

Title: Misunderstanding the Father **Scripture:** Luke 15:11–32

Main Idea: Both sons in Jesus’ parable misunderstood the heart of their father. One thought life was found away from him, one was just didn’t leave. But real life is found only with the Father who welcomes home the repentant and delights in those who stay near.

Point 1: Life Away from the Father Leads to Death

Explanation: The younger son demanded his inheritance early, symbolically wishing his father dead. He believed real life and freedom were found away from the father’s rules and expectations. But after chasing pleasure, he hit rock bottom feeding pigs and realized the emptiness of his rebellion.

Truth: Sin promises life but always ends in death and emptiness.

Challenge: If you have wandered far from God, come to your senses and turn back. Repentance is not punishment; it is the doorway back to real life. The Father runs to meet those who return.

Point 2: The Father’s Heart is to Restore, Not Reject

Explanation: When the younger son came home, the father didn’t wait for groveling or probation. He ran to him, embraced him, and restored him fully as a son—robe, ring, and celebration. The Father’s joy was resurrection joy: his lost child was alive again.

Truth: God’s grace is not partial. He doesn’t make you earn your way back; he restores you completely.

Challenge: Stop living like a hired hand in God’s house. Live as a fully loved son or daughter. Receive the grace that has already been offered to you.

Point 3: Staying with the Father is a Joy, Not a Job

Explanation: The older brother stayed but served without joy. He saw himself as a slave instead of a son, resenting his father’s grace toward others. He too believed life was better elsewhere. The father reminded him, “You are always with me, and everything I have is yours.”

Truth: Joy is found in relationship with the Father, not in religious performance or comparison.

Challenge: Check your heart. Are you serving out of love or out of obligation? Ask God for renewed joy in being with him, and rejoice when others come home.

Reflection:

Both brothers were lost in different ways—one in rebellion, the other in resentment. Yet the Father went out to both. Whether you’ve wandered far or quietly grown cold, the Father is inviting you back to relationship. Real life is not out there or in your own effort. It’s found only with the Father who runs to meet you.

Devotion 1: The Far Country

Scripture: Luke 15:13–17 *"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... When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!'"*

Reflection: The far country always looks appealing from a distance. It promises freedom, excitement, and control. But what starts as “wild living” always ends with emptiness. The younger son learned that what looked like freedom away from the father was really slavery to sin. Only when he reached the end of himself did he finally see the truth—that life away from the father isn’t life at all. Sometimes the Lord allows us to hit bottom so we can finally look up.

Challenge: Ask yourself today if there’s an area of your life where you’ve been walking toward a “distant country.” What would it mean to “come to your senses” and turn back toward God in that area?

Devotion 2: The Running Father

Scripture: Luke 15:20–24 *"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."*

Reflection: In this single verse, Jesus gives us a picture of the gospel. The father doesn’t stand on the porch with crossed arms. He runs. He meets his son before a word of apology can even leave his mouth. That’s the heart of our God—he doesn’t wait for perfection, he responds to repentance. The robe, ring, and feast aren’t earned; they’re gifts from a Father who rejoices when his children come home.

Challenge: Maybe you’re hesitant to draw near to God because of shame, regret, or fear. Picture this scene in your mind: the Father running toward you. Let that image replace the lies about who God is. He’s not angry at your return—he’s overjoyed.

Devotion 3: The Joy of Staying Close

Scripture: Luke 15:28–31 *"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him... 'My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.'"*

Reflection: It’s possible to live in the Father’s house and still miss his heart. The older brother never left home, but he also never experienced joy. His service had become duty instead of delight. The Father gently reminded him that everything he longed for was already his—he just needed to enjoy it. Faithful service to God isn’t slavery; it’s the privilege of living in close relationship with him.

Challenge: If you’ve grown weary in your walk with God, ask him to restore your joy. Spend time this week not “doing” for God, but simply *being* with him. Let his presence remind you that life with the Father is the best place to be.