

What God is Really Like

WHAT GOD IS REALLY LIKE, PART 3: THE OLDER SON

We all have a tendency to judge others based on what we think they deserve. Maybe you've tried to do things the right way, but those who had no regard for the right way seemed to be rewarded. The truth is, when we overestimate our own righteousness and underestimate the grace we've been given, we can't help but judge others. In order to discover true peace, we need to shift our focus from others to ourselves and rest in the relationship we have with the Father.


BIG IDEA: We can be at home and still miss the heart of the Father.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Growing up, did you experience sibling rivalries with a brother or sister? If so, share a story of what happened and why.
2. Why do we tend to get upset when we see others being rewarded—particularly when we've attempted to do things “the right way” and they haven't?
3. Have you ever been frustrated or upset with God when this happens? Why?
4. *With your Bible or the Bible App, read Luke 15:25–32.*

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!' His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 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!'

Luke 15:25-32 (NLT)

5. Can you relate to the older brother in this story? Why do you think he was so frustrated? Do you think his frustration was justified? Why?
 6. Does God owe you? What happens when you relate to the Father as if he owes you?
 7. Chris said, “When you overestimate your own righteousness and underestimate the grace you've been given, you can't help but judge others.” Do you believe this statement is true?
 8. Our Big Idea says that, “Without a proper view of the Father, we can be at home and still miss the heart of the Father.” How can we “be at home” with God and still miss his heart?
 9. Would you say you are currently moving away from God or toward him?
 10. What can you do this week to focus on your relationship with your heavenly Father instead of on the lives of others?
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DIGGING DEEPER

1. *With your Bible or the Bible App, read Luke 15:1-32.* Describe the context for the parable about the prodigal son. (vs. 1-2) What is the connection between the other two parables; the lost sheep and the lost coin, and this third one the lost son? Describe 2 or 3 qualities of each character in the prodigal parable.
2. Why do you think Jesus might have chosen this story in the context of vs. 1-2 which describes the Pharisees and Scribes?
3. What was it that attracted the tax collectors and sinners to Jesus?
4. What problem did the Pharisees and Scribes have with Jesus in his welcoming sinners?
5. What areas in your life do you feel Jesus searching for you? Do you feel like the older brother sitting on the porch and refusing to go in or the younger brother who has been received with open arms by his loving father?

THINK ABOUT IT

Are you not experiencing joy in your life right now because your withholding grace to someone? Let the group pray for you to take the next step toward giving them a second chance.

MOVING FORWARD

When we focus on other people's relationship with God rather than on our own, we miss out on the joy of being his children. We miss out on the simple fact that he wants an intimate relationship with us. This week, make time to focus on the following:

1. Respond with repentance.
2. Receive the gift.
3. Recognize the relationship.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

His father said to him, "Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 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!"
Luke 15:31-32 (NLT)

