



*Teachings of the Teacher – A study in the parables of Jesus*  
*The Prodigal Sons*

**Luke 15:11-32**

**Lesson 13**

This parable is often called *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*. Yet, it is not the son upon which our focus should lie, but rather, on the loving kindness and mercy of the father; the joy of the father in his son's return. We may identify with the younger and older sons in this story and learn much from them. But may the impetus of this story in our lives be an adoration of our heavenly Father who adores us and will not rebuke us when we return to Him. Instead, with all of heaven, He will celebrate.

**OBSERVATION: Read Luke 15:11-32**

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they were about?
2. Key words help us to better understand a parable. We have listed below key words of this parable. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text.  
  
Key Words: words that refer to *Jesus*, the *father*, the *younger son*, and the *older son*  
*merry/glad*, and the phrases *was dead and is alive again*, *was lost and is found*
3. The contrasting word *but* is used six times. Mark each time this word is used. Choose one of the times this word is used. Record what is being contrasted and the significance of the contrast.
4. The term of conclusion, *therefore*, is used once. Mark it as a key word and record the conclusion stated.

## CONSIDER THESE THINGS:

1. In what way did you and your siblings compete with each other?
2. How do you feel when other people get rewards greater than they deserve?
3. How do you normally react when you feel you have been treated unfairly?

## THE REBELLION: Read Luke 15:11-16

1. At the request of his younger son, the father *divided his livelihood* to his sons. The older son used his inheritance responsibly. What did the *younger son* do with *his possessions*?
2. An antonym to the word *prodigal* is "using restraint". In what way is *prodigal* living evidence of a life without restraint?
3. According to verse 15, what was the result of the younger son's *wasting of his possessions* and *spending all*?
  - a. To whom did this young man go to seek help?
    - 1.) Record the warning of Isaiah 31:1
    - 2.) Read Psalm 107:11,12 and record the consequences of Israel's rebellion.
4. Using verse 16, describe how bad it got for this *prodigal*.
  - a.) Ponder the phrase *and no one gave him anything*. What do you think that was like for him?

## THE REALIZATION: Read Luke 15:17-19

1. Luke 15:16 ends with the phrase *and no one gave him anything*. Many in this situation would blame others, blame God, or sink into self pity. This young man did not. Rather, we see a young man *who came to himself*. What does a person realize when he *comes to himself*?
  - a. According to Luke 15:17, what did the younger son realize?
    - 1.) Read the words of the Lord to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 18:27-28. What does God call the *wicked* to do?
    - 2.) Although, as we read in Psalm 107:11,12, there was no *help* for Israel while they were *rebellious*, what happened when they cried out to God for *help*? Psalm 107:13,14
  2. After *coming to himself*, the younger son decided to *arise and go to his father*. According to Luke 15:18, 19, what three things did he determine to say to his *father*?
    - a. *I have sinned against heaven and before you*. What was his sin against heaven?
      - 1.) Consider the words of the Lord regarding rebellious Israel in Leviticus 26:40-42. What can we learn about God's attitude regarding rebellion and confession?
    - b. In what ways do the son's statements in Luke 15:19 reveal a repentant heart?
  3. The God of the Old Testament has been mistakenly viewed as a God of vengeance by many. Yet, the Old Testament is filled with God's cry to His people to return to Him. This young man probably knew those promises. How does it help you to know Scripture when you are hurting and have lost your way?

## THE RETURN: Read Luke 15:20

1. *And he arose and came to his father*. Stop. Meditate on those words. What are your thoughts?

2. The son might have been taking a risk, returning to his father. He might have been facing rejection and retribution. What do you think this younger son knew about his father?
  - a. What do you know about God, that causes you to know it will be a good thing to return to Him, when you have gone astray?
  
3. Read Psalm 32 and record some of David's conclusions as he realized the pain of sin and the joy of forgiveness.

**THE RECEPTION: Read Luke 15:20-24**

1. *But, when he was still a great way off...* Reflect upon the pain this son had caused his father. List just a few thoughts and reactions the father "could have" had.
  
2. According to Luke 15:20, what did the *father* do?
  - a. Define the word *compassion*.
  
3. Psalm 86:5,15 reflect the heart of our heavenly Father. What do they teach us?
  
4. Record the promise of 1 John 1:9.
  - a. How have you personally experienced the forgiving love of the Father?
  
5. The *father* in this story was taking a chance in accepting the son so unconditionally. What was his risk?

- a. From your perspective, is it best to err on the side of grace or on the side of caution? Why?

Personal: Is there a relationship in your life where you may need to rethink your reaction?  
Take a moment and ask the Lord what He sees.

6. Using Luke 15:22-24, record the father's response to the son's return.

- a. Describe the thoughts and emotions each may have been experiencing:

*the father*

*the younger son*

### **THE REJECTION: Read Luke 15:25-32**

1. Back in the field, the older son *heard music and dancing*. Curious, he asked a servant *what these things meant*. What did the servant tell him?
2. Summarize the response and interaction of the *older son* with his *father*. Luke 15:28-32
  - a. What words would you use to describe the attitude of the *older son*?
  - b. Notice, the statements made by the *older son* were true statements. Yet, his heart was not in a good place. Read and record the attitude God is looking for as stated in Luke 17:10.
    - 1.) How did the older son's attitude differ from the attitude of Luke 17:10?
3. This parable followed the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, parables directed at the Pharisees. In what ways were the Pharisees like the *older son*?
4. Think about the contrasts in Luke 15:24, 32, *dead and alive; lost and found*. How do you relate to them?

**REVIEW: Read Luke 15:11-32**

1. What can we learn from the example of:

*the younger son*

*the father*

*the older son*

2. What does this parable reveal to you about God's love and forgiveness?
3. What have you learned about extending mercy?

*I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I have not hidden.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"  
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.  
Selah - Psalm 32:5*

## Observation Worksheet

### Luke 15:11-32

Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup>And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. <sup>13</sup>And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. <sup>14</sup>But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. <sup>15</sup>Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup>And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, <sup>19</sup>and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ' <sup>20</sup>And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; <sup>24</sup>for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. <sup>25</sup>Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup>And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' <sup>28</sup>But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup>So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' <sup>31</sup>And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "