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Developing The Heart Of The Father

LUKE 15:25-32

Introduction

1. Have you ever been criticized?
 - a. Was it for something which you did with good motives and intentions?
 - b. Was it for something in which you were right for doing what you did, but others, for whatever reason didn't see it that way?
2. I don't know that any of us like to be criticized, but if we live very long upon this earth, we will be criticized.
 - a. Some criticisms are just because we have acted in an unjust way.
 - b. However, other criticisms are the result of jealousy or resentment on the part of the one criticizing.
3. Jesus was often criticized by those who should have known better — the religious leaders of His day.
 - a. He didn't fast like they did (Luke 5:33).
 - b. He violated their concept of the Sabbath (Luke 6:2,7;14:1-6).
 - c. He associated with the wrong people (Luke 7:39).
 - d. He cast out demons which they reasoned was by the power of Beelzebul (Luke 11:15).
 - e. He didn't adhere to the ceremonial traditions (Luke 11:38).
2. At the beginning of Luke 15, from which our reading was taken today, we find them at it again.
3. In verse 2, Luke records for us these words — “Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with

them” (Luke 15:2, NASB95).

4. So, Jesus tells three parables to explain to them why He spent time with the people He did — the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son.
5. We looked at the first part of this last parable two weeks ago and saw the Father’s response to his son’s return:
 - a. He ran to meet him.
 - b. He instructed his servants to put the best robe on his returning son, “a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet” (v. 22).
 - c. He had them kill “the fattened calf” so that they could “eat and celebrate.”
6. The family is together again and all is well, or so it seems.
7. However, as you heard from our reading this morning, there is a family member who is not at all happy with the younger son’s return — it is his older brother.
8. Because he had been out in the field working, apparently some distance from the house, he did not know that his brother had returned.
9. Jesus tells us that when he came home he heard the sound of “music and dancing” coming from the house.
 - a. When you read this, you have to ask yourself, “When was the last time he heard such sounds coming from the family home?”
 - b. Was it a time before his younger brother left home?
10. He quickly found one of the servants and asked him the reason for all the excitement.
11. The servant immediately proclaimed, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.” (Luke 15:27, NASB95)

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“But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.” (Luke 15:28, NASB95)

12. He couldn't believe his ears.
 - a. His worthless brother had come home, and to beat it all, they were throwing a party for him.
 - b. The longer he thought about it the angrier he became — he was boiling mad.
 - c. There was no way he was going into that house.
13. When his father learned of this he went out to plead with his son to come inside.
14. As we look at the rest of this parable which Jesus tells, I want to encourage each of you to look inside yourself and ask, "Whose heart do I most reflect, that of the father or the older son?"

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[It all begins with . . .]

I. A Matter of Perspective

“But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’”

(Luke 15:29–30, NASB95)

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A. SINS OF PASSION

1. One groups of sins which can lead us far away from God are those we call sins of passion.
2. The apostle John described such sins as the “the lust of the flesh” and “the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16).
3. Hollywood has capitalized on these and done very well over the years.
4. The younger son pursued them as soon as he could get out from under his father's feet.

5. Jesus tells us that he “went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living” (v. 13b,NASB95)
6. Even the older son accused his brother of devouring his father’s wealth “with prostitutes” (v. 30).
7. Such sins are evident by the things which a person may do.

Slide 5**B. SINS OF ATTITUDE**

1. Here in His parable, Jesus points to another group of sins which also distance us from our Father — sins of attitude.
2. He tells us that it is possible to leave the Father without ever leaving the farm.
3. The older son was no doubt considered a “good man” by those in his community.
 - a. He was a respectable, obedient, dutiful son.
 - b. He did all the right things in all the right ways.
 - c. He was dependable, industrious — He wasn’t wasteful.
 - d. He had a good sense of what was morally right.
4. The older brother was good on the outside, but . . . something was missing.
5. How many of us here today would have the same things said about us, but deep in our heart of hearts there is something still missing.

Slide 6**II. A Matter of the Heart****A. HE DID NOT SHARE HIS FATHER’S HEART**

1. He did not have the same loving heart as his father.
2. In truth, he was sorry that his younger brother had come home.
3. How many of us look good on the outside to those around us but our heart is out of tune with our Father?

4. Notice that the older son never says, "this brother of mine," but "this son of yours" (v. 30).
5. Hatred and jealousy rule his heart.
6. We can just hear him saying, "I knew this would happen."
7. The older son was jealous that his brother got to do what he wanted with no apparent consequences.
8. We can just hear his arguments to his father:
 - a. "For so many years I have been serving you."
 - b. "I have never neglected a [single] command of yours."
9. In his mind, this wasn't fair. He wanted justice!
10. His younger brother should be disowned, not honored (cf. Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

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[Not only did the older brother not share his father's heart . . .]

B. HE DID NOT SHARE HIS FATHER'S JOY

1. This older brother is so consumed by the issue of fairness that he cannot rejoice at the beneficial transformation that has come to his brother.
2. His argument to his father is . . .
 - a. "I have been a faithful and obedient"
 - b. "I have worked for you like a slave"
 - c. "But you have never rewarded me or celebrated anything which I have done"
 - d. "Now, this son who has wandered and squandered what you worked so hard for is given a huge celebration."
3. What is it that Jesus was seeking to communicate to his listeners in that day and to us here today?
 - a. It is that God's action toward all who repent is gracious, not deserved.
 - b. Our response should not be to compare how we are treated in relation

to those who repent, but to remember that repentance yields the same gracious fruit to all, so it is just.

- c. Repentance represents a new direction which someone chooses to take in their life and we should share in the joy of that changed direction.

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III. Understanding The Father's Heart

A. WE ARE ALWAYS WITH OUR FATHER

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.’” (Luke 15:31, NASB95)

1. The father begins by addressing his son with a term of affection **Τέκνον** (child) or “my child”.
2. He affirmed his older son's faithfulness and the special place he held in his father's heart.
3. He acknowledges that his son has always been at his side.
4. He reminded him that all he owns belongs to him.
5. In no way has his status been diminished in his father's eyes.
6. The same is true for each of us who are Christians here today.
 - a. We still hold a special place in our Father's heart.
 - b. We have been at His side since the day we first obeyed the gospel and nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).
 - c. Each of us still has an inheritance awaiting us in heaven which “can never perish, spoil or fade” (1 Peter 1:4, NIV84).

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B. WE HAVE TO CELEBRATE AND REJOICE

“But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and

has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.” (Luke 15:32, NASB95)

1. The father does not allow his oldest son to separate himself from his brother — he calls him “this brother of yours.”
2. In other words, he is saying, “he is not just my son, he is your brother.”
3. It is not only appropriate that we celebrate, it is necessary — it is morally right.
 - a. A dead brother is now alive.
 - b. That which was lost has been found.
4. This should cause us to rejoice, not ask questions about fairness.

Conclusion

1. Did the father get through to his elder son?
2. Did the elder son apologize to his father and go join the celebration?
3. Did he hug his brother and welcome him home?
4. We will never know.
5. More importantly, our Lord wants us to examine our own hearts.
6. How do we respond to those who repent and come home?
7. Do we welcome them with open arms and rejoice at their return?
8. Or, do we hold them at arm’s length, resentful of their repentance, hoping they will fail?
9. Whether you are struggling with sins of passion or attitude, our Father patiently pleads with you to come home.
10. He is waiting to welcome you home!