme of this parable is not so much the conversion of the sinner, as in the previous two parables of Luke 15, but rather the restoration of a believer into fellowship with the Father. In the first two parables, the owner went out to look for what was lost (Luke 15:1–10), whereas in this story the father waits and watches eagerly for his son's return. We see a progression through the three parables from the relationship of one in a hundred (Luke 15:1–7), to one in ten (Luke 15:8–10), to one in one (Luke 15:11–32), demonstrating God's love for each individual and His personal attentiveness toward all humanity. We see in this story the

graciousness of the father overshadowing the sinfulness of the son, as it is the memory of the father's goodness that brings the prodigal son to repentance (Romans 2:4).

Jesus sets the scene for the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11: "There was a man who had two sons."

### **The Younger Son**

In Luke 15:12, the younger son asks his father for his share of his estate, which would have been half of what his older brother would receive (see Deuteronomy 21:17). In other words, the younger son asked for 1/3 of the estate. Though it was perfectly within his rights to ask, it was not a loving thing to do, as it implied that he wished his father dead. Instead of rebuking his son, the father patiently grants him his request. This is a picture of God letting a sinner go his own way (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Like the prodigal son, we all possess a foolish ambition to be independent, which is at the root of the sinner persisting in his sin (Genesis 3:6; Romans 1:28). A sinful state is a departure and distance from God (Romans 1:21). A sinful state is also a place of constant discontent. In Luke 12:15 Jesus says, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." The younger son in the parable learned the hard way that covetousness leads to a life of dissatisfaction and disappointment. He also learned that the most valuable things in life are the things we cannot buy or replace.

In Luke 15:13 the younger son travels to a distant country. It is evident from his previous actions that he had already made that journey in his heart, and the physical departure was a display of his willful disobedience to all the goodness his father had offered (Proverbs 27:19; Matthew 6:21; 12:34). In the foreign land, the prodigal squanders all his inheritance on selfish, shallow fulfillment, losing everything. His financial disaster is followed by a natural disaster in the form of a famine, which he failed to plan for. At this point he hires himself out to a Gentile and finds himself [feeding pigs](#), a detestable job to the Jewish people ([Leviticus 11:7](#)). Needless to say, the prodigal must have been incredibly desperate to willingly take such a loathsome position. He was paid so little and grew so hungry that he longed to eat the pig's food. To top it off, he could find no mercy among the people he had chosen as his own: "No one gave him anything" (verse 16). Apparently, once his wealth was gone, so were his friends. Even the unclean animals were better off than he was at that point.

The prodigal son toiling in the pig pen is a picture of the lost sinner or a rebellious Christian who has returned to a life of sin (2 Peter 2:19–21). The results of sin are never pretty (James 1:14–15).

The prodigal son begins to reflect on his miserable condition, and "he came to his senses" (Luke 15:17). He realizes that even his father's servants have it better. His painful circumstances help him to see his father in a new light. Hope begins to dawn in his heart (Psalm 147:11; Isaiah 40:30–31; 1 Timothy 4:10).

The prodigal's realization is reflective of the sinner's discovery that, apart from God, there is no hope (Ephesians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:25–26). When a sinner "comes to his senses," repentance follows, along with a longing to return to fellowship with God.

The son devises a plan of action, and it shows that his repentance was genuine. He will admit his sin (Luke 15:18), and he will give up his rights as a son and take on the position of a servant (verse 19). He realizes he has no right to a blessing from his father, and he has nothing to offer his father except a life of service. Returning home, the prodigal son is prepared to fall at his father's feet and beg for mercy.

In the same way, a repentant sinner coming to God is keenly aware of his own spiritual poverty. Laying aside all pride and feelings of entitlement, he brings nothing of value with him. The sinner's only thought is to cast himself at the [mercy of God](#) and beg for a position of servitude (1 John 1:9; Romans 6:6–18; 12:1).

### **The Father**

The father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son was waiting for his son to return. In fact, "while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him" (Luke 15:20). He runs to his wayward son, embraces him, and kisses him. In Jesus' day, it was not customary for a grown man to run, yet the father runs to greet his son, breaking convention in his love and desire for restoration (verse 20). The returning son begins his prepared speech (verse 21), but his father cuts him off and begins issuing commands to honor his son—the best robe, the best ring, the best feast! The father does not question his son or lecture him; instead, he joyfully forgives him and receives him back into fellowship.

What a picture of God's love, condescension, and grace! God's heart is full of compassion for His children; He stands ready to welcome the returning sinner back home with joyous celebration.

The prodigal son was satisfied to return home as a slave, but to his surprise and delight he is restored back into the full privilege of being his father's son. The weary, gaunt, filthy sinner who trudged home was transformed into the guest of honor in a rich man's home. That is what God's grace does for a penitent sinner (Psalm 40:2; 103:4). Not only are we forgiven in Christ, but we receive

the Spirit of “[adoption](#) to sonship” (Romans 8:15). We are His children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

The father’s command to bring the best robe for the returned son is a sign of dignity and honor, proof of the prodigal’s acceptance back into the family. The ring for the son’s hand is a sign of authority and sonship. The sandals for his feet are a sign of his not being a servant, as servants did not wear shoes. The father orders the fattened calf to be prepared, and a party is held in honor of the returned son. Fatted calves in those times were saved for special occasions. This was not just any party; it was a rare and complete celebration.

All these things represent what we receive in Christ upon salvation: the robe of the Redeemer’s righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), the privilege of partaking of the Spirit of adoption (Ephesians 1:5), and feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, prepared to walk in the ways of holiness (Ephesians 6:15). The actions of the father in the parable show us that “the Lord does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him” (Psalm 103:10–13). Instead of condemnation, there is rejoicing for a son who “was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:32; cf. Romans 8:1; John 5:24). Those words—*dead* and *alive*, *lost* and *found*—are terms that also apply to one’s state before and after conversion to Christ (Ephesians 2:1–5). The feast is a picture of what occurs in heaven over one repentant sinner (Luke 15:7, 10).

### The Older Son

The final, tragic character in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is the older son. As the older son comes in from the field, he hears music and dancing. He finds out from one of the servants that his younger brother has come home and that what he hears is the sound of jubilation over his brother’s safe return. The older brother becomes angry and refuses to go into the house. His father goes to his older son and pleads with him to come in. “But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’” (Luke 15:29–30). The father answers gently: “My son, . . . you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad” (verses 31–32).

The older son’s words and actions reveal several things about him: 1) His relationship with his father was based on works and merit. He points out to his father that he has always been obedient as he’s been “slaving away”; thus, he deserves a party—he has earned it. 2) He despises his younger brother as undeserving of the father’s favor. 3) He does not understand grace and has no room for forgiveness. In fact, the demonstration of grace toward his brother makes him angry. His brother does not *deserve* a party. 4) He has disowned the prodigal as a brother, referring to him as “this son of yours” (verse 30). 5) He thinks his father is stingy and unfair: “You never gave me even a young goat” (verse 29).

The father’s words are corrective in several ways: 1) His older son should know that their relationship is not based on performance: “My son, . . . you are always with me, and everything I have is yours” (Luke 15:31). 2) His older son should accept his brother as part of the family. The father refers to the prodigal as “this brother of yours” (verse 32). 3) His older son could have enjoyed a party any time he wanted, but he never utilized the blessings at his disposal. 4) Grace is necessary and appropriate: “We had to celebrate” (verse 32).

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, mentioned in Luke 15:1, are portrayed as the older brother in the parable. Outwardly, they lived blameless lives, but inwardly their attitudes were abominable (Matthew 23:25–28). They saw their relationship with God as based on their performance, and they considered themselves deserving of God’s favor—unlike the undeserving sinners around them. They did not understand grace and were, in fact, angered by it. They had no room for forgiveness. They saw no kinship between sinners and themselves. They viewed God as rather stingy in His blessings. And they considered that, if God were to accept tax collectors and sinners into His family, then God would be unfair.

The older brother’s focus was on himself and his own service; as a result, he had no joy in his brother’s arrival home. He was so consumed with justice and equity (as he saw them) that he failed to see the value of his brother’s repentance and return. The older brother had allowed [bitterness](#) to take root in his heart to the point that he was unable to show compassion toward his brother. The bitterness spilled over into other relationships, too, and he was unable to forgive the perceived sin of his father against him. Rather than enjoy fellowship with his father, brother, and community, the older brother stayed outside the house and nursed his anger. How sad to choose misery and isolation over restoration and reconciliation!

The older brother—and the religious leaders of Jesus’ day—failed to realize that “anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him” (1 John 2:9–11).

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one of Scripture's most beautiful pictures of God's grace. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We are all prodigals in that we have run from God, selfishly squandered our resources, and, to some degree, wallowed in sin. But God is ready to forgive. He will save the contrite, not by works but by His grace, through faith (Ephesians 2:9; Romans 9:16; Psalm 51:5). That is the core message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

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## THE PRODIGAL SON

Remember the story of the prodigal son? Most retellings of the parable focus closely on the wayward son. But there's another son in the parable, the resentful and grumpy older brother. As the party rang in the distance, he sulked that even though he had never asked his father for anything, he now had to watch him lavish gifts on his ungrateful brother. Have you ever been the older brother? Have you wondered why God chose to bless someone else, someone who didn't appear to deserve it? If so, the father's words to his son might be meaningful for you as well: "You have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:31-32 NASB). Like the father in the parable, God richly blesses us every day. When He throws a party for someone else, we should celebrate too, knowing what a good God we have. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. LUKE 15:23-24 (See [Inspired Faith - 365 Days a Year: Daily Motivation in God's Word](#))

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### J. Ellis - Pointed and Practical Sermon Outlines

PRODIGAL SON, THE.—Divisions of the parable (Luke 15:17).

The fatherland.

Leaving home.

The far country.

Riotous living.

A mighty famine.

Feeding swine.

A wise resolution.

A happy meeting.

The best robe.

The festival.

An angry brother.

A righteous father.

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### Come Home!

Your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found. —Luke 15:32

Several years ago, my wife Carolyn and I camped near the town of Brimley, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It was a holiday, and we ambled into town for the annual parade. Believe me, it was something to write home about.

There were marshals on horseback, homecoming queens, forest rangers, even Smokey Bear! There was a float featuring Big Bird from Sesame Street, and a flatbed truck carrying a brass band of men and women wearing straw hats and dressed in red-white-and-blue uniforms. There were vehicles of all kinds: tractors, trailers, trucks, and kids on tricycles.

But the last float fully captured our attention. It featured a gray-haired old man kneeling at the foot of a cross. Across the back of the float was written: "COME HOME!" —JESUS

Jesus still calls, "Come home!" You're never too far away or too far gone to come back to your Father's love. He stands waiting, just as the father of the prodigal son did. "When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion" (Luke 15:20). He rejoiced that his son was no longer lost (v.32).

Come home to God. Don't stay away. No matter what you've done, or left undone, He still loves you. By David H. Roper [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

O Lord, it's true, I've wandered far  
From what I know is right,  
But now I want to come back home  
And please You day and night.  
—K. De Haan

It's never too soon to come home to God.

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## What Makes You Happy?

It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again. —Luke 15:32

Mr. Mactavish was gone. I wanted to wait until morning to see if he would come back on his own. But the look on the other family members' faces vetoed that idea. So we climbed into the car to begin looking for our wayward Scottish terrier.

As we drove down street after street, calling his name and peering intently into the darkness, even I became sentimental. What if he got hit by a car? What if someone else picked him up? What if we never saw him again?

We eventually found him. And by the time we did, I was as happy as the rest of the family to see him. Even though he was a mess—mud-soaked and foul-smelling—Mac was a sight for sore eyes. In fact, at that moment my family appeared to be far happier about finding and being with that dirty dog than we were about being with one another.

Does that mean we loved Mac more than we loved one another? Of course not. Neither does showing special affection for a repentant alcoholic, adulterer, or enemy indicate that we love others any less. It means that we have enough of God's love to celebrate with the kind of joy He feels when a dearly loved rebel comes home.

Is your heart full of love for the lost? By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Repentant sinners who come home  
Deserve our love and caring touch;  
For who are we to withhold love  
When God's forgiven us so much?  
—Sper

Those who deserve love the least need it the most.

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## AI Generated Synopsis of The Prodigal Son

The parable of the Prodigal Son, found in [Luke 15](#), teaches several important lessons. In this story, a young man asks his father for his inheritance and then leaves home, squandering all the money in "riotous living" in a far country [1 2](#). When a famine strikes, the son finds himself in dire poverty and decides to return home [1 2](#). Upon his arrival, the father, who had been waiting for his return, welcomes him with unconditional forgiveness and celebration [1 2 3](#). The parable also includes an elder brother who refuses to participate in the homecoming festivities, representing a critique of those who judge repentant sinners [2](#). This story is often interpreted as an illustration of God's forgiveness and willingness to welcome back those who have strayed from faith [3](#). The parable has been influential in religious teachings on repentance and has inspired numerous works of art, literature, and music throughout history [4](#).

1 Thomas Nelson, [Awesome Bible Kids](#) (Nashville, TN: Tommy Nelson, 2004).

2 David L. Jeffrey, in [A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992).

3 Gordon R. Coulter and James W. Thompson, "[A Theology of Grandparenting and Generational Faith](#)," in *A Theology for Family Ministry* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 143.

4 John F. A. Sawyer, "[Prodigal Son](#)," in *A Concise Dictionary of the Bible and Its Reception* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 212.

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**Prodigal** As Dorothy said in the Wizard of Oz, there is no place like home.

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**PRODIGAL SON** "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living LUKE 15:13 NIV The Prodigal Son is a sterling example of bad decision-making. He couldn't wait to get his money before he ran off to a strange land to spend it. Finally, destitute, he landed in a field, tending pigs. We tend to look at the son and feel some pride. We've never done such a thing, have we? We ask ourselves how he could have been so foolish, and we feel good about ourselves. But in doing so, we miss the point of Jesus' parable. We are all prodigals who ran from God; none of us

made a good choice until we turned to follow Him. The Prodigal Son, who runs back to his father when he's in trouble, is actually a good example because he does that. But we often forget about this son's good choice, a choice we need to share. When we make bad choices, are we ready to turn to the Father who loves us? Or will we so fear Him that we avoid His face? Can we turn to Him, asking forgiveness? Be assured that your Father loves you and is calling you home. No mistake or sin of yours can stop His love (Letting Go and Trusting God) (CAVEAT - REMEMBER LET GO, LET GOD IS NOT BIBLICAL - THE BIBLICAL PATTERN IS "LET GOD, LET'S GO" AND THE PRODIGAL DID JUST THAT - HE REPENTED AND RETURNED).

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## The Prodigal Son

*Though we stray in headlong fashion and often come to a crisis  
as serious as did the prodigal son, our Heavenly Father  
waits with open arms to receive us, His penitent children.*

One of the best-known parables of Jesus was that of the prodigal son. It is the story of a father and his two sons. The father was "comfortably fixed," as we would say. The younger son was a restless type who wanted everything now and not as an inheritance. He was brash enough to ask for his share of the inheritance, and the father gave it to him. You likely know the rest. The son blew the inheritance on "wild living." That was not the last time a prodigal son or daughter ended up broke. At the same time, a severe famine had hit his new country, and the prodigal son was needy— even hungry. He secured a job, of sorts, with a local farmer who put him to work feeding pigs. At this crisis point in his life, the young man finally came to his senses. Realizing he had made an utter failure of his life, he decided to eat some "humble pie." Not demanding or even expecting anything, he decided to return home as a very needy man and seek work as one of his father's servants. He went home, and while he was still a long way off, the Scriptures tell us, his father spotted him. Compassionately, the father ran to his penitent son and threw his arms around him to welcome him back. The father told his servants to bring a fattened calf and kill it. "Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:23–24). The point of this parable is obvious . . . lovingly obvious. Jesus was teaching us about our Heavenly Father. Though we stray in headlong fashion and often come to a crisis as serious as did the prodigal son, our Heavenly Father waits with open arms to receive us, His penitent children. That's what repentance means, very simply. "I tell you," said Jesus, "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). The book of Hebrews adds in the fourth chapter, verse 16: "Let us then approach the throne of grace [i.e. an awaiting Heavenly Father] with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Beyond the Horizon - Daily Devotions for Seniors)

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## The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-24-32- Wade Horton (Borrow [Sound Scriptural Sermon Outlines](#))

This is a PARABLE OF LOSS

- The father lost a son
- Fellowship
- The son lost the comforts of a home
- The companionship of a family
- He became lost to himself

The parable emphasizes the love that a father can have for his children. There are many instances of deep paternal love in Scripture.

JACOB: "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."  
"Ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

DAVID: And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went thus he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee. O Absalom, my son, my son!"

JOB: When the days of his seven sons and three daughters feasting were gone about, Job rose up and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus did Job continually.

The rupture—separation of father and son—may have come after long conflict and heartache.

The Prodigal said: "Give me the portion... that falleth to me."

This attitude reflected a basic difference in the philosophy of the son and his father. It contrasted:  
Pleasure with work

Luxury with prudence

Wastefulness with temperance

At last the differences were made clear:

Self-indulgence

Indolence

His choice of friends

The son was spoken of as being "lost" and "dead."

o LOST—

- To himself
- To his father
- To reality

o DEAD—

- In rebellion
- In sin
- In self-realization

Like a person who had been out of his mind, it is said that, "He came to HIMSELF...."

His confusion was like that of modern youth—addled, befuddled, often schizoid.

When he became willing to face up to himself he became willing to face his father: "He arose, and came to HIS FATHER."

The Father and benefactor, the friend and counselor, had become a stranger to dread and to fear.

But the Father greeted the son with:

- FORGIVENESS—There was no bitterness or recrimination.
- LOVE—He fell on his neck in affection.
- ROBE—Which signified a new beginning
- RING—A signet ring, which signified authority and responsibility
- FEAST—The joy of reunion—fellowship, rejoicing

—Charles W. Conn

### **The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32**

INTRODUCTION: This is a story of tragedy and of triumph. The tragedy his leaving home, where blessings were many—love, shelter, protection, and fellowship of family and friends. The triumph was that "he arose, and came to his father" (v. 20). He saw himself and returned home.

#### **I. HIS DEPARTURE**

A. He said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" (v. 12).

B. His father responded and granted his request.

C. He gathered everything he had and departed—departed from home into a world of which he knew nothing.

D. The same thing happens spiritually. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

#### **II. HIS DISTANCE**

A. He "took his journey into a far country" (v. 13).

B. From a good home to a filthy hogpen

C. He, perhaps, had a vision of a better life in a new country, but he soon saw that home was the best place in all the world.

D. Spiritually, when a Christian leaves God, he is estranged from all that is good, pure, wholesome, and sound. He is really in a far country.

E. "... though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).

F. "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

#### **III. HIS DEGRADATION**

A. He "wasted his substance with riotous living" (v. 13).

B. "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine... and he began to be in want" (v. 14).

C. "He joined himself to a citizen of that country" (v. 15) as a servant and was sent to feed the swine. Jews would not feed swine!

D. Spiritually, the same things happen—all is spent, no friends, away from God, out of reach.

#### **IV. HIS DISGUST**

A. "He would... have filled his belly with the husks" (v. 16).

B. So disgusted, he would do the disgusting things.

C. And to make matters worse, "no man gave unto him."

D. No doubt he had given parties, spent money on drink, food, and good times, and now no one cared about him.

E. When he hit the bottom, all left him. That same thing holds true today.

#### V. HIS DISCOVERY

A. "And when he came to himself [Oh, thank God! He came to himself!], he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" (v. 17).

B. Yes, he saw himself! What a discovery! How foolish he had been!

C. He was far from home, perishing with hunger, and his father's house was full—plenty of love, food, and forgiveness.

#### VI. HIS DETERMINATION

A. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father" (vv. 18-20).

B. Would to God that more sinners and backsliders would be determined to arise and return to the Father's house!

#### VII. WHAT WAS HIS FATHER'S ATTITUDE?

A. It could have been a refusal. It could have been a coldhearted "Come in." But neither of these fit the occasion.

B. He welcomed him with open arms!

1. Reception—"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (v. 20). The prodigal testified of what had happened.

2. Forgiveness—He not only received his son, but he also had compassion. God forgives us (1 John 1:9).

3. Feasting—"Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (vv. 23, 24).

This was perhaps the greatest feast day this family had ever observed. What joy and happiness permeated that home.

CONCLUSION: Oh, that all sinners and backsliders could see this great need of returning. The Father awaits with open arms. Please remember that the heavenly Father loves you. Repent and He will forgive you.

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**Prodigal Son** One of the most beautiful stories of the Scriptures is that of the prodigal son, the youth who left home, got into deep difficulty, wasted his life in riotous living, and ended up in the pigpen.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee once asked, "Do you know the difference between the son in that pigpen and the pig? The difference is that no pig has ever said to himself, "I will arise and go to my father."

He is right; only sons say that. That is why there will be no condemnation, no rejection by God of his children. All believers, even prodigal sons, are his children, not his enemies.

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### The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11–24 - Jackson Maze

#### I. THE PRODIGAL LEAVING HOME

A certain man had two sons. One was satisfied to stay at home but the other wanted to wander in the world.

vv. 12–13... And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

1. The prodigal in a faraway country.

The faraway country is sin. It is far from God, far from right, a dwelling place in the world for unsaved people.

2. The prodigal lived an extravagant life.

"And there wasted his substance with riotous living."

3. The prodigal found himself in want.

vs. 14... And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

#### II. WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF

1. He thought of his father's home.

vs. 17... And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger.

2. He arose and came to his father.

As long as he had pride, it would not let him go back home. With all of his sorrow and penitent spirit, he would never have been forgiven his sins.

#### III. THE WANDERING PRODIGAL WAS FORGIVEN AND ACCEPTED AS A SON

1. The father met his son.

vs. 20... And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. HE LOVED HIS SON AND HAD COMPASSION ON HIM.

2. The disobedient son repented of his sins.

vs. 21... And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

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[Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia](#) (borrow) - PRODIGAL SON. The parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32) has aptly been called “the gospel within the gospel” and “the crown and pearl” of all Christ’s parables because of its lucid portrayal of gospel truth. In response to the grumbling of the scribes and Pharisees (15:1–2) Christ structured a parable around the Jewish custom whereby a father could assign his possessions to his heirs during his lifetime. He might actually hand over the allotment (cf. the younger son, 15:12); or he might present the share but retain the right to usufruct (cf. the elder son, 15:31). The attitudes and actions of the parable’s personae then depict the various facets of the gospel: (1) The younger son (15:12–20)—the tax-gatherers and sinners whom Jesus received (NB the prodigal’s sin, misery, and repentance). (2) The father’s joyful and enthusiastic reception of the returned prodigal (15:20–24)—God’s welcome to the repentant sinner. (3) The annoyance and bitterness of the elder brother (15:25–28)—the grumbling discontent and spiritual poverty of the scribes and Pharisees, who thought that salvation was a matter of meritorious works and outward piety. Possibly one could say there were two prodigal sons!

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### **The Prodigal Son**

On one occasion when preaching on the returning prodigal, a pastor paused, looked at the door, and shouted out, after he had depicted him in his wretchedness, “Here he comes, slipshod! Make way—make way—make way, there.” Such was the approach to reality, that a considerable part of the congregation turned to the door, some rising on their feet, under the momentary impression that some one was entering the chapel in the state described. In the same sermon, paraphrasing the father’s reply to the son that was angry and would not go in, he said: “Be not offended; surely a ‘calf’ may do for a ‘prodigal’, ‘shoes’ for a ‘prodigal’, a ‘ring’ and a ‘robe’ for a ‘prodigal’, but ALL I have is YOURS.”

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### **Alexander Whyte - Bible Characters**

A CERTAIN man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. The country-bred boy had been told stealthy and seductive stories about the delights of city life. ‘A young man with a little money,’ he had been told, ‘can command anything he likes in the great city. A young man who has never been from home can have no idea of the pleasures that are provided in the city for young men whose fathers have money. The games, the shows, the theatres, the circuses, the feasts, the dances, the freedom of all kinds; there is absolutely nothing that a young man’s heart can desire that is not open to him who brings a good purse of money to the city with him.’ All these intoxications were poured into this young man’s imagination, and he was but too good a pupil to such instructions.

How long will my father live? he began to ask. How long will that old man continue to stand in my way? It is not reasonable that a young man should be kept so long out of what really belongs to him. It is not fair to treat a grown-up man as if he were still a child. “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.” It was a heartless speech. But secret visions of sin will soon harden the tenderest heart in the world. Cogitatio et imaginatio, according to À Kempis, are the two first steps of a young man’s heart on its way down to the pit. Keep a young man’s thoughts and imaginations clean, and he is safe, and will be a good son. But once pollute, by bad books or bad companionships, a young man’s mind and imagination, and nothing in this world will hold that young man back from perdition.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Let one who lived for a long time in that far country describe it. “A darkened heart is the far country. For it is not by our feet, but by our affections, that we either leave Thee or return to Thee. Nor did that younger son look out for chariots, or ships, or fly with visible wings, that he might go to the far country. Unclean affections, and a God-abandoned heart, that is the far country. This was the world at whose gate I lay in imagination, while yet a boy. And this was the abyss of my vileness when I was cast away from before Thine eyes. Who was so vile before Thee as I was? I was vile even to myself.”

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. “A mighty famine” is perfect English. It is one of those great strokes of translation that sometimes surpass the original. “A mighty famine” puts a perfect picture of that far country before us. Now what chance, in the midst of a mighty famine, had a prodigal son who had already wasted all his substance with riotous living? What hope was there for him? What could a penniless spendthrift do? Till, covered with rags, and with all his bones staring till they could be counted, he threw himself upon a citizen of that country, and said:—‘Only give me one crust-of-bread and water, and I will do anything you like to command me. I have a father at home, but that is far away. Oh, for my father’s sake, and he will repay you, give me something to eat.’ And he sent him into his fields to feed swine. “Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, or who were his family connections, I should conclude there was some secret connected with his history, and that he was one of whom, from

one cause or another, his parents were ashamed." Such is Dr. Newman's picture of the human race, as it is fallen away from God, and gone into a far country.

"And when he came to himself."-Underline these words. Print these words in capitals. Engrave these words in letters of gold. For up till now sin has abounded, but henceforth grace is much more to abound. And already the abounding grace that the prodigal son is so soon to be met with, is beginning to drop from His lips Who here tells the prodigal's sad story. Look at the beautiful way in which the terrible truth is softened in the telling. Every word is so tenderly, and almost apologetically, chosen. You do not upbraid a son of yours when he is brought home to you safe and sound from the asylum. Whatever he may have said or done during his illness there, you refuse to listen to it. You say, My poor possessed child! You say, My son at that time was not responsible. And you shut your ears to all the heartless tales they tell about what he said and what he did when he was still beside himself. You rebuke his cruel accusers. You tell them that nobody reckons to a recovered man the things that would be reckoned and punished to an entirely sound-minded man. These grace-chosen words, "When he came to himself," already prepare us for the speedy return and complete restoration of this unhappy son, whose infirmity and affliction, rather than his sin and guilt, are the subject of his history as it is here told to us.

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." And we see him. Our Lord sees him, and He makes us see him. Look at him! Look how he runs! He runs like a man running for his life. He forgets his bleeding feet and his hungry belly. He outstrips everybody on the same road. He runs as he never ran before. But when he comes to the first sight of his father's house his strength suddenly fails him. He stands still, he sinks down, he beats his breast. He cries out as with an intolerable pain till the passers-by hasten on in fear. The man is possessed, one says to him. How long wilt thou be drunken? says another. But he sees them not. He hears them not. The only thing he sees is his father's house through his tears and his sobs. And all that any of the people in the fields or on the road could make out from him was always this: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight!"

And, then, all this long far-country time, his father's grey hairs were being brought down with sorrow to the grave. His father had never been the same man since that evil day when his son had left his father's door without kissing his father. He had ever since that day gone up and down his house a broken-hearted man. His very reapers had wept for him as they saw him walking up and down alone in his harvest fields. Every night also he sat and looked out of his window till the darkness fell again on all the land. And all through the darkness he listened all night for a footstep that never came. But, at last one day,-That is none other than my long-lost son! And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed, him.

And now, among many other things, our Lord, I feel sure, would have us learn from this family history such things as this-The unspeakable evil of a mind early stained with the images of sensual sin. This young man was at one time as innocent of this sin, and was as loyal to his father and mother, as are any of your sons or mine. But on a fatal day some bad man told him a bad story. Some one whispered to his heart some of the evil secrets of Satan's kingdom. And then, as the Imitation has it, there was first the sinful knowledge, and then there arose out of that a sinful imagination, a picture of the sin, and then the young sinner's heart took a secret delight in the knowledge and the vision, and then he sought for an opportunity, and the opportunity soon came. A bad companion will do it. A bad book will do it. A bad picture will do it. The very classics themselves will sometimes do it. It is being done every day in our bothies, and in our workshops, and in our schools, and in our colleges. A bad story will do it. A bad song will do it. A bad jest will do it. Indeed, it is in the very air that all our sons breathe. It is in the very bread they eat. It is in the very water they drink. They cannot be in this world and clean escape it. For myself, one of the saintliest men I ever knew once told me certain evil things, just out of the evil fulness of his heart, when I was not asking for them. Evil things that I would not have known to this day but for that conversation. Supply me with a knife deep enough and sharp enough to cut that corrupt spot out of my memory, and I will, from this moment, cast it out on the dunghill of the devil for ever-as we had, at last, to cut off and cast him. It was some one like my early friend who polluted that young man's imagination till nothing could keep him back from becoming the prodigal son of whom our Lord here tells us all these things for our warning and for our rebuke.

The very finest point in all this history full of fine points, is this,-"When he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him." And there is nothing more true in our own history than just this, and nothing more blessed for us to be told than just this, that our Father also sees us when we are yet a great way off from Him, and has compassion on us. When we are just beginning to remember that we have a Father; when we are just beginning to repent toward Him; when we are just beginning to pray to Him; when we are just beginning to believe on Him, and on His Son Jesus Christ our Saviour; when we are still at the very first beginnings of a penitent, returning, obedient, pure, and godly, life; ay, when we are yet a great way off from all these things, our Father sees us, and has compassion on us, and comes to meet us. I do not know a sweeter or a more consoling scripture anywhere than just this,-"When he was yet a great way off." For, what grace is in that! What encouragement, what hope, what comfort, what life from the dead is in that! Blessed be the lips that told this whole incomparable story, and added to it these words of gold-"a great way off."

And, then, to sum up. This whole story, in every syllable of it, has its exact and complete fulfilment in ourselves every day. A prince

of Scripture exposition holds it to be doubtful whether our Lord intends under this family story to set forth the first conversion of a great sinner, or the repeated restorations of a great backslider. But the truth is, our Lord intends to set forth both; and much more than both. For not one, nor two, nor three, but all the steps and all the stages of sin and salvation in the soul of man, are most impressively and most unmistakably set before us in this masterpiece of our Master. From the temptation and fall of Adam, on to the marriage supper of the Lamb—all the history of the Church of God, and all the experiences of the individual sinner and saint, are to be found set forth in this most wonderful of all our Lord's histories. John Howe warns us that we must not think it strange if all the requisites to our salvation are not to be found together in any single passage of Holy Scripture. But, on the other hand, I will take it upon me to say that all the incidents and all the experiences of this evangelical history are to be found together in every soul of man who is under a full and perfect salvation. In a well-told story like this, all that the prodigal son came through, from first to last, must of necessity be set forth in so many successive steps and stages: the one step and stage following on the other. But that is not at all the case in the actual life of sin and grace in the soul. The soul is such that it is passing through all the steps and all the stages of sin and salvation at one and the same time. Some of the steps and stages of sin and salvation may be more present and more pressing at one time than at another time, but they are all somewhere or other within the soul, and are ready to spring up in it. We speak in our shallow way about the Apostle Paul being for ever out of the seventh of the Romans and for ever into the eighth. But Paul never spoke in that superficial fashion about himself. And he could not. For both chapters were fulfilling themselves within their profound author: sometimes at one and the same moment. Sometimes the old man was uppermost in Paul, and sometimes the new man; sometimes the flesh, and sometimes the spirit; sometimes the law and sin and death had Paul under their feet, and sometimes he was more than a conqueror over all the three. But, all the time, all the three were within Paul, and every page he writes, and every sermon he preaches, shows it. And so it is with ourselves, so far as this history, and so far as Paul's history, is our history. For, like the prodigal son, we are always having lewd stories told us about the far country. We are always dreaming of being at liberty to do as we like. We are always receiving our portion of goods, and we are always wasting our substance. We are always trying in vain to fill our belly with the husks that the swine do eat. And we are always arising and returning to our Father's house. In endless ways, impossible to be told, but by all God's true children every day to be experienced, every step and every stage of the prodigal's experience, both before he came to himself, and after it, is all to be found in the manifold, boundless, all-embracing, experience of every truly gracious heart. In His unsearchable wisdom, God has set both the whole world of sin, and the whole world of salvation, in every truly renewed heart. And that, not in successive and surmounting steps and stages, but at one and the same time. And that accumulating, complex, and exquisitely painful, state of things, will go on in every truly regenerate heart, till that day dawns when the greatest prodigal of us all, and the saddest saint of us all, shall begin to be merry.

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**John MacArthur - The Prodigal Son** (see [40 Lives in 40 Days: Experiencing God's Grace](#))

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."  
LUKE 15:21

The parable of the prodigal son is perhaps the greatest short story ever told. The character of the younger son—the Prodigal—has much to teach us about our plight as sinners and the unfathomable grace of God.

When we are first introduced to the younger son in Jesus' parable, the picture painted is that of a young man, probably in his teens and obviously filled with shameless disrespect for his father. For a son in that culture to request his inheritance early was tantamount to saying, "Dad, I wish you were dead. You are in the way of my plans. I want my freedom. And I want out of this family now. I have other plans that don't involve you, this family, or this estate. I want nothing to do with any of you. Give me my inheritance now, and I am out of here."

Faced with such a request, any self-respecting father in that culture would have felt he had to disgrace the son as publicly as possible. After all, it was the only way to avoid allowing the boy to bring a lasting reproach against the family's good name. Instead, the father in this parable "divided to them his livelihood" (Luke 15:12). It didn't take long for the real agenda behind the Prodigal's defiance to become clear: "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living" (v. 13). When the Prodigal arrived in the far country, he was a fat cat with a big bankroll. You can bet every con artist and lowlife in town set their sights on him. But whatever "friends" the Prodigal made in the pursuit of such a lifestyle were no true friends at all. When he ran out of cash, they were nowhere to be found.

Right after the Prodigal spent himself broke, "there arose a severe famine in that land" (v. 14). Here was an absolutely devastating turn of events. Consider how hard it must have hit the Prodigal. His father had met his every need and supplied him with every amenity from the day he was born. Now not only had the life of pleasure he sought come to a screeching halt, but also it was suddenly clear to him that the life of freedom he thought he would find was nothing like he anticipated.

Before long, the Prodigal found himself feeding swine—virtually the lowest and most possibly degrading chore in the whole hierarchy of labor. As he watched the pigs greedily devouring the carob pods he gave them, he found himself earnestly longing to fill his own stomach with the swine food. It was at this low point that he finally came to his senses and decided to return to his father's home,

not as a son—he had behaved too wretchedly for that—but as a servant.

As he drew near, the Prodigal must have rehearsed his plea dozens, maybe hundreds, of times: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants” (vv. 18–19). But as he drew closer to his family’s estate, he saw something in the distance—his own father, running toward him.

We can safely imagine that the father had been looking steadily, scanning the horizon daily, repeatedly, for signs of the boy’s return. How else could he have seen him while he was still a long way off? The father clearly wanted to reach the Prodigal before the boy reached the village—apparently to protect him from the outpouring of scorn and criticism he would surely have received if he walked through that village unreconciled with his father. The father himself would bear the shame and take the abuse instead. When the father spied his beloved lost son, he gathered up the hem of his robe and took off in a most undignified manner, truly eager to initiate forgiveness and reconciliation. This is indeed a fitting picture of Christ, who humbled Himself to seek and to save the lost—and then “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2). (40 Lives in 40 Days)

Like this father, He willingly took upon Himself all the bitter scorn, the contempt, the mockery, and the wrath our sin fully deserves. He even took our guilt upon His own innocent shoulders. He bore everything for our sake and in our stead.

What parallels do you see between your own attitudes and those of the prodigal son at the parable’s beginning?

Reexamine the son’s planned speech upon returning home. Does your heart reflect the same estimation of your standing before God? Why or why not?

What does Jesus’ characterization of the father in His parable tell you about God’s disposition toward undeserving sinners?

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**LESSON FROM THE PRODIGAL - Matthew Henry** - Now the condition of the prodigal in this ramble of his represents to us a sinful state, that miserable state into which man is fallen.

**[1.] A sinful state is a state of departure and distance from God** First, It is the sinfulness of sin that it is an apostasy from God. He took his journey from his father’s house. Sinners are fled from God; they go a whoring from him; they revolt from their allegiance to him, as a servant that runs from his service, or a wife that treacherously departs from her husband, and they say unto God, Depart. They get as far off him as they can. The world is the far country in which they take up their residence, and are as at home; and in the service and enjoyment of it they spend their all. Secondly. It is the misery of sinners that they are afar off from God, from him who is the Fountain of all good, and are going further and further from him. What is hell itself, but being afar off from God?

**[2.] A sinful state is a spending state:** There he wasted his substance with riotous living (Lk 15:13), devoured it with harlots (Lk 15:30), and in a little time he had spent all, Lk 15:14. He bought fine clothes, spent a great deal in meat and drink, treated high, associated with those that helped him to make an end of what he had in a little time. As to this world, they that live riotously waste what they have, and will have a great deal to answer for, that they spend that upon their lusts which should be for the necessary substance of themselves and their families. But this is to be applied spiritually. Wilful sinners waste their patrimony; for they misemploy their thoughts and all the powers of their souls, misspend their time and all their opportunities, do not only bury, but embezzle, the talents they are entrusted to trade with for their Master’s honour; and the gifts of Providence, which were intended to enable them to serve God and to do good with, are made the food and fuel of their lusts. The soul that is made a drudge, either to the world or to the flesh, wastes its substance, and lives riotously. One sinner destroys much good, Eccl. 9:18. The good he destroys is valuable, and it is none of his own; they are his Lord’s goods that he wastes, which must be accounted for.

**[3.] A sinful state is a wanting state:** When he had spent all upon his harlots, they left him, to seek such another prey; and there arose a mighty famine in that land, everything was scarce and dear, and he began to be in want, Lk 15:14. Note, Wilful waste brings woeful want. Riotous living in time, perhaps in a little time, brings men to a morsel of bread, especially when bad times hasten on the consequences of bad husbandry, which good husbandry would have provided for. This represents the misery of sinners, who have thrown away their own mercies, the favour of God, their interest in Christ, the strivings of the Spirit, and admonitions of conscience; these they gave away for the pleasure of sense, and the wealth of the world, and then are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessaries for their souls; they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is like a land where famine reigns, a mighty famine; for the heaven is as brass (the dews of God’s favour and blessing are withheld, and we must needs want good things if God deny them to us), and the earth is as iron (the sinner’s heart, that should bring forth good things, is dry and barren, and has no good in it) . Sinners are wretchedly and miserably poor, and, what aggravates it, they brought themselves into that condition, and keep themselves in it by refusing the supplies offered.

**[4.] A sinful state is a vile servile state.** When this young man’s riot had brought him to want his want brought him to servitude. He went, and joined himself to a citizen of that country, Lk 15:15. The same wicked life that before was represented by riotous living is

here represented by servile living; for sinners are perfect slaves. The devil is the citizen of that country; for he is both in city and country. Sinners join themselves to him, hire themselves into his service, to do his work, to be at his beck, and to depend upon him for maintenance and a portion. They that commit sin are the servants of sin, John 8:34. How did this young gentleman debase and disparage himself, when he hired himself into such a service and under such a master as this! He sent him into the fields, not to feed sheep (there had been some credit in that employment; Jacob, and Moses, and David, kept sheep), but to feed swine. The business of the devil's servants is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine; and how can rational immortal souls more disgrace themselves?

**[5.] A sinful state is a state of perpetual dissatisfaction.** When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by going to service; and he must be content with the provision which not the house, but the field, afforded; but it is poor provision: He would fain have filled his belly, satisfied his hunger, and nourished his body, with the husks which the swine did eat, Lk 15:16. A fine pass my young master had brought himself to, to be fellow-commoner with the swine! Note, That which sinners, when they depart from God, promise themselves satisfaction in, will certainly disappoint them; they are labouring for that which satisfieth not, Isa. 55:2. That which is the stumbling-block of their iniquity will never satisfy their souls, nor fill their bowels, Ezek. 8:19. Husks are food for swine, but not for men. The wealth of the world and the entertainments of sense will serve for bodies; but what are these to precious souls? They neither suit their nature, nor satisfy their desires, nor supply their needs. He that takes up with them feeds on wind (Hos. 12:1), feeds on ashes, Isa. 44:20.

**[6.] A sinful state is a state which cannot expect relief from any creature.** This prodigal, when he could not earn his bread by working, took to begging; but no man gave unto him, because they knew he had brought all this misery upon himself, and because he was rakish, and provoking to everybody; such poor are least pitied. This, in the application of the parable, intimates that those who depart from God cannot be helped by any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and the flesh (those gods which we have served) ; they have that which will poison a soul, but have nothing to give it which will feed and nourish it. If thou refuse God's help, whence shall any creature help thee?

**[7.] A sinful state is a state of death:** This my son was dead, Lk 15:24, 32. A sinner is not only dead in law, as he is under a sentence of death, but dead in state too, dead in trespasses and sins, destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ, no spiritual senses exercised, no living to God, and therefore dead. The prodigal in the far country was dead to his father and his family, cut off from them, as a member from the body or a branch from the tree, and therefore dead, and it is his own doing.

**[8.] A sinful state is a lost state:** This my son was lost—lost to every thing that was good—lost to all virtue and honour—lost to his father's house; they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God are lost souls; lost as a traveller that is out of his way, and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be lost as a ship that is sunk at sea, lost irrecoverably. [9.] A sinful state is a state of madness and frenzy. This is intimated in that expression (Lk 15:17), when he came to himself, which intimates that he had been beside himself. Surely he was so when he left his father's house, and much more so when he joined himself to the citizen of that country. Madness is said to be in the heart of sinners, Eccl. 9:3. Satan has got possession of the soul; and how raging mad was he that was possessed by Legion! Sinners, like those that are mad, destroy themselves with foolish lusts, and yet at the same time deceive themselves with foolish hopes; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

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**Prodigal** C. S. Lewis summed it up so well when he talked about that longing for someone else in this statement. "All of the things that ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of heaven. Tantalizing glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. If I find in myself a desire, which no experience in this world can satisfy the most probable explanation is that, I was made for another world. Earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy, but rather to arouse, to suggest the real thing."

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**Prodigal - Greg Laurie - ILLUSTRATION** - Consider this. Our aircraft today navigate electronically. They pick up radio or satellite signals using complicated equipment to translate this information so a pilot can tell where he is going. For years we know that birds can navigate great distances without any such devices. You have never seen a bird out flying with a little GPS unit. They have this natural homing instinct that God has placed inside of them. I read recently about a unique bird known as the Manx Shearwater which nests off of the coast of Wales. They had noticed that these birds had incredible homing instincts. As a test they took a number of them and tagged and released them at different points around the globe to see if they could find their way back to the coast of Wales. One of these was released in Boston some 3200 miles from home. In just 12 and ½ days that bird returned to his nest having traveled 250 miles a day from a place it had never been before to go back home again. I heard about another bird known as the Golden Plover. They normally live in Hawaii. In the summer they go to the Aleutian Isles 1200 miles from Hawaii. They mate. They have their eggs. The eggs hatch and the little fledglings are born. The Golden Plovers fly back and leave their fledglings to grow up a little. What is amazing is these little baby birds who have never been to Hawaii then make the journey 1200 miles away to a place they have never been before. It is that amazing homing instinct. I thin in a sense we all have that in us. A longing for something more. A homesickness for heaven. A desire to be in a relationship with God.

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## Some Things the Prodigal Wasted Luke 15:13

INTRODUCTION: Many people are confused about the Prodigal whom God is talking about. Primarily the Prodigal is a picture of Israel, but we learn a good lesson on drifting away and about the lost condition of a lesson we learn.

### 1. HE WASTED HIS LIFE

- a. Life is precious
- b. Life is short
- c. Life is to be given in account of

### 2. HE WASTED HIS MONEY

- a. All money received is a gift of God
- b. All money received should be spent wisely
- c. God allows us only what we can manage

### 3. HE WASTED HIS PRIVILEGES

- a. As son
- b. Access to Father
- c. Access to Father's Goods

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## Two Wayward Brothers

It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again. —Luke 15:32

The story of the prodigal son is actually the story of two wayward brothers and their loving father. It's a universal story that represents every member of the human race.

I can't fully identify with the prodigal. "Riotous living" is foreign to me. But the older brother's self-righteous attitude—now that resonates with my spiritual struggle. His sin was perhaps more serious than an out-in-the-open immoral lifestyle. That's because it was hidden—but easy to recognize when it surfaced.

Here are its characteristics: He chose anger instead of acceptance (Luke 15:28). He separated himself and "would not go in" (v.28). He said to his father, "this son of yours" (v.30), instead of calling him "my brother." Clearly, he hadn't experienced the wonder of grace.

Yet the father loved both sons unconditionally. With the prodigal, he ran out to welcome him. And with his older son, he "came out and pleaded with him" (v.28). There was no harsh scolding, just joy for the younger son and a longing heart for his older son. What a wonderful picture of how graciously God pursues us!

Which son represents you? Have you responded to your heavenly Father's immeasurable love? By Dennis J. DeHaan [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Naught have I gotten but what I received,  
Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed;  
Boasting excluded, pride I abase—  
I'm only a sinner saved by grace!  
—Gray

God's love changes prodigal sons into precious saints.