

Reflection Questions: Luke 15:25-32

For the message, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son(s)?" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on January 23, 2022

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Luke 15:25-32 & context

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them"....

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' "

20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in.

His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'

31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- Do you find yourself identifying more with the younger son or the older son? Why is that?
- Describe for a moment how the older brother viewed his relationship with his father. And then describe the accusation he puts to his father. Put these in your own words.
- In his book, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Henri Nouwen candidly admits, "The more I think about the elder son, the more I recognized myself in him.... He was obedient, dutiful law-abiding, and hard-working.... But when confronted by his father's joy at the return of his younger brother, a dark power erupts in him and boils to the surface. Suddenly, there becomes glaringly visible a resentful, proud, unkind, selfish person, one that had remained deeply hidden, even though it had been growing stronger and more powerful over the years. The more I reflect on the elder son in me, the more I realize how deeply rooted this form of lostness is and how hard it is to return home from there. Returning home from a lustful escapade seems so much easier than returning home from a cold anger that has rooted itself in the deepest corners of my being."
 - What, if anything, resonates with you in this quote?
 - How do you see the danger of having a "cold anger that has rooted itself in the deepest corners of my being"? What makes that especially hard to return home to God the Father?

2. Let's think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus' followers.

- How do you think the parable of the lost sons, and especially the part about the older son, challenge churches in our area? In other words, how would you know if the impact of this story that Jesus told in light of the grumbling of the Pharisees in verses 1-2 has happened or not?
- How does this parable help us to understand the kind of church we want MHC to be? Or to put it another way, how would we as a community of faith know we are in sync with the Father's heart, and not off in the 'far country' of our own self-righteousness? How would we know?

3. Let's think about how this text applies to our city.

- How could you use the truth of this parable to answer a person's objection that Christians are just a bunch of self-righteous hypocrites?
- How does this text help us understand God's mission in our city? In other words, how is the Good News of Jesus good news for the unchurched and also the church?

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life?