



Read Luke 15v29b

What was wrong with this statement?

What kind of thinking did this show?

The brother believed he should receive special treatment because of his hard work. The Pharisees felt the same.

Do you?

Why did the father believe the son should have special treatment?



My son,' the father said,'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' Luke 15v31-32



What two things did the father tell him?

How do these apply to us?



Read 1 John 3v1-2

Who are we?

What is our position in Christ? Romans 8v16

What do we have?



It is amazing that God should call us His children, that He should promise to be with us all the time and should tell us that all that He has is ours. We need to live in this security. The older son's attitude caused him to miss out on all the father had for him. God's estate is very big we have nothing to lose. We have no reason to be petty or jealous. Everything God has is ours, we need to be aware of our inheritance. Our position in God gives us the ability to be magnanimous.

The challenge; to love how God loves; to forgive how God forgives; to accept how God accepts. We need to join the Father's celebration.

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The Older Brother



The parable of the lost son splits conveniently into two parts. The first part is centred around the younger son. It is heart warming and inspiring. The second, is about the older brother and is challenging, perhaps a little too close to home. So convenient is this split that the second part is often ignored, or mentioned only in passing. Reading the parable in context we discover that the first part is really a preparation for the second, it is the second part that contains the message Jesus wanted His hearers to understand.

So what did Jesus want to say to His hearers? His primary meaning that has not come out in the previous two studies. It comes as a shock to discover that many of us are not the prodigal but are in fact the older brother.



Read Luke 15v28-32

Read Luke 15v1-2

On the bases of these verses who are the parties in the parable?

The three parables of Luke 15 are told in response to the Pharisees criticism of Jesus. The Pharisees are the older brother and the sinners, that Jesus eat with, are the lost ones.

Jesus concluded a similar parable by warning the Pharisees; *"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. Matthew 21:31*



What did Jesus want the Pharisees to understand? Luke 19v9, Matthew 9v12

Why did Jesus associate with sinful people?

How did they respond to Him?

Why did the Pharisees have a hard time with this?

Were the Pharisees frightened that Jesus was lowering the standard?



Not the fatted calf!

What was the character of the older brother?

Was he good or bad?

Reliable or unreliable?

Considerate or inconsiderate?



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It would be easy to turn the older brother into the bad guy. He wasn't. He was everything a son should be. He loved his father and cared about him, he worked hard, obedient and faithful. Quite the opposite of the younger!

It would be easy to read into the story an animosity between the brother that predated the prodigals misadventure. If it was there Jesus is silent about it. The older brother acts like someone who has been hurt, genuinely offended.

How was his character in comparison with his younger brother?

How had the prodigal wronged his older brother?

How did the older brother react when his brother returned?



Was the older brother angry that the prodigal had return?

This is interesting we don't know how he felt about his brothers return! When talking to his father, he referred to him as 'this son of yours', not 'my brother' The father pointedly corrects him 'this brother of yours'. v32.



What accusations does he make against his younger brother? v30

He certainly wasted the money, but while it was the fathers money it had been given to him. About the prostitutes? We don't know and neither did the brother. No doubt rumours abounded. He was quick to assume the worst.



Did the older brother stand to loose out from the prodigals return?

No, the property was divided and remained his, (as his father pointed out to him,v31) The interest belonged to the father and was his to do with as he wished.



What did the older brother get offended at?

His problem was not his brothers return, but the way his father handled it. *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."* Luke 15v2

How did his father handle the return?



What accusation did he make against his father?

He was unjust in his dealings.



How would the older brother have wanted his father to handled it?

"Accept him back, sure, he is family after all. There should have been punishment, conditions, trial periods. Why not let him come back as a servant at least to start with. He should be made to learn from his mistakes. We should be justified and at the bottom line he should be just like me."

How should the older brother have responded?

Why did the father and son react so differently?

What was the older sons problem?

Did he understand his father?

What was his labour motivated by?

(What word does he use to describe his work?)



The older brother understood; discipline, duty, responsibility and obedience. He did not understand, his younger brother, mercy, grace, love or most of all his father. In verse 28 in is interesting that the older brothers indignation and self righteousness kept him outside the fathers house. He did not understand repentance , what it meant to be a son, or more importantly a father. He did not understand why his father behaved the way he did, or his continuing love for such a son. He thought everything came from merit and hard work.



Were James and John right? Luke 9v54

What did Jesus want the Pharisees to understand by telling them this parable?

How does it apply to us?



How were the brothers different?

How were they the same?

Of the two sons one was unrighteous, the other was self-righteous, both rebelled, both broke their fathers hearts, both ended up in a distant country (one physically the other spiritually and emotionally. Both wasted their inheritance. The Father had to come out to both of them and they both received his love.



How did the older son rebel?

How did the older brother waste his inheritance?

He rebelled because he disagreed with his fathers actions and refused to enter the house, despite his fathers pleading It was a very different rebellion, but a rebellion it was. He wasted his inheritance by thinking of himself as a slave.

How do each of them need to receive the Fathers love?

The prodigal need to receive the fathers love by changing his ways. The Older brother needed to change his attitude to his brother and his father.



We act like the older brother when:



The Father's reply to his son.

The older brother biggest failure was to appreciate what he had.

What did he have?