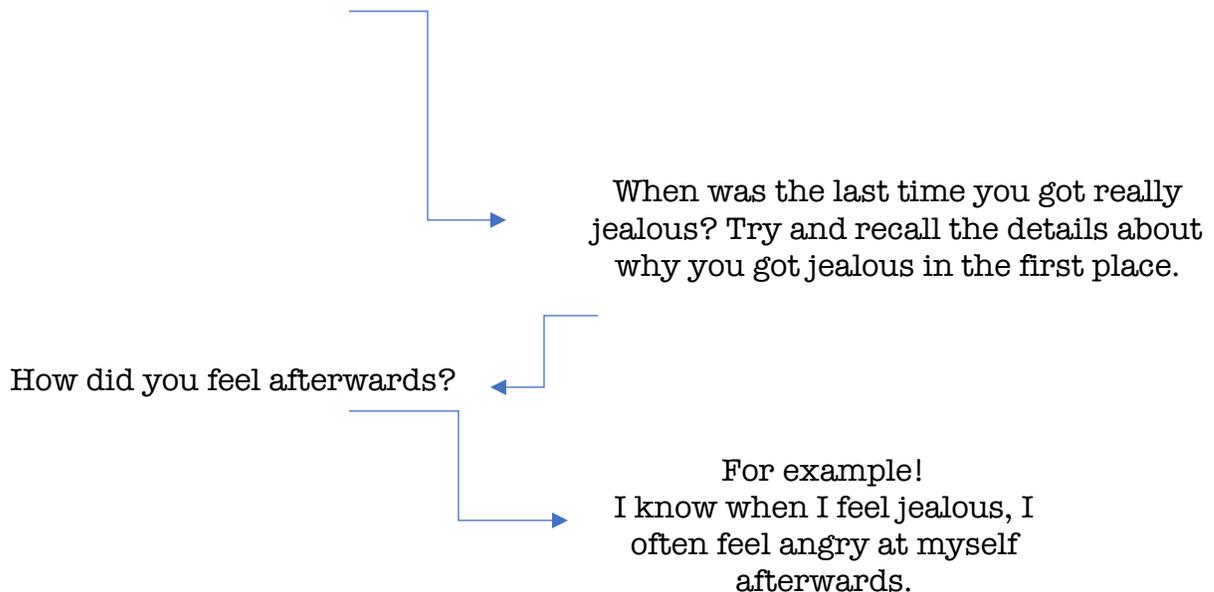


Youth July 10th, 2020

This week I thought we would switch things up and do a bible study instead of a video this week. You can follow this anyway you'd like, all in one day, or splitting it up over a couple of days. Today we are going to focus on a passage I use to really struggle with, but after learning more about it, and being challenged by it, I now see it as a reminder of how God changes hearts, because he changed mine!

So, the passage we'll be looking at is the story of the Prodigal Son, which you might already have heard. The specific passage is Luke 15:11-32. But first I want you to start by considering these questions.



Now I'd like you to read the passage. Read it in your own Bible or I've included it below. I would encourage you to read it slowly and to read it twice to help you understand it. Also highlight, underline, or make note of anything (words or phrases) that stands out to you.

“Luke 15:11-32 New Living Translation (NLT)

Parable of the Lost Son

11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. **12** The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

13 “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. **14** About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. **15** He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. **16** The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

17 “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, **19** and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’

20 “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. **21** His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’^[a]

22 “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. **23** And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, **24** for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, **26** and he asked one of the servants what was going on. **27** ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

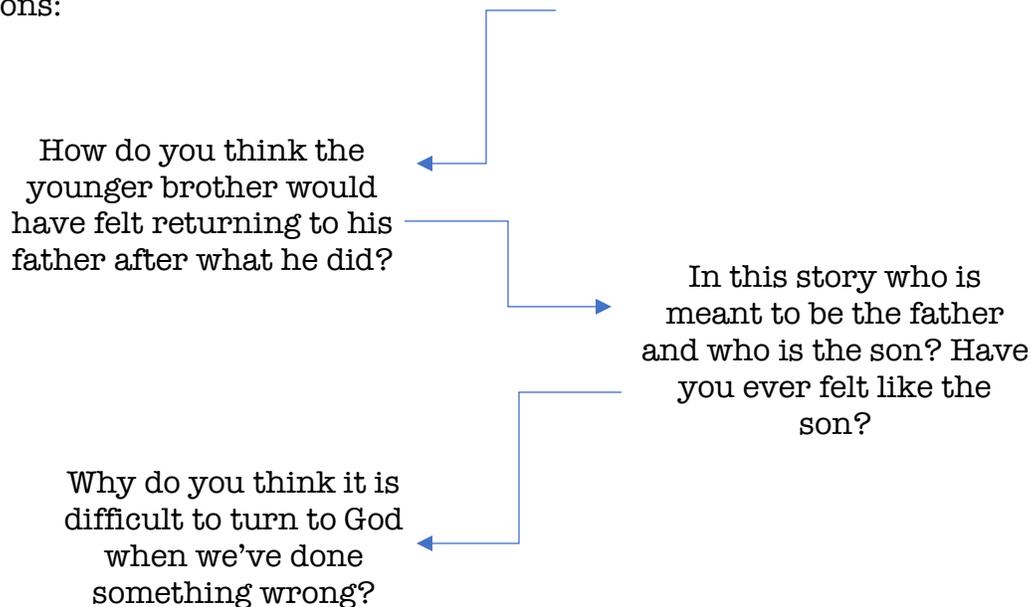
²⁸ “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹ but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

³¹ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³² We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

Footnotes:

- a. **15:21** Some manuscripts add *Please take me on as a hired servant.*

Now in this story there are 2 brothers and we will spend some time looking at both, but let's start with the younger brother first. Consider the following questions:



The younger brother had wasted everything his father had given him. He took it, squandered it, and when he had nothing left, he returned to his father. Yet despite all that had happened, when the son was still off in the distance, the father saw him, ran to him and forgave him (verse 24). God forgives us and welcomes us home to him no matter our baggage. Even if we've done everything

wrong, like the son, and turned from God, he still sees us when we are a long ways off and welcomes him home as one of his sons and daughters.

“ Grace come free of charge to people who do not deserve it and I am one of those people. I think back to who I was- resentful, wound tight with anger, a single hardened link in a long chain of ungrace learned from family and church. Now I am trying in my own small way to pipe the tune of grace. I do so because I know, more surely than I know anything, that any pang of healing or forgiveness or goodness I have ever felt comes solely from the grace of God.”

-Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace*, 42

Now let's take a look at the other brother. He was always the one I related to more, and where my problems with the passage came up. Reread the last part of the passage, verses 25-32.

Can you understand why the brother felt the way he did?
Why?

How do you think the brother felt seeing his younger brother return?

How would you have felt if you were the older brother?

What always troubled me about this passage was that I didn't think the older brother was in the wrong. I thought the brother was right for being angry. He had worked hard for his father all these years, stood by him, and never did

anything wrong (verses 28- 30). I felt like this a lot I worked hard, never did much wrong, yet saw all these people who were "Good Christians" with strong faiths who had done fewer good deeds than me.

Eventually, with help from mentors, teachers, and learning more about of this passage, I came to learn why the older brother was in the wrong. The older brother felt that his good actions (verse 29) made him worthy of their father's love, and that his brothers bad actions (verse 30) made him unworthy of their fathers love. I understood this, and I'm sure you do to. You don't have to look very far to see how we are judged, and deemed worthy or unworthy in society. We get jobs, friends, marks, based on our actions. We get into good schools or bad schools based on our marks and work, and we get punished, shunned, or turned

down based on the things we do wrong. Our worth in society is so often tied to our actions. Yet this isn't the case with God's love. The older brother's mistake was that he thought he had earned his father's love, that it could be bought with good deeds and loyalty. Yet this isn't the case. We are saved by God's love when we choose to accept God's love and to follow him, to have faith in him. No amount of good deeds could save us. The father tells the older brother in the last verse of the passage (32) that everything he has is his, why worry? God's love is bigger than any action, good or bad, and he loves us not because we did 100 good things, and he doesn't reject us because we've done 100 bad things. He is our father and we are his children and he loves us because we are.

"God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

-Ephesians 2:8-10, NLT

I wanted to talk about this passage to you today to encourage you all. As we've been talking about change I wanted to highlight this passage to remind you that God's love is unconditional. No matter where we're at, if we turn to Him he will accept us and love us no matter our actions. I pray that this encourages you and reminds you that you're worth God's love just as you are! If you have any questions, let me know!

Blessings,

Clare