



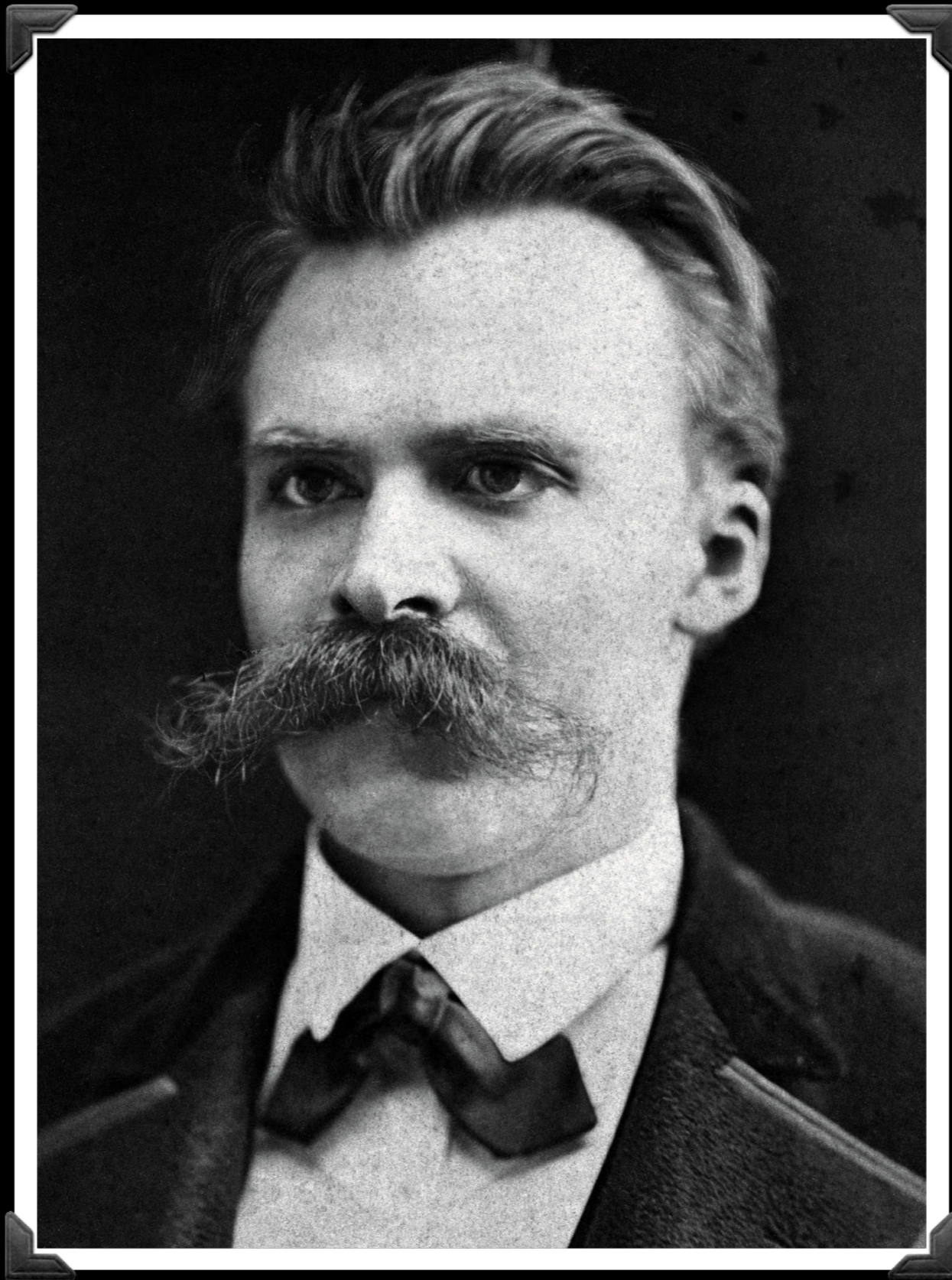
The Parable of the Lost Son(s)?

— The Gospel of Luke 11:11-32 —



THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY FOR ALL PEOPLE



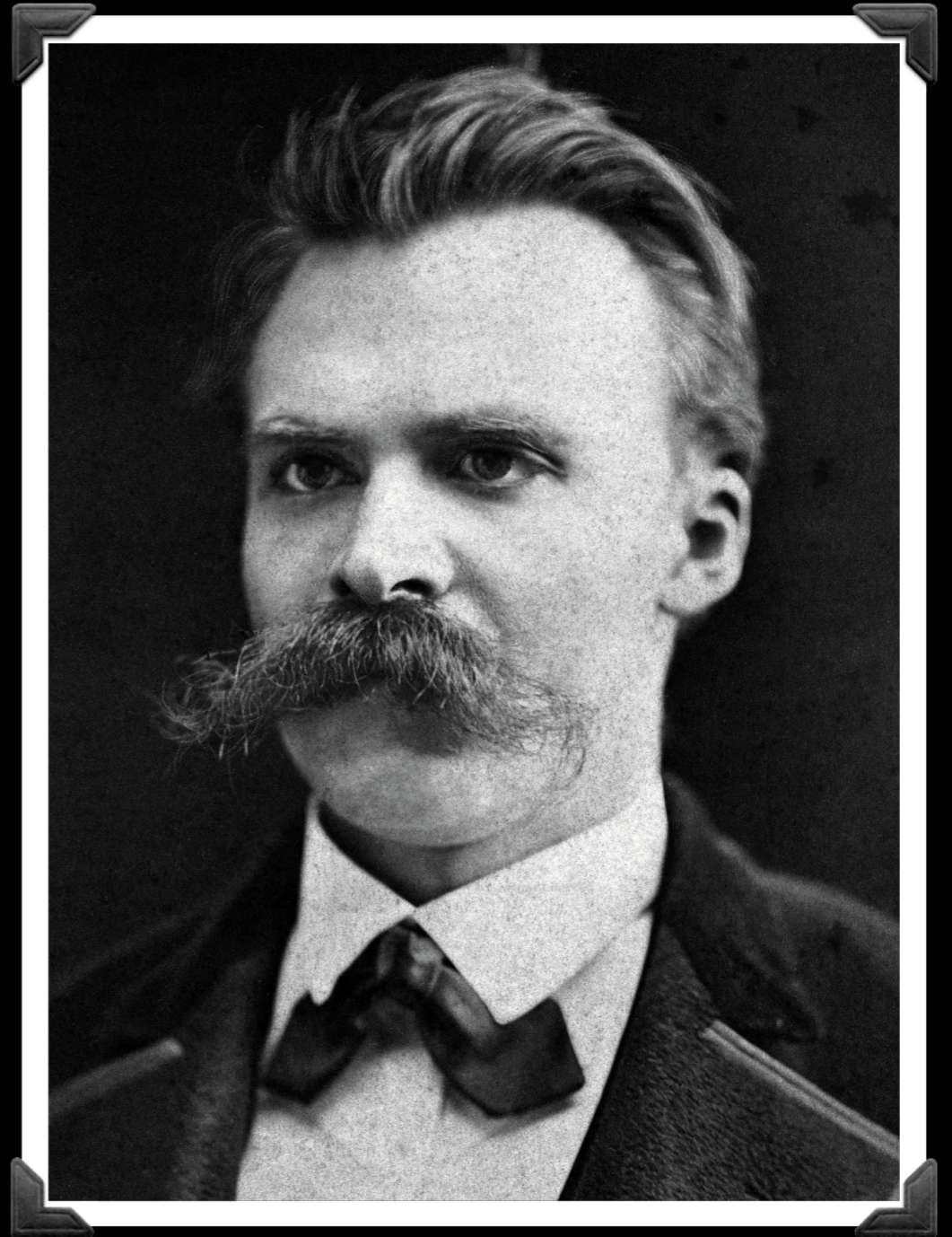
Fredrick Nietzsche

— 1844-1900 —

**I would only
believe in a God
who could dance.**

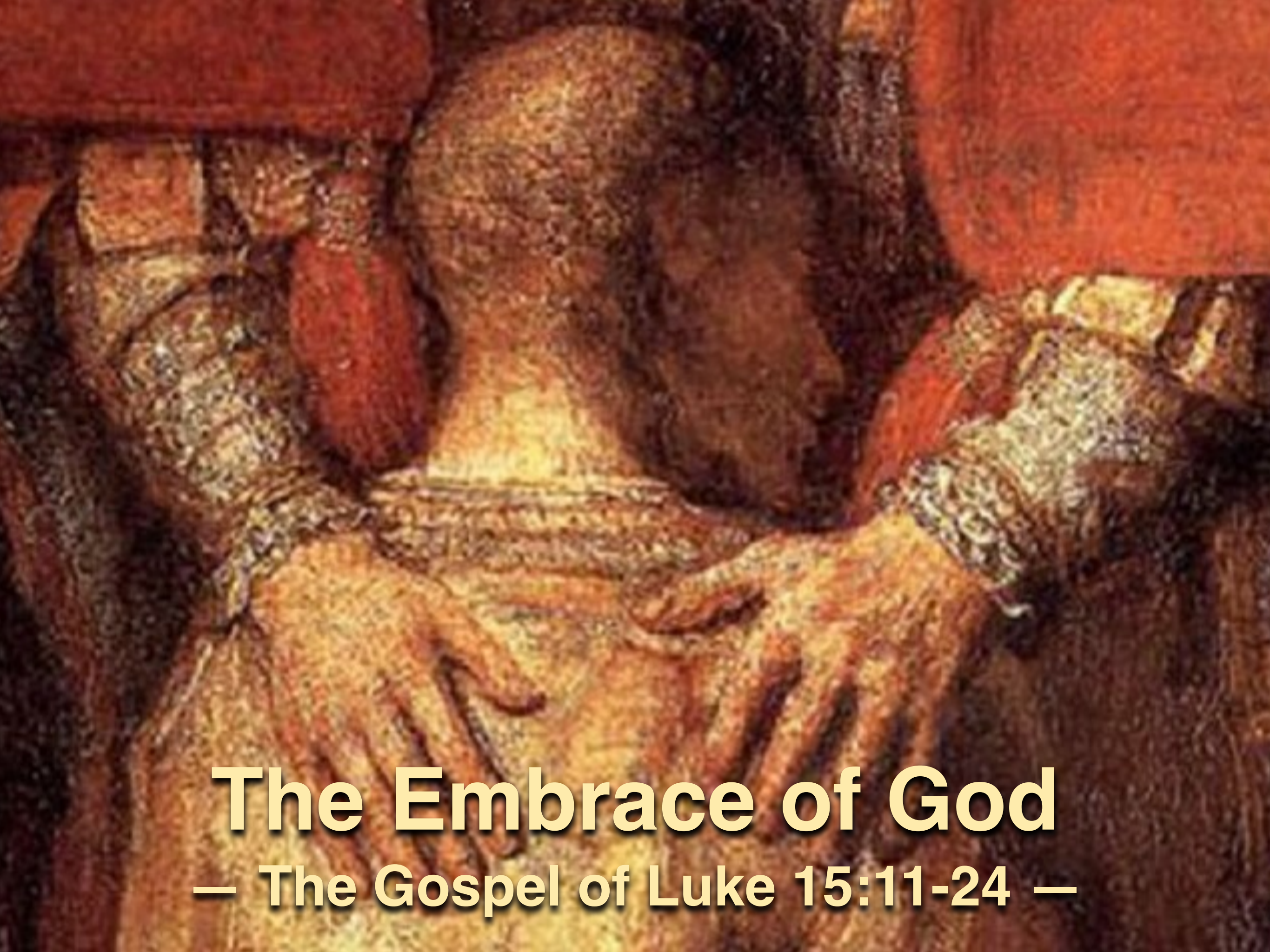
Friedrick Nietzsche

— 1844-1900 —



**What if God is dancing,
but you don't want to
join the celebration?**

**What if God's heart
is wild with celebration,
but you refuse to dance?**

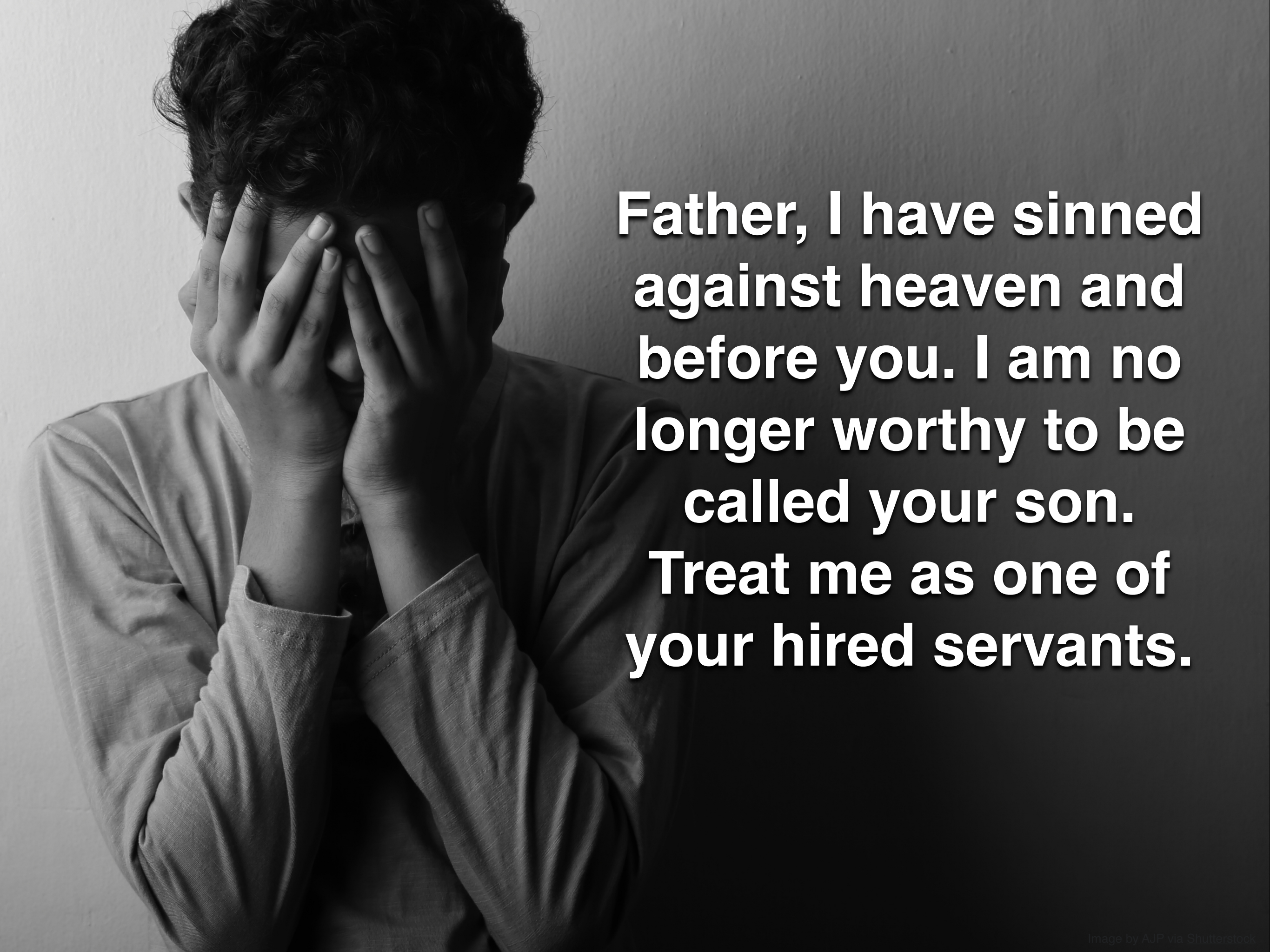
The background of the slide is a highly textured, close-up image of a hand. The hand is rendered in warm, earthy tones of brown, gold, and red, with a rough, almost stone-like or wood-like texture. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours and ridges of the hand, creating a sense of depth and warmth. The overall mood is intimate and comforting, suggesting a firm yet gentle embrace.

The Embrace of God

— The Gospel of Luke 15:11-24 —



**“This man receives sinners
and eats with them.”**



**Father, I have sinned
against heaven and
before you. I am no
longer worthy to be
called your son.
Treat me as one of
your hired servants.**

The Gospel of Luke 15:1-2, 11-24

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.

The Gospel of Luke 15:1-2, 11-24

21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worth to be called your son....'

The Gospel of Luke 15:1-2, 11-24

21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worth 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.'**

The Gospel of Luke 15:1-2, 11-24

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.

The Gospel of Luke 15:1-2, 11-24

23 'And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and **celebrate**.' 24 For my son this was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found.'
And they began to **celebrate**.

God can't wait to celebrate!

**Though we are all
more flawed, broken,
messed up, rebellious,
addicted, lost, and yes,
sinful, than we often
have the courage to
admit,**



**yet in Christ we can
experience more love,
more forgiveness,
more acceptance,
more grace, and
more celebration in
the warm embrace of
God the Father than
we ever dared dream
was possible.**





**The Father's
embrace means
there is always
grace greater
than our sin.**



**Our glare means grace is rare,
especially when you sin.**

— The Religious Leaders —



The Parable of the Lost Son(s)?

— The Gospel of Luke 11:11-32 —

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

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.

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

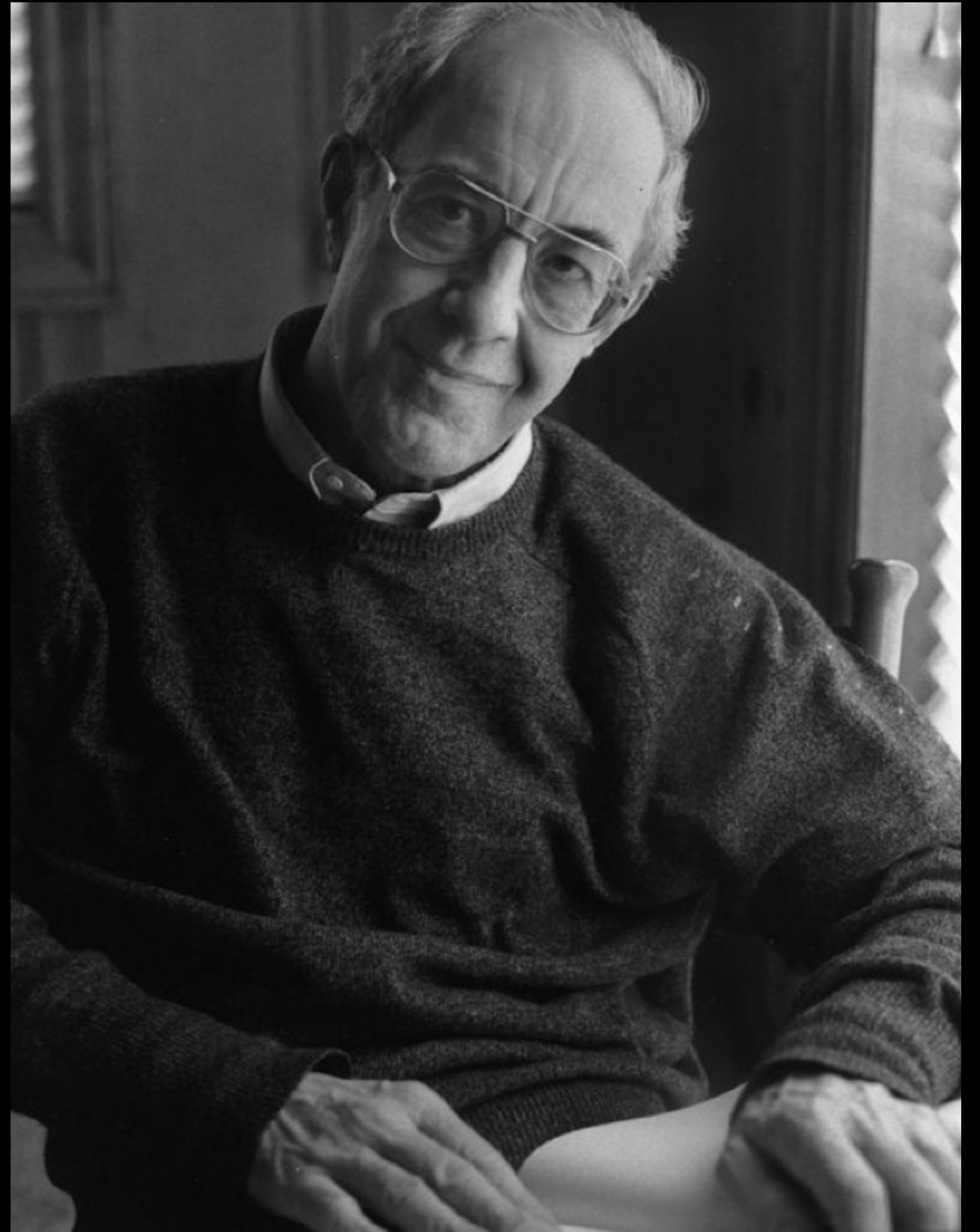
27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.'

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

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.'**

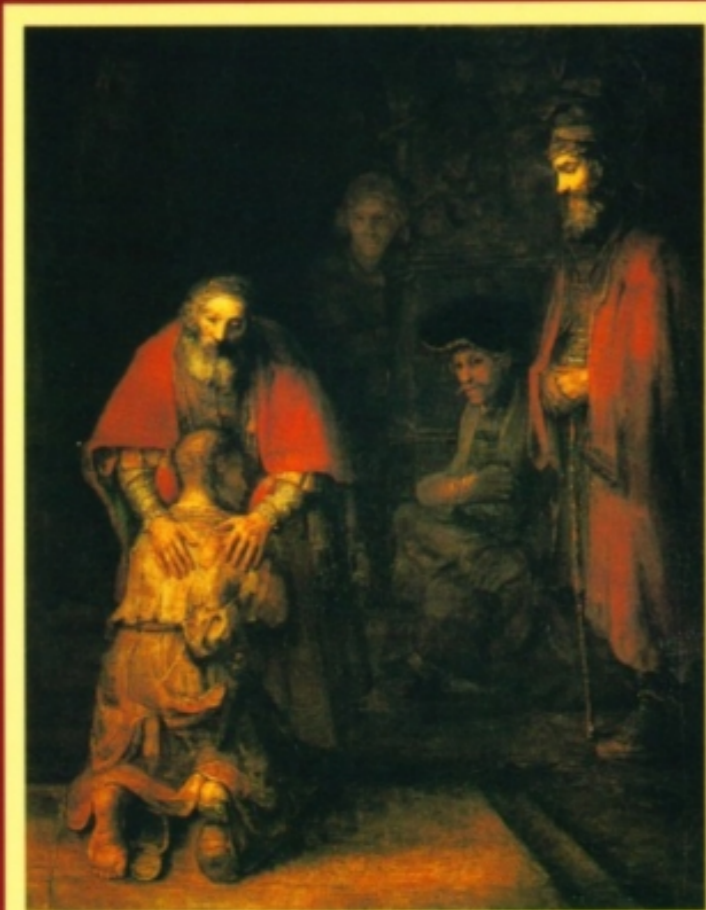
The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

28 **But he was angry and refused to go in.**



— Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* —

THE RETURN OF
THE PRODIGAL SON

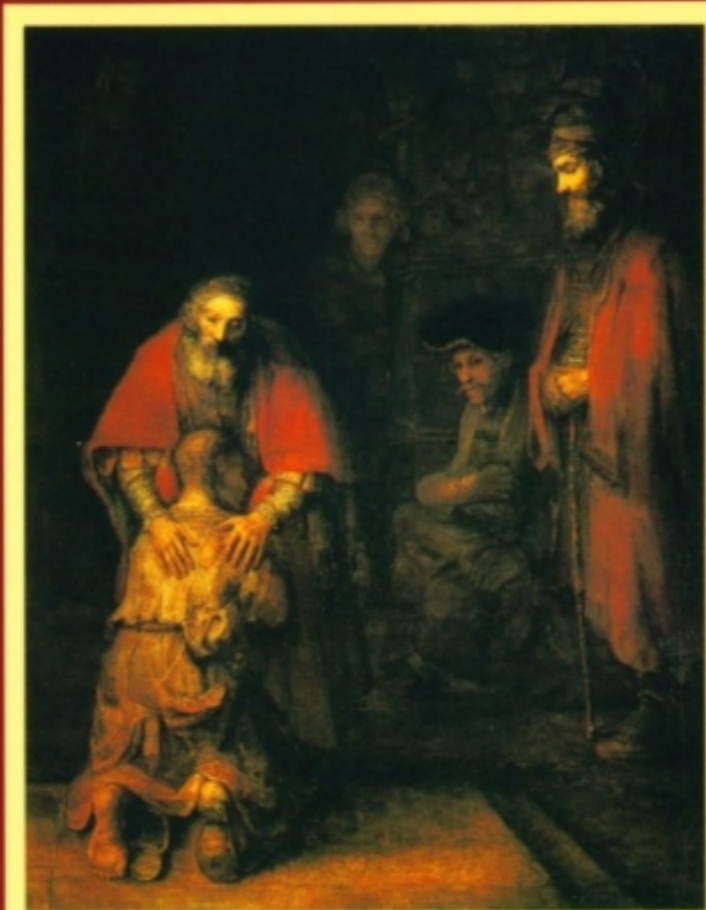


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

I became increasingly fascinated by the figure of the elder son. I recall gazing at him for long periods and wondering what was going on in this man's mind and heart.

THE RETURN OF
THE PRODIGAL SON

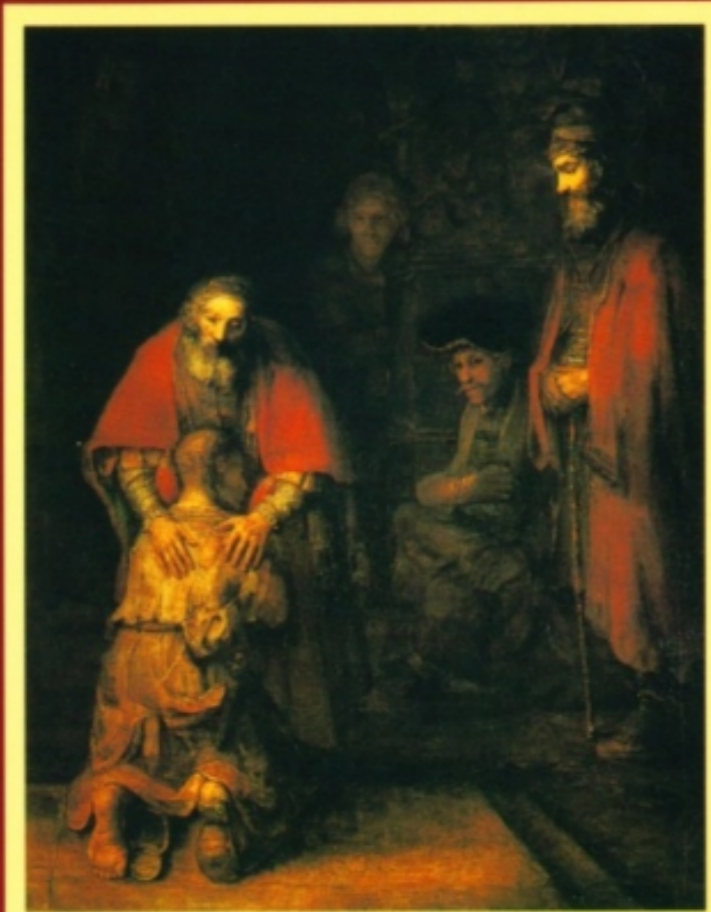


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

At the time when I was familiar only with the detail of the painting in which the father embraces his returning son, it was rather easy to perceive it as inviting, moving, and reassuring.

THE RETURN OF
THE PRODIGAL SON

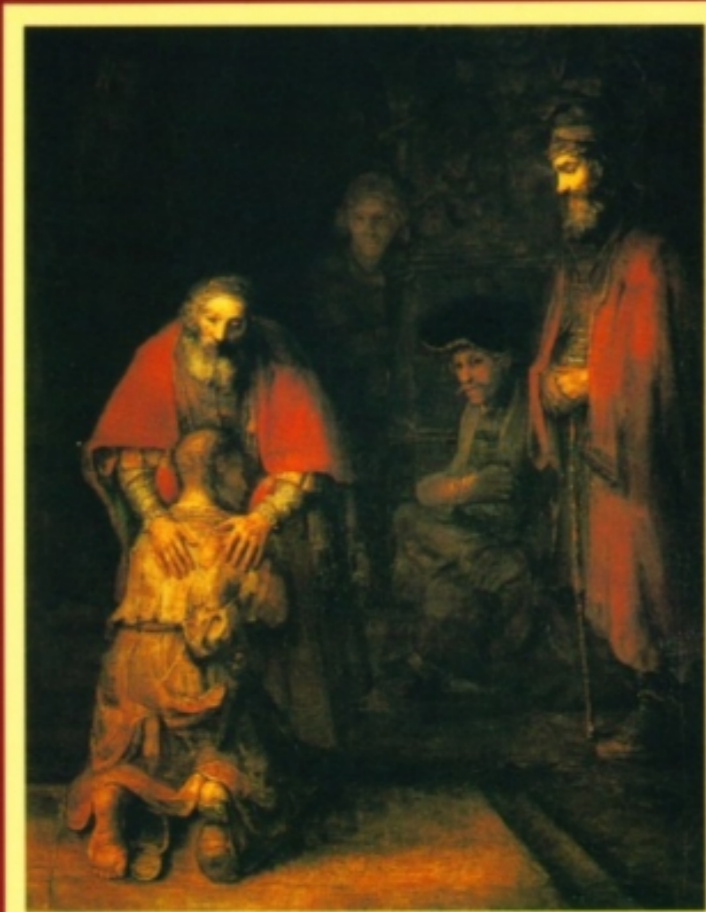


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

But when I saw the whole painting, I quickly realized the complexity of the reunion. The main observer, watching the father embracing his returning son, appears very withdrawn. He looks at the father but not with joy.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

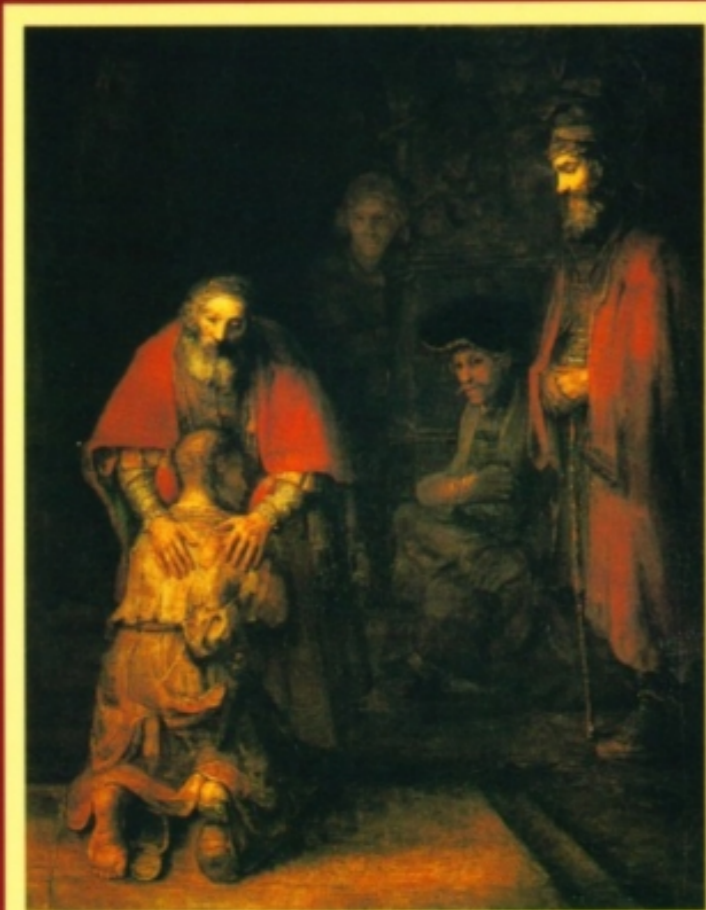


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

**He does not reach out,
nor does he smile or
express welcome. He
simply stands there—at
the side of the platform—
apparently not eager to
come higher up.**

THE RETURN OF
THE PRODIGAL SON

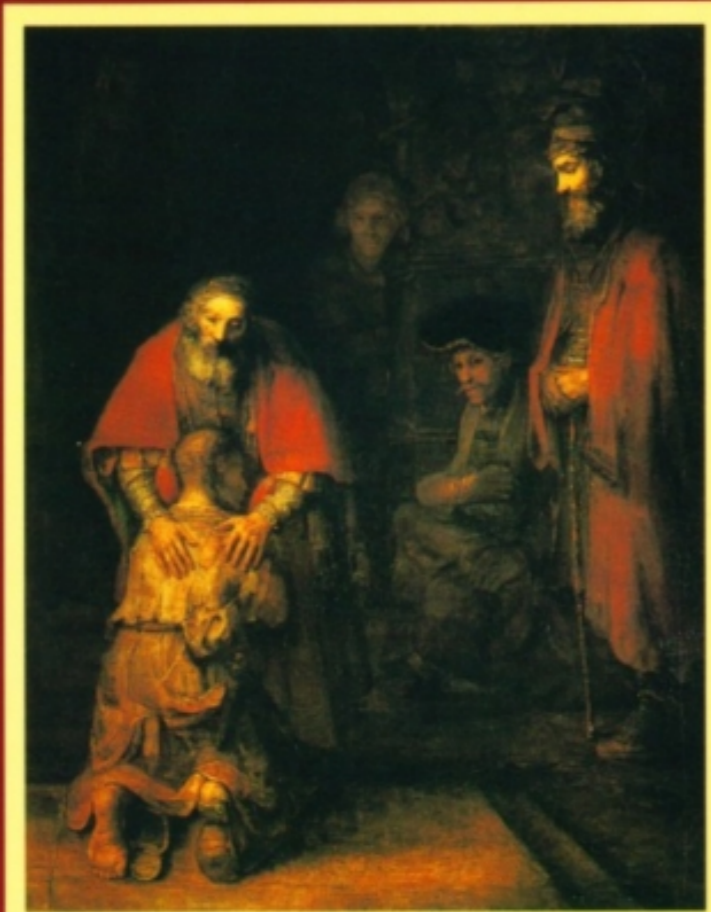


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

It is true that the ‘return’ is the central event of the painting, however, it is not situated at the physical center of the canvas. It takes place at the left side of the painting while the tall, stern elder son dominates the right.

THE RETURN OF
THE PRODIGAL SON



A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

There is a large open space separating the father and his elder son, a space that creates a tension asking for resolution.... What is going on inside this man? What will he do?

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

28 **But he was angry and refused to go in.**

Important Point

What we must see is that not only did the younger son get lost in his appetite for sensuality, but also the other brother is now lost in his anger and self-righteousness.

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

28 But he was angry and refused to go in. **His father came out and entreated him....**

GEEKING OUT ON GREEK

Entreat = *parakalew*



to call near, to beg, to urge,
to encourage, to console,
to invite, or to summon

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

**28 His father came out and entreated
him, 29 but ...**

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

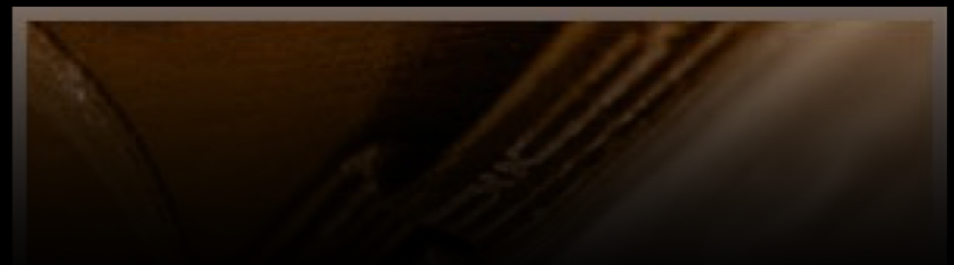
28 His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate....

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

28 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, and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate....**

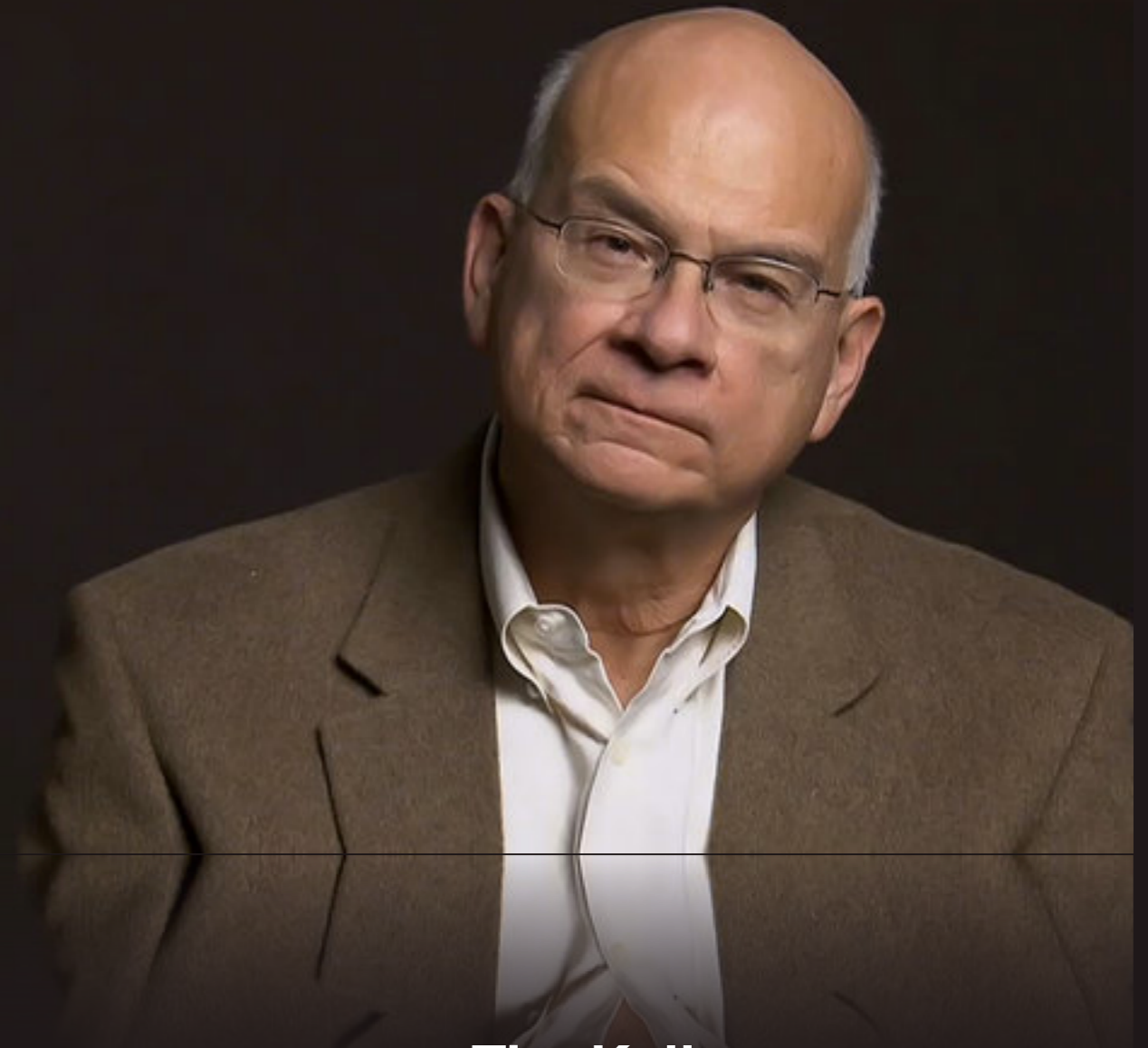
**“Look! All these years
I’ve been slaving for you
and never disobeyed
your orders.”**

— Luke 15:29 (New International Version) —



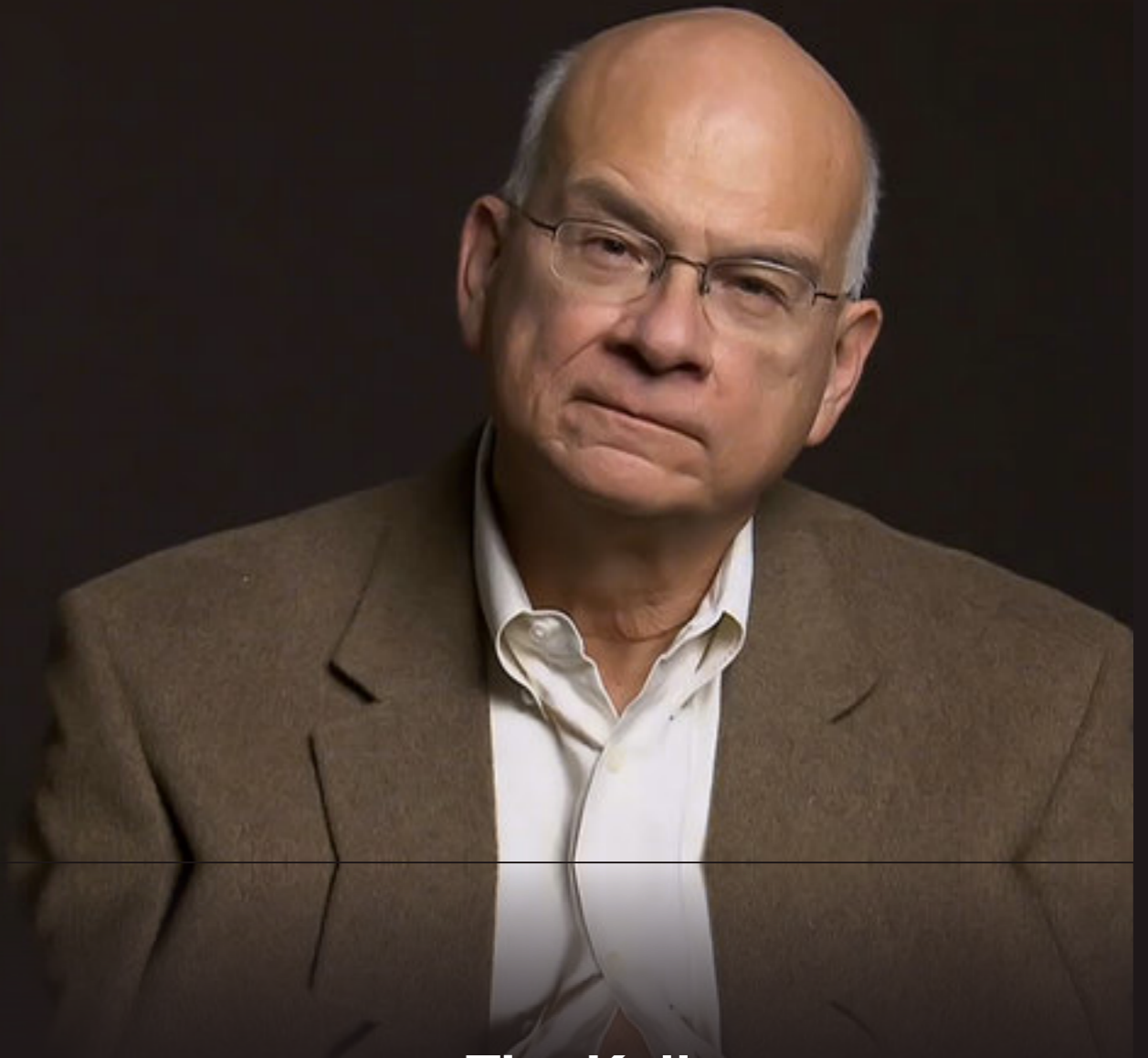
**Do you realize, then,
what Jesus is teaching?**

**Neither son loved the
father for himself. They
both were using the
father for their own self-
centered ends rather
than loving, enjoying,
and serving him for his
own sake.**



Tim Keller
The Prodigal God

This means that you can rebel against God and be alienated from him either by breaking his rules *or* by keeping all of them diligently. It's a shocking message: careful obedience to God's law may serve as a strategy for rebelling against God.

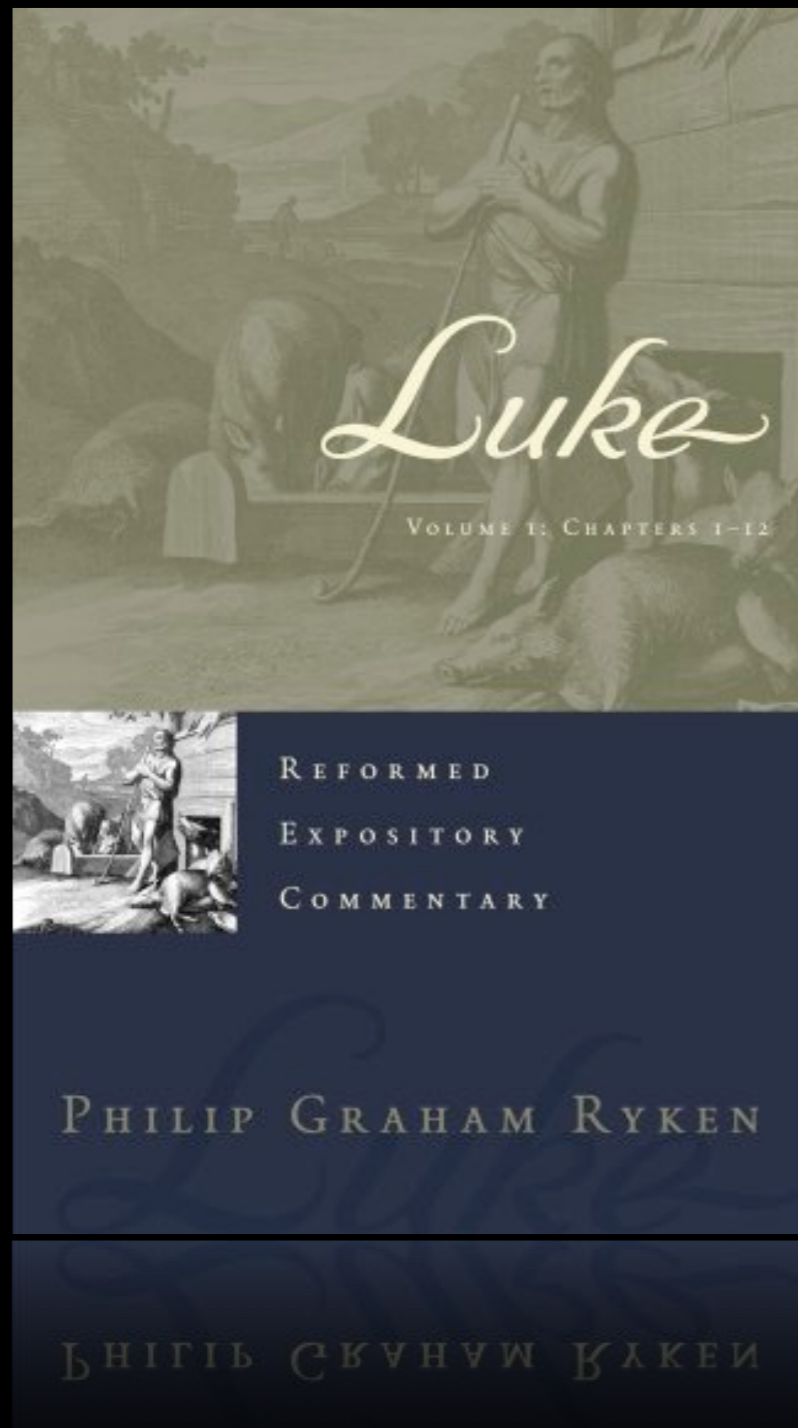


Tim Keller
The Prodigal God

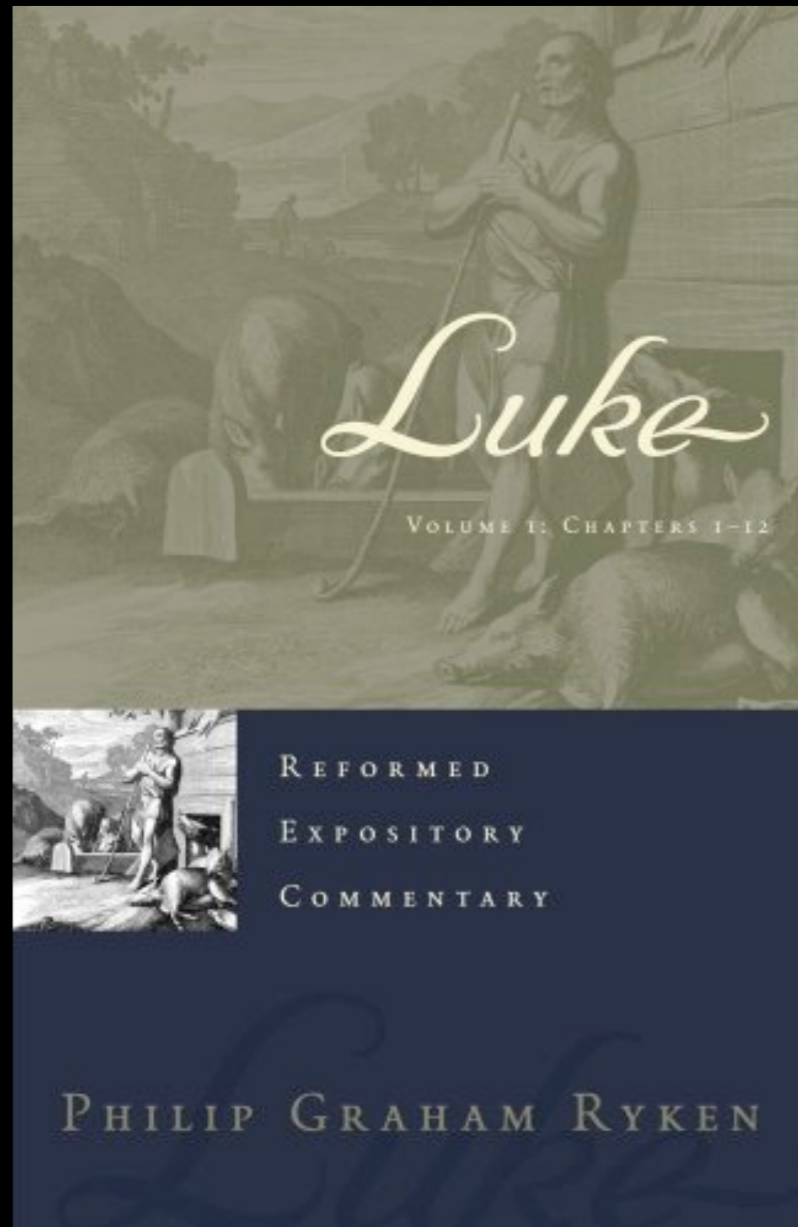
The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

29 ‘**Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate,**

30 ‘**But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’**



The elder brother was completely lost: lost in his refusal to reconcile, lost in his rejection of his father's joy, lost in his striving for self-salvation, lost in resentment for his brother's reward, and lost in the unrighteous desires of his own sinful heart.



**But he was lost
mostly because he
rejected his sonship,
seeing himself as a
slave instead of a son.**

БНІГІЬ СБАНУМ РУКЕН

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

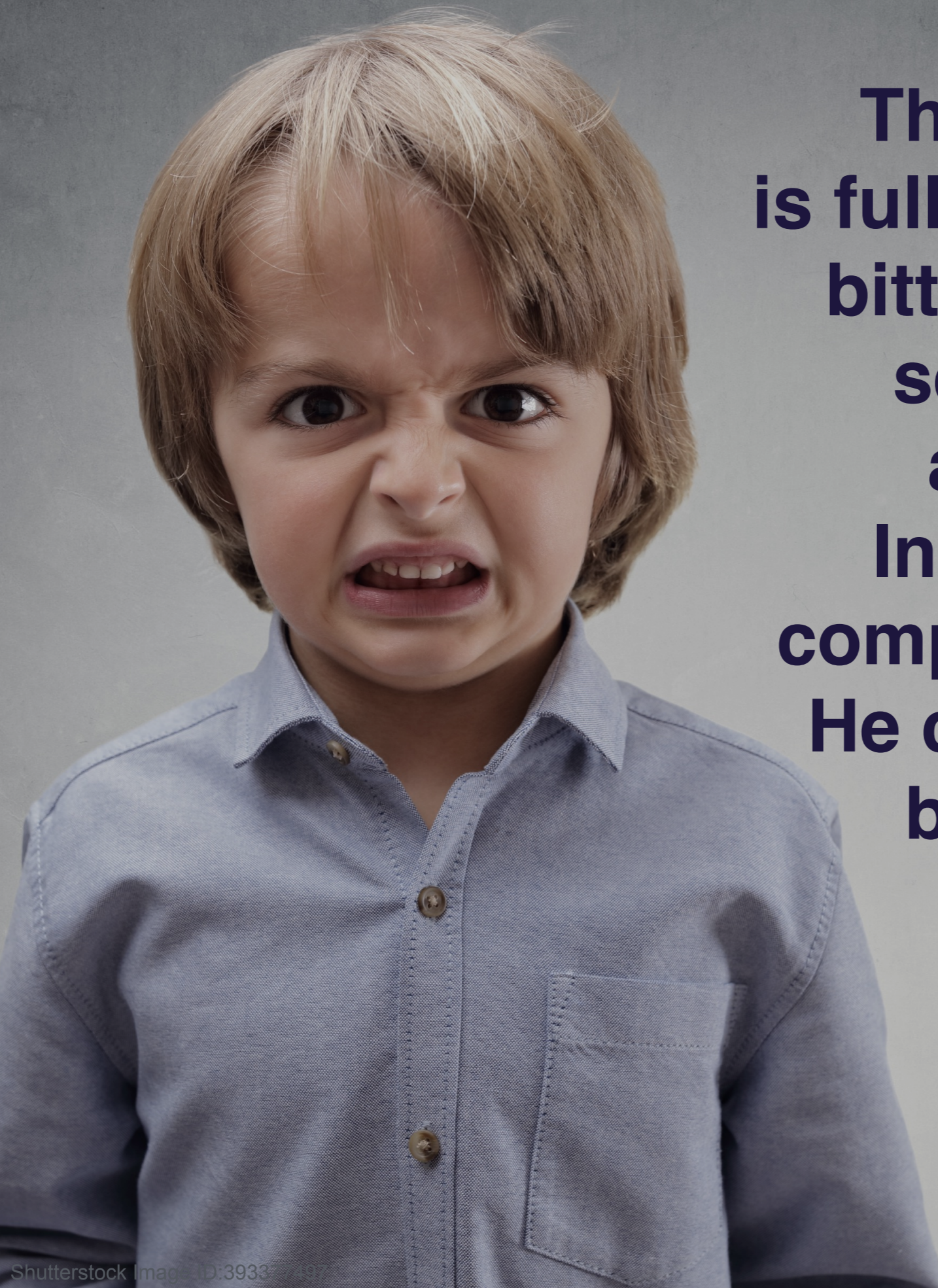
31 And he said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours....

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32

32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.

The Gospel of Luke 15:25-32





The older son's heart is full of anger, comparison, bitterness, resentment, self-righteousness, and complaining. In other words, he is completely self-absorbed. He can't celebrate grace because he knows nothing about it.

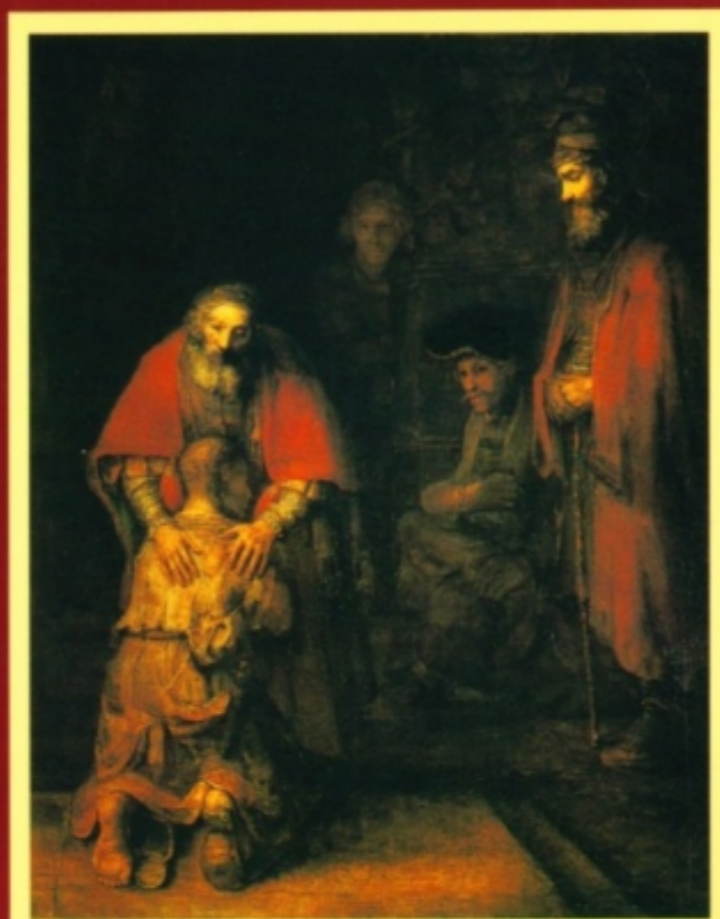


What we know for certain is the Father's heart—a heart that wants to have a joyful celebration with both of his sons.

**Let's realize that
this story invites us
to see ourselves as
the older lost sibling.**



THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

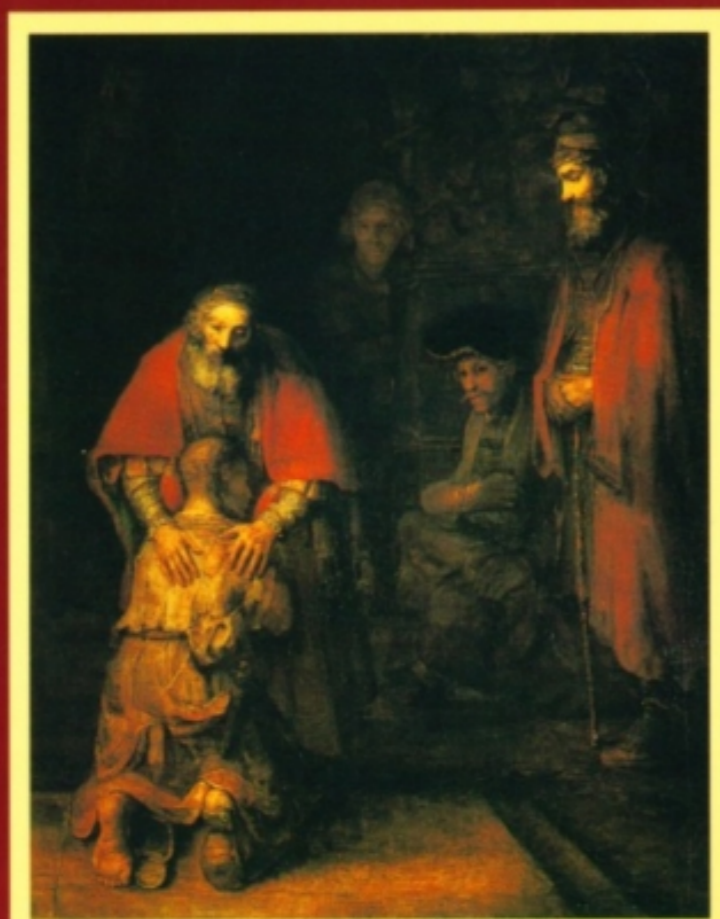


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

It is hard for me to concede that this bitter, resentful, angry man might be closer to me in a spiritual way than the lustful younger brother. Yet the more I think about the elder son, the more I recognize myself in him....

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

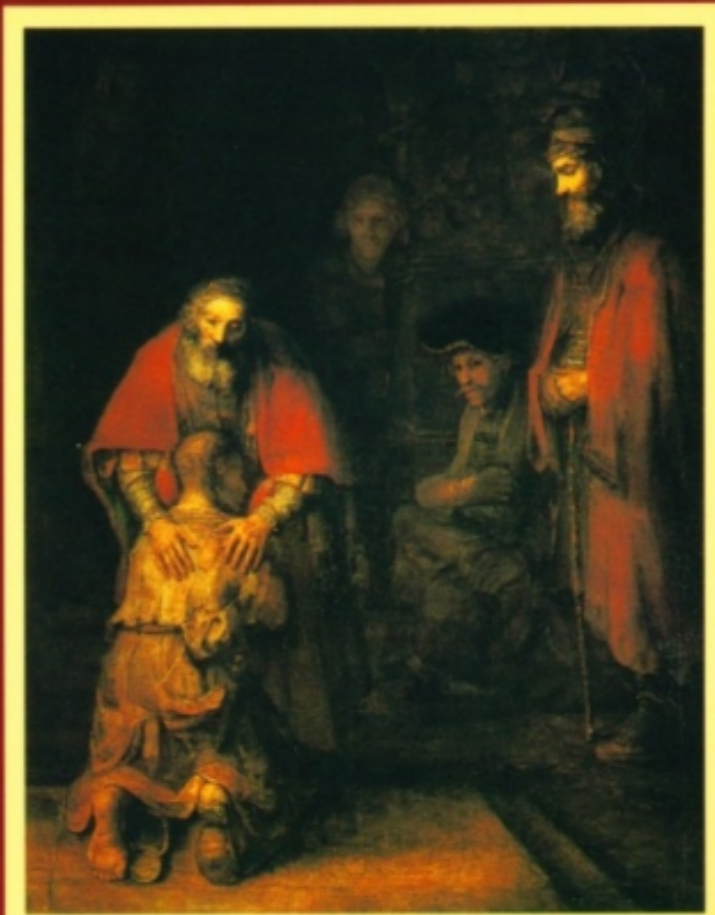


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

I have no difficulty identifying with the elder son of the parable who complained: “All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a goat for me to celebrate with my fiends....”

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

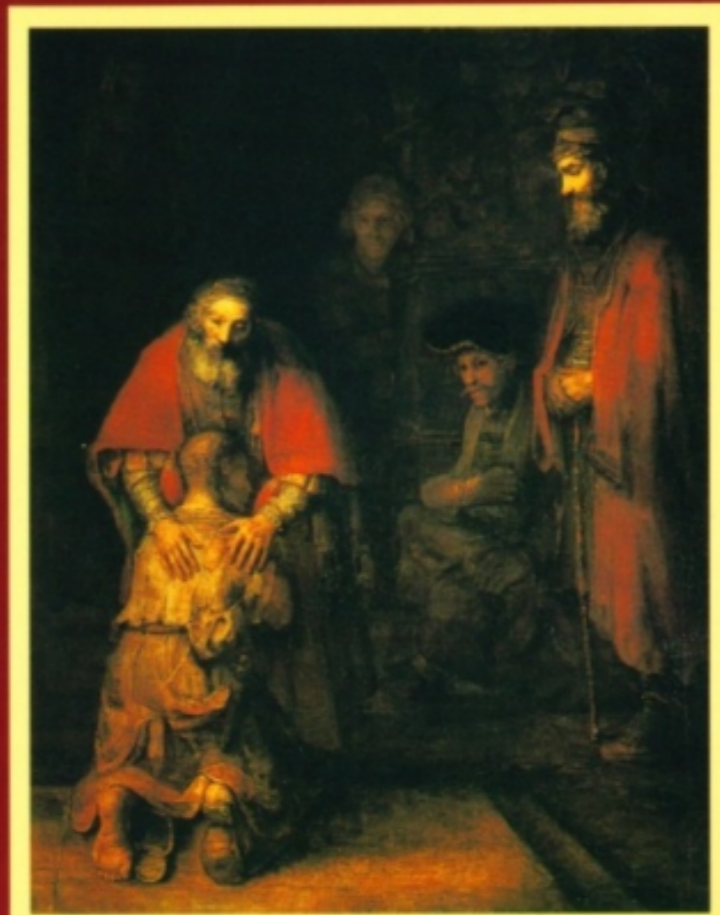


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

**It is this lostness—
characterized by judgment
and condemnation, anger
and resentment, bitterness
and jealousy—that is so
pernicious and so damaging
to the human heart.**

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

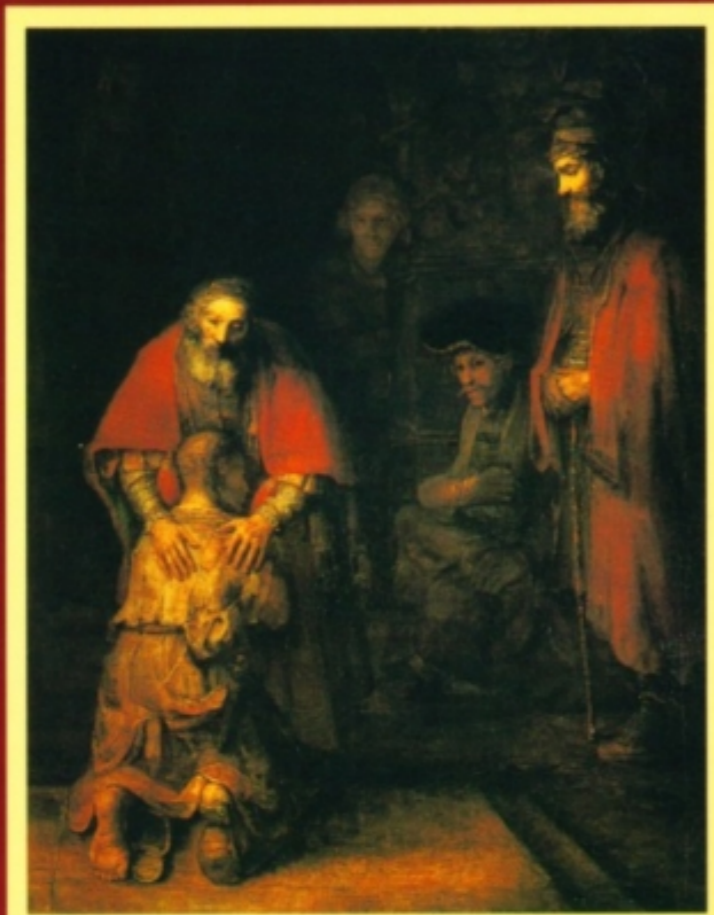


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

Often we think of lostness in terms of actions that are quite visible, even spectacular. The younger son sinned in a way that we can easily identify. His lostness is quite evident.... The lostness of the elder son, however, is much harder to identify. After all he did all the right things.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

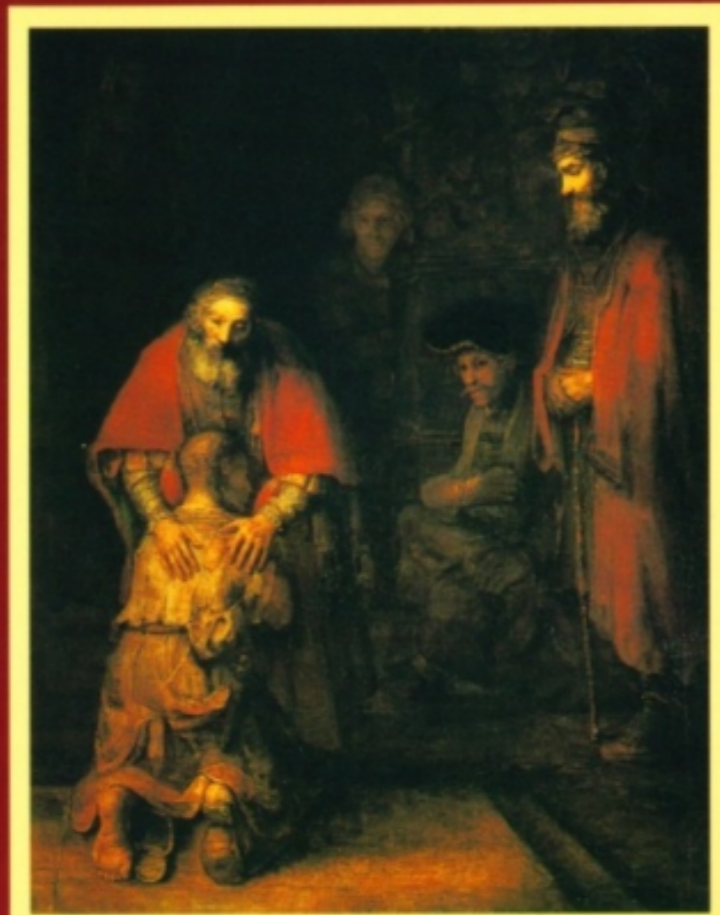


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

He was obedient, dutiful, law-abiding, and hard-working. People respected him, admired him, praised him, and likely considered him a model son. Outwardly, the elder son was faultless. But when confronted by his father's joy at the return of his younger brother,

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

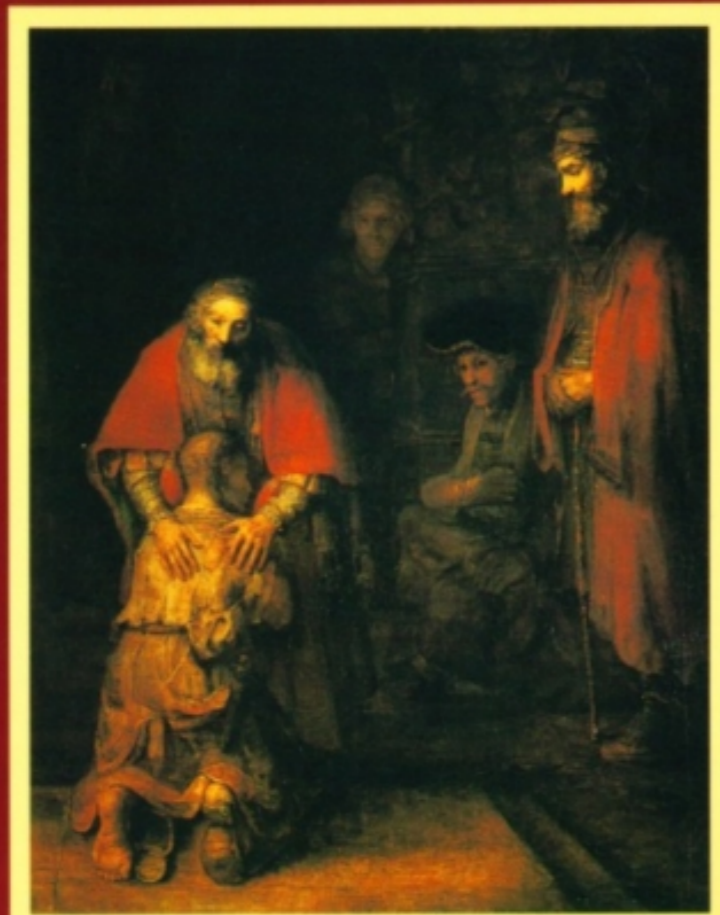


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

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 RETURN OF
THE PRODIGAL SON

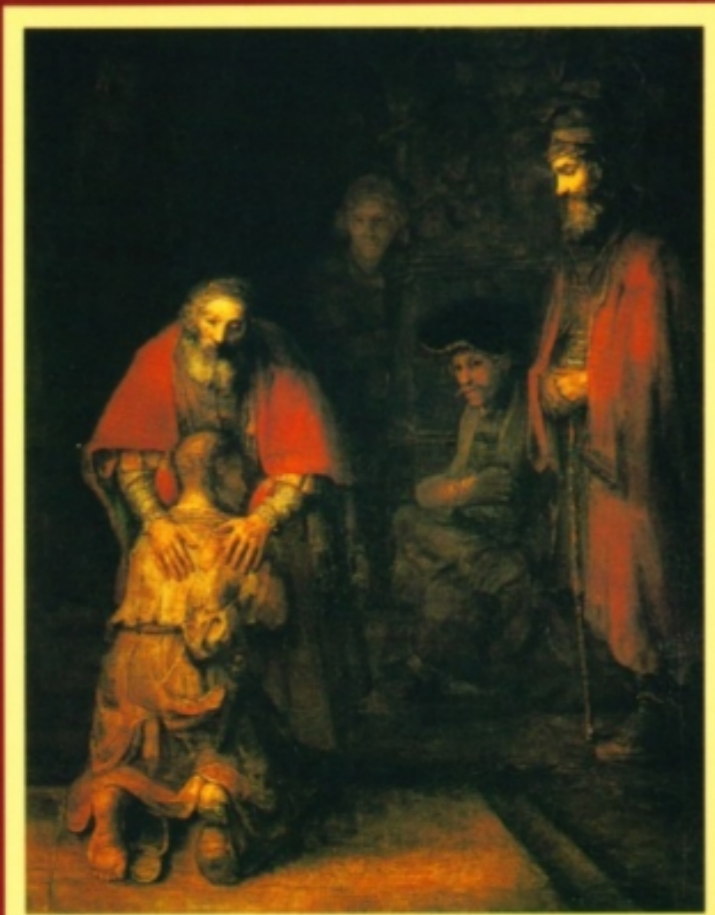


A Story of Homecoming

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

**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.**

THE RETURN OF
THE PRODIGAL SON



A Story of Homecoming

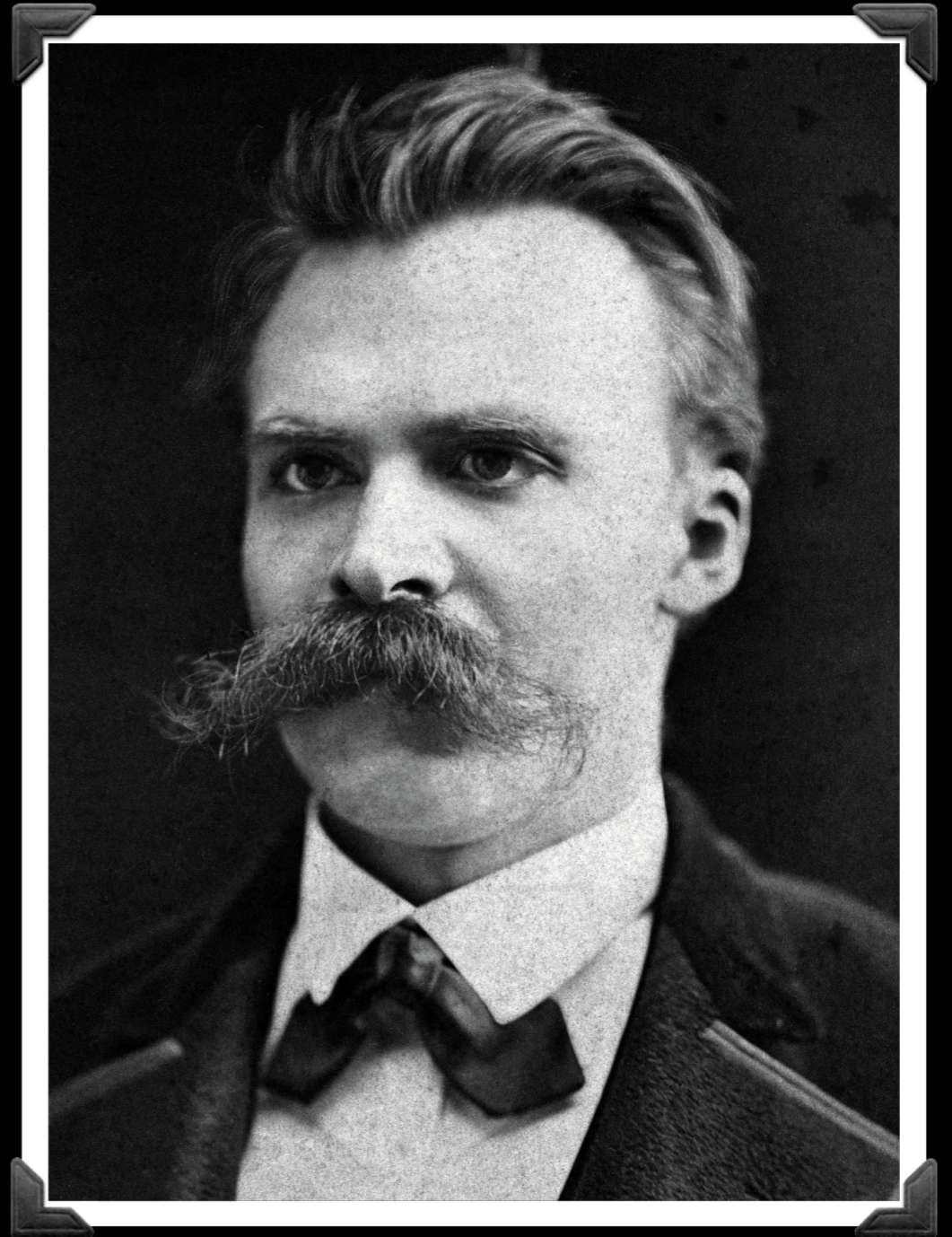
HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

**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.**

**I would only
believe in a God
who could dance.**

Friedrick Nietzsche

— 1844-1900 —



**What if God is dancing,
but you don't want to
join the celebration?**

**What if God's heart
is wild with celebration,
but you refuse to dance?**



**I would never believe in
a God who would dance.**

What has happened to all your joy?



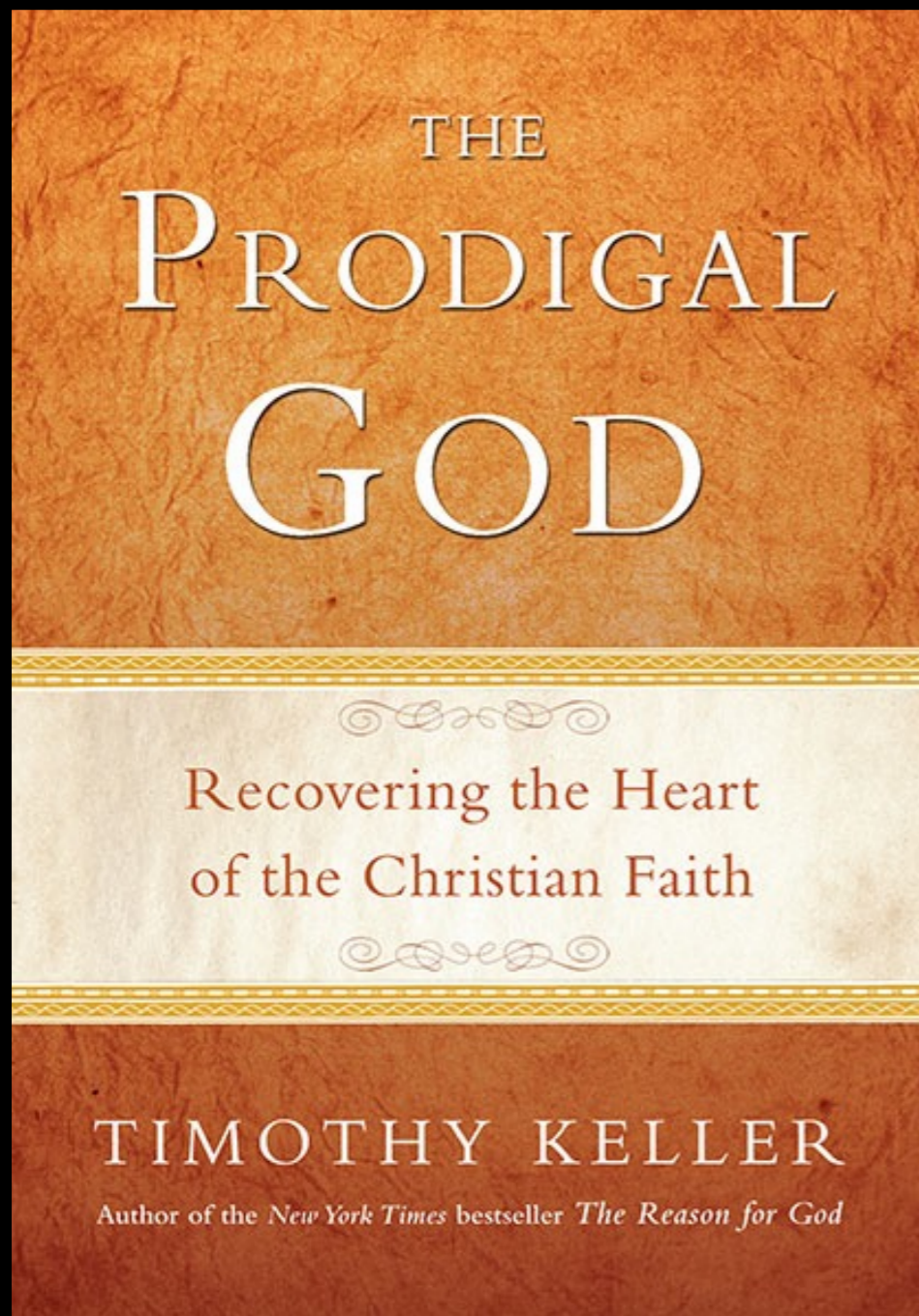
**Joy and resentment
cannot coexist.**

— Henri Nouwen —

The Return of the Prodigal Son



**Let's believe that
Jesus died for the sins
of the sensualist
AND for the sins of
the self-righteous.**



Jesus does not divide the world into moral 'good guys' and the immoral 'bad guys.' He shows us that everyone is dedicated to a project of self-salvation...we are just going about it in different ways....



THE
PRODIGAL
GOD

Recovering the Heart
of the Christian Faith

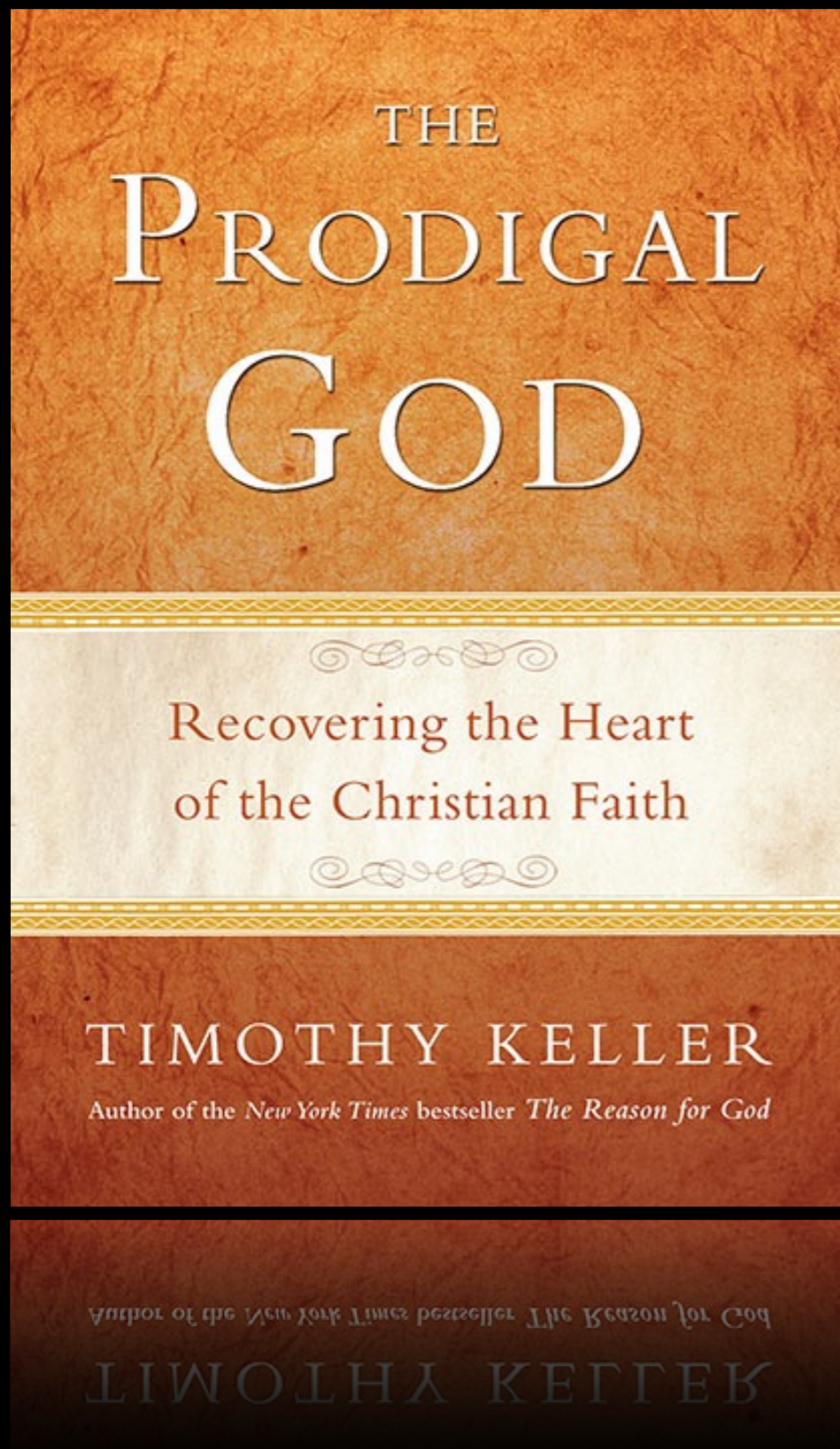
TIMOTHY KELLER

Author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Reason for God*

**This means that
Jesus' message,
which is 'the gospel,'
is a completely
different spirituality.**

Author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Reason for God*

TIMOTHY KELLER



The gospel of Jesus is not religion or irreligion, morality or immorality, moralism or relativism, conservatism or liberalism. Nor is it something halfway along a spectrum between two poles — it's something else altogether.



A black and white portrait of C.S. Lewis, a middle-aged man with receding hair, wearing a suit and tie, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a textured wall.

“Oh, that’s easy. It’s grace.”

— CS Lewis —