

What God is Really Like

WHAT GOD IS REALLY LIKE, PART 2: THE YOUNGER SON

If there's one thing that's true for all of us, it's that we will pursue our own desires and eventually come to regret it. It's a cycle in which we often find ourselves. Unfortunately, we tend to circle back to the same desires that got us in trouble in the first place. Often this is because we're afraid to come back home to our heavenly Father. We try to fix things on our own instead of coming home, where we can truly find peace and rest. What if we made the decision to come home—where we were intended to be all along? Maybe it's here we will realize that our dependence on the Father is what gives us true freedom in this life.

BIG IDEA: When we miss the Father's heart, we'll always end up away from home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe your relationship with your father.
2. Have you ever been lost? Maybe you got lost from your parents as a kid, or perhaps you were on a road trip and wandered away, not knowing where you were. How did you feel when you didn't know where you were or where to go next?
3. How did you end up finding your way?
4. We often find ourselves running from those who have been entrusted to look out for us (parents, bosses, teachers). Why do we do this? Do we do this with our heavenly Father as well? Why do so many of us have a tendency to run from God?
5. *With your Bible or the Bible App, read Luke 15:11–24.*

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.' 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.

Luke 15:11-24 (NLT)

6. Why do you think the younger son wanted to leave home and be on his own?
7. The prodigal son ran because "he thought he knew better." Was there a time in your life where you've run because you thought deep down you knew better than God?
8. Is there a time that you've thought: There is a life out there that God is trying to keep me from? What self-destructive place did that lead you to?

9. What did he realize when he was on his own—away from the father and his home? Why was he hesitant to head back home?
10. How did the father respond? Was it the way the son thought he would?
11. If you've ever found yourself running from God, do any of the following resonate with you?

Reason #1: He's going to be mad, and I don't want to face his anger.

Reason #2: He's embarrassed by me, and I've lost the relationship.

Reason #3: I just can't please him, and it will be exhausting to work my way back in.

12. Have you ever hit "rock bottom" and realized you were no longer in control? When you realized this, how did you respond?
13. Did this circumstance send you further away from your heavenly Father, or did it send you "home" to where he greeted you with open arms?

THINK ABOUT IT

This week, find some peace in knowing that you cannot run outside the boundaries of God's grace. Whether you're run from God in the past or you're running from him in some area right now, remember that as followers of Christ, we are people of the second chance. Think about an area you may be struggling with giving yourself or someone else a second chance. How can we pray for you?

Let's let the story of the prodigal son remind us that God is there to welcome us with open arms when we come back. So why wait?

MOVING FORWARD

There truly is no place like home. There is no better place than being at home with our heavenly Father, especially when we've pursued our own ways and spent time running away. If you have run away, would you be willing to come back home? Your heavenly Father is there with open arms and is ready to throw a party for you!

CHANGING YOUR MIND

The younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve.

Luke 15:13-14 (NLT)

