

# The Heart of God

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## Notes

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### Luke 15:1-2

Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

### Luke 15:11-32

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

“A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’

“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’

“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

“The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

“His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

This story is about the heart of God. The sons illustrate two extremes of a spectrum of brokenness and bitterness. It’s about who God is in spite of who we are. One son was running from the father, and the other let themselves become jealous and angry. From this story, we learn three things about the heart that God has for us:

### 1) God is looking for you, not pointing His finger at you

The father saw his son coming, which means he was looking for him the entire time. Jesus came because He knew we had missed and needed Him. Like the father in the story, God forgives us and welcomes us with open arms.

### 2) God has compassion for you

Compassion means to come with passion. And that’s what Jesus did for us - He came with a passion to show the Father’s love, the heart of God.

### 3) As you step toward God, He runs toward you

The son felt no worth, but the father said his worth wasn't in anything he had done or been. Our worth is found in who the Father says we are. In Him, we are at home and are a part of His family. Jesus stepped toward us when He went to the cross; when we step toward Him in faith, He runs to welcome us home. God is for all people, everywhere; we just have to respond to Him.

## Group Questions

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- How does the younger son illustrate someone who is broken?
- How does the older son illustrate someone who is bitter?
- Who does God say we are once we come to Him?
- What is God's heart for humanity?

## Prayer

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Thank you for being our heavenly father and for welcoming us into your family. Despite anything we have done, you forgive us. In you we find our worth and our purpose.