

Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31)

The Parable of the Lost Son is also known as the Parable to the Prodigal Son. Prodigal means “to spend money lavishly but wastefully and recklessly. Listen carefully to each part of the parable - what is Jesus saying about each person?

1. What is Jesus saying about the younger son’s actions and what they reveal about his character?

He also said, “A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.’ So he distributed the assets to them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything. (Luke 15:11-16, CSB)

2. What is Jesus saying about what the younger son learned from the consequences of his actions?

When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! I’ll get up, go to my father, and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.”’ So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son.’ (Luke 15:17-21, CSB)

3. What did Jesus reveal about the father? What was important to the father?

“But the father told his servants, ‘Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let’s celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ So they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:22-24, CSB)

4. What did Jesus reveal about the older son? What was important to this son? What does Jesus repeat?

“Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he summoned one of the servants, questioning what these things meant. ‘Your brother is here,’ he told him, ‘and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

“Then he became angry and didn’t want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. But he replied to his father, ‘Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’

“‘Son,’ he said to him, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’” (Luke 15:25-31, NKJV)

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Teacher Notes

The Parable of the Lost Son is also known as the Parable to the Prodigal Son. Prodigal means “to spend money lavishly but wastefully and recklessly. Listen carefully to each part of the parable - what is Jesus saying about each person?

In this lesson, the teacher is reading the passage of each question. Read with flourish, expression, and action. Make the Jesus’ parable come alive to illustrate to the student what the point of the parable is.

1. What is Jesus saying about the younger son’s actions and what they reveal about his character?

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Ask the student: what right does a son have to his father’s personal money? If you received a thousand dollars, would you spend it all quickly? What would you buy? Did the son have enough money to buy food?

Inform the student: in the first century, a father would pass down all of what he owned to his sons. That is not true today.

The younger son spent all of his inheritance on foolish living. Without money, he was unable to buy anything to eat, and he ate what he could from the pig feed.

2. What is Jesus saying about what the younger son learned from the consequences of his actions?

When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! I’ll get up, go to my father, and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.”’ So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son.’ (Luke 15:17-21, CSB)

Ask the student: what does it mean when the young son “came to his senses?”

Help the student see what the son realized – the reality / truth of his life: a) his father’s hired workers had food, and b) what he did was foolish and unworthy to be his father’s son.

Ask the student: what was the son’s thought process and attitude in coming back home?

Help the student with his observation of the son’s confession and humble / contrite return home.

3. What did Jesus reveal about the father? What was important to the father?

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Ask the student: what do you learn about the father's love? How do you know the father forgave his son? Why did the father celebrate his son's return? How important was the money to the father?

4. What did Jesus reveal about the older son? What was important to this son? What does Jesus repeat?

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Ask the student: what do you observe are the reasons for the oldest son resentment of the younger son?

Ask the student: is the oldest son comparing himself to the younger son? What do you observe of the oldest son that indicates his pride?

Ask the student: what did the father emphasize? What really matters in life?

Ask the student: who is the lost son? Who is the obedient son? Who is the father?