

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"OUT OF BREATH BUT NEVER OUT OF LOVE" | LUKE 15: 11-32 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What are the advantages of being the oldest sibling? The youngest?

"The Unrighteous Younger Brother" (Luke 15: 11-24)

In the parable, the unrighteous brother returns home and is greeted by his father who runs to him, gives him a robe, sandals and a ring, restoring him as a son with dignity and authority before He apologizes. **What does this show about God's love for people who are lost? How can Jesus followers love the lost like that today?**

"The Self-Righteous Older Brother (Luke 15: 25-32)

In the parable, the self-righteous older brother refuses to celebrate with the father out of anger over the grace being shown. **What does it show about someone when they get angry over grace?**

"Out of Breath but Never Out of Love"

In the parable the Father pursues both sons, goes to them when he didn't have to in that culture, showing love and offering second chances. **What are ways God pursues and gives second chances in our culture today?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

This parable powerfully shows that both the unrighteous and the self-righteous live for themselves and reject God's love, and yet God continues to pursue and shows love and grace to them both. **What are ways God has pursued you lately? Have you responded to His grace? Pray and ask God to clothe you with His love and to rejoice with His people.**

Out of Breath but Never Out of Love

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2-4 **Kel:** Women's Xmas. Month Giv. 678/Rise Winter Camp.
- B. Slide5 **Missions Prayer:** Tonight we will have *special updates about Nepal* and be sharing some photos and highlights. And then lift up our missionaries around the globe in prayer. Please join us at *6pm in the Agape room.
- C. **Prayer:** CS Lewis said, *Joy is the serious business of heaven.*

II. Slide6 **Intro:** Out of Breath but Never Out of Love

- A. Today we have a story about a compassionate **father** and his 2 *very different sons*.
- B. **Big idea:** There are 2 *ways* to be separated from the Father, and only 1 way home.
- C. You can be lost in your religion or in-religion.
- D. **Read 1,2 for setting.** Tax collectors and sinners = the younger brother.
The Pharisees & scribes = the elder brother.
 - 1. **Younger Bro:** irreligion. rule breaker. hedonistic. *chill/attitude.*
works/when inspired. visible sinner. uses people. unrighteous. Dirty sinners
 - 2. **Elder Bro:** religious. rule keeper. moralistic. *anger/attitude.* Clean sinners.
overworks. invisible sinner. condemns people. self-righteous.
 - a) **Which can you relate to?** If you were the younger brother, it's hard to live with an older brother, vice versa. *Whichever one you relate to, I bet your spouse is the opposite, which can make marriage difficult.*
- E. **We meet people in the Bible in both categories:**
 - 1. **Younger, bro:** woman at well/promiscuous.
Rich man (& Laz) Lk.16 spent everything he had on his self indulgent life.
 - 2. **Older bro:** Nicodemus, very religious (yet not saved).
The rich young ruler (I don't think I've broken a single command).
- F. **There are 3 ways to live:**
 - 1. Like the **younger** brother (living wild in sin) 2. Like the **older** brother, a rule

keeper, live self righteous (but not have a heart made alive by Jesus). 3. Or, *Come to Jesus* and be *made alive!*

III. Slide7 SCENE 1: THE UNRIGHTEOUS YOUNGER BROTHER (11-24) READ

A. (11) This 1st section tracks the younger brothers *rebellion* (11-16).

1. Give me my inheritance (1/3rd). He doesn't want to wait for his father to die. *I don't want you, I want your stuff.*
2. Please hear this, **to be lost is** not just to be in rebellion, **but** not loving your heavenly father.

B. (13) *he gathered all that he had* - Gk term *gathered*, he *converted his assets* (i.e. *turned livestock into currency*).

C. *He took a journey into a far country* - a great description of what it is to live in rebellion (far away from God).

1. It's really *any place in your heart or mind*, where you don't want God to know that you're there.
2. *Also*, the hardest thing for any parent to go through ... *to let them go.*

D. *He squandered his property in reckless living*, & even used his fathers \$ to pay for sex (vs.30).

1. I think ultimately what this story is speaking to is, *can man be happy apart from God? Not ultimately! Maybe for a season* (*sin offers fleeting pleasures*, Heb)
2. *The heart wants to escape from God*, *so* you look in other places, looking for what only God can give you.
 - a) That's why it's been said, "*Everyone who knocks on the door of a brothel is ultimately looking for God.*"

3. Slide8a Augustine said, "*Because God has made us for Himself, our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.*"

E. (16) He couldn't find work so this Jewish boy settled for working for a *gentile pig farmer*. *Next* is *wanting* to eat with the pigs, *and then* the phrase *no one gave him anything* (sit there for a minute).

1. **Modern day:** he needs rehab. he needs a bath. he needs food. he needs a job. he needs a friend. *He's Alone!*
 - a) Sounds like Eric Clapton's song, *Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out.*
- F. Wow, how do you love *the younger brother*. Well, *the father* shows us how.
- G. **Slide8b (17) When he came to himself** - Do you remember the moment when you came to yourself?
1. Mine was in my friend Dave's tricked out Volkswagen bug. After a week of partying in Newport Beach. On a Friday night when I said Dave, *There's got to be more to life than this. And there was*, Kelly invited me to church that Sunday. I reluctantly went, but ended the service with, "I want to know my **God**, like he (the pastor) knows his **God**, and I want to know my *Bible like he knows his Bible.*"
- H. **My fathers hired servants have more than enough bread** - he recalled his father is *gracious*.
1. He's driven home at *the prospect of mercy*. He remembers *what kind of father he is, and what kind of character he has*.
 2. It was not *the badness of his life but the goodness of his father* that brought him to his father. *The goodness of God leads you to repentance Rom.2:4*
- I. (18) *I will arise and go to my father* - This is repentance, *turn and go*.
1. He comes up with a good humble plan.
 2. **How did the Pharisees expect the story to end?**
- J. **Slide8c (20) But while he was a long way off** - He watched for His son. Oh the patience of **God**. (modern Christian hymn, Stuart Townend) *How deep the Father's love for us, How vast beyond all measure. That He should give His only Son. To make a wretch His treasure.*

K. Slide8d Look at all **the verbs** in vs.20: *father saw him, felt compassion, ran, embraced him, and kissed him.* (to kiss fervently, *the sign of forgiveness.* LKGNT)
Covered with kisses!

1. The Gospel isn't *if you fly-right you get a hug.* No, you get a hug at the beginning.

L. Slide8e He ran - (Spurgeon) *"The Father may be out of **breath**, but never out of **love**"*

M. A Robe, Shoes/sandals, & a Ring:

1. The robe speaks to his **identity**.

2. The sandals speak to **dignity** (slaves didn't own, *just Masters/Sons*).

3. The ring speaks to **authority** (signet ring, seal, *the fathers signature*).

a) **Identity. Dignity. Authority.** The Father knows what you need today!

N. (23,24) Dad doesn't throw *a fit*, He throws *a party!*

1. An observation. There are actually 2 characters unhappy when the son comes home, **the older brother ... and the calf!**

2. And side-note: he doesn't say let's have *a kale salad*, **but instead**, let's kill a Cow!

O. (24) My son - 1 Jn3:1 *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called **children of God**; and so we are.*

P. This is the kids journey: *He is sick of home. Then he is sick. Then he's home sick. And now he's home!*

IV. Slide9 **SCENE 2: THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS OLDER BROTHER (25-32) READ**

A. Grace makes you glad, legalism makes you mad.

B. (28) Pouting on the porch - he refused to go in.

C. But his father came out - didn't *command* him to come in. Come in son, *rejoice w/me.*

D. (29) These many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command -

1. It was really an issue w/*dad*, not brother. An issue w/his *mercy, grace, forgiveness* (just like the Pharisees).

2. He sees *dad* more like **his boss**, than a *father*.

3. He's *keeping score*. He's *earning* his way. He comes on his merits.

4. Outwardly **morality** is good, inwardly it's a serious problem.

a) Sure you would want to choose **morality vs immorality**, but morality will not keep you out of hell. *He was still lost, even though he never ran away!*

5. "He's a prodigal w/o the guts to leave!" (Piper)

E. (30) More self righteousness here. How dare you be **gracious** with him!

F. Wow, how do you love *the older brother*. Well, *the father* shows us how.

G. (31) The father pleads with his son again to *come into the party*.

H. And then the story just ends.

1. Did the older son go in? We're left with this cliffhanger.

2. I think here **we** are called to enter into the story. Which son are we like?
And have we entered in?

V. Slide10a **OUT OF BREATH BUT NEVER OUT OF LOVE**

A. This story is about the love of God. God is our Father.

1. He is not a **lifeguard** where we just *cry out when we're desperate*.
He's not a **butler** there to *do our bidding*, but he is **our Father**.

2. He is a father to the fatherless. And yet tonight, millions of children will go to bed without a father :(

3. Maybe **you've** had a **distant** father, or **no** father, or an **abusive** father, *and I'm sorry*. And this morning I want you to see *what kind of father is presented to us in the story*. **This is our Father!**

4. He is majestic, transcendent, and Holy, but he is also *loving, forgiving, and near*. We can cry out *Abba father*, and He hears us!

B. Slide10b Note the Father *goes out looking for both* lost sons. [Tax collectors/sinners. Pharisees/scribes]

- C. What we **don't see** is whether the **younger son** changed his life, cleaned up his act. We don't know what happens next. **And** whether the older son went into the party?
1. **Maybe that's the point. Because we never know what happens next.**
 - a) **Therefore** we cannot wait or holdback our love and forgiveness from so called **sinners**, **until** we see how they're going to behave themselves.
 2. **Because our love and forgiveness *might determine* what happens next!** How do they respond. How do we respond. How welcoming are we when they come home.
 3. **Read 20,21 over again. Read it again to get the order, **forgiveness than repentance**. The **kiss** came before the **confession**. *Not, go clean up and then we'll talk.* Rom.5:8 **God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.****
- D. ***Can you imagine the story if the younger brother 1st ran into his older brother?**
1. **Who do you think you are?** You can't come back. **After you've hurt our dad and shamed the family name. *Oh ok, good idea, go work with the slaves.***
- E. **Some don't come home for fear of the Fathers judgment** (they haven't heard of His prodigal love).
1. **But I believe even more people don't come home because they are afraid of **OUR** judgment!** (all of our **rules** and *regulations*. **Plus** they just aren't going to **fit in** here anymore).
- F. **Listen this morning if you're in a far country** - you're not coming home to the **anger** of God, you're coming home to **the love of God**. **Just come to your senses.**
- G. **Slide10c What was different in the story of *the lost sheep & coin*?** No one went out looking for the lost younger son.
1. It was actually **the elder brothers job**. He **was** to be **his brothers keeper**.
 2. He didn't go to find him in our story because **the Pharisees** are **not** the **solution**.

3. The older brother in that day would have said, *I will go look for him, and even lay down my life for him.*

a) **But good news** we do have *a true older brother*, his name is **Jesus**.

b) *For God, so loved the world that he didn't send a Pharisee.*

4. Hebrews, *"He is not ashamed to call you brother."*

H. Today we have sitting in this room (& online), **rescued** younger brothers and **rescued** elder brothers.

I. Keywords: righteous, Father, celebrate.