

## SCRIPTURE

“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has got him back safe and sound. 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.’”

**Luke 15:25-29**

## READ THIS OVERVIEW

When reading the story of the prodigal son I think the emphasis is typically placed on the lost son who went and squandered his father's inheritance, but then came to his senses and returned home. However, I must say that I resonate with the older brother. I, too, was the “goody goody” Christian who remained faithful to the church. Every Sunday I was either leading prayer, reading the announcements, or teaching the sermon. You name it and I've done it. However, I did it out of this empty void that said if I worked hard enough I could earn God's love and validation. This runs contrary to the truth of scripture that says God loved us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). The Father's love for us can not be earned, it is given freely.

This is something that the older brother clearly struggled to understand. Due to his lack of understanding he did two things when he encountered his father's grace towards his brother. First, he boasted of his own well doing and second he did not trust his father's heart. This happens all the time for people like me. We have been wired to work hard and earn all that we have in life not realizing that all has been given to us. The opportunities that we have been given were not in our control. The ability to reason and other faculties of our brain are not always within our control.

**Sometimes we are so focused on what we have done that we forget how gracious God has been towards us. It was God who woke us up. It was God who provided for us and protected us.**

How dare we take the credit that should be given to God? If we took a sober look at our lives we would see the through line of grace that has kept us this whole time.

Secondly, the older brother did not trust his father's heart. In verse 29 he says that he had been slaving this whole time and his father did not even give him a measly little goat! Yet, his younger brother comes home after making a mockery of the family and spending frivolously and the father gives him the fattened calf! This is just ridiculous! I have been serving you since I was a child and yet so and so got married? You know how long I've wanted to be married? I've been serving the children's ministry, I've been the sound technician for years and yet so and so got the job or the house or the child and they never go to church! Many of us have thought this. We can switch out the ministry we were involved in and the unmet desire, but the heart of the matter is the same. Many of us have been conditioned to believe in the just world fallacy. This idea that we all get what we deserve and most of us think we deserve WAY more than what we have been given.

Yet, the truth of the matter is God's sacrificial love for us as displayed through the death of Jesus Christ, his only son is more than we could ever deserve.

**It is this love that shows us the Father's heart. This love is beyond all that we could ever fathom or hope for. This love sees us at our best even when we are at our worst.**

When we learn to accept and lean into this love we are then able to celebrate our brothers and sisters. We are called to cry with those who mourn and to rejoice with those who celebrate. This is the Father's heart for His children.

### **ENGAGE A PRACTICE**

Grab your journal and Bible, and spend 5-10 minutes responding to these questions. What areas of your life do you struggle to accept the Father's love? What do you think is causing this disconnect? What does the scriptures say about the Father's love for you? Process it all out in the presence of Jesus.

Read aloud Matthew 3:17 below a couple of times inserting your name. "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved daughter or son, \_\_\_\_\_, I take delight in him/her'"

Take a few minutes and close your eyes and experience the delight of the Father. He is delighting in you no matter your shortcomings.

Next read aloud Matthew 3:17 below a couple of times inserting the name of someone you think less of or don't like very much. "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved daughter or son, \_\_\_\_\_, I take delight in him/her'"

Take a few minutes and really consider how much the Father delights in the people we think less of, or ignore all together. Imagine how that makes the Father feel. Write down anything that comes to your heart.

### **WRAP UP WITH A PRAYER**

Father, thank you for loving us with an unconditional, unwavering love. Thank you for showing us your heart not only for us, but for the world. Give us eyes to see ourselves and others the way you do. Help us to trust your heart when we do not fully comprehend your actions. You are worthy of all the praise and honor. We give you everything we are, mold us into something beautiful. In Jesus Name. Amen.

