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Loving the Rebellious

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Loving the Rebellious

Luke 15:11-24

Have you ever done something really bad—so bad that you felt God couldn't possibly love you?

I have.

As a 38-year-old, "mature" Christian, I did something so awful that I couldn't believe God could love a sinner like me. I couldn't forgive myself for what I had done. I didn't like myself, let alone love myself, and I felt that God couldn't possibly like me (or love me) either. In this way, I condemned myself; my own twisted thinking cut me off from God's love.

My heavenly Father still loved me; it was just that the lies I believed kept me from believing and accepting that He did.

Have you stopped to consider that how you think God feels about you may not be the way He actually feels at all? Is it possible that you have excluded yourself from God's forgiveness and compassion because you simply cannot believe He could really love you?

Jesus told this parable of the lost son so that we would understand: Our Father values us for who we are, not because of what we do or don't do. Our sins—those we have committed knowingly or unknowingly, those we have committed in the past and those we will commit in the future—do not exclude us from God's love. Our Father desires that each one of us live in continual, joy-filled, loving relationship with Him.

Read Luke 15:11-24 ([Parable of the Lost Son](#)).

Questions

Q. 1. What do verses 12-13 say that the lost son did? What choices did he make?

Q. 2. Based on verses 14-17, why do think the son decided to return home?

Q. 3. According to verses 18-19 and 21, what did the son plan, and then say, to his father? What do these words tell you about the son's perception of himself?

- Q. 4. What do these words tell you about the son's perception of his father?
- Q. 5. As described in verses 20 and 22-24, how does the father greet his lost son?
- Q. 6. What do these actions tell you about the father's heart for his son?
- Q. 7. After being welcomed home with celebration, how do you think the son saw his father?
- Q. 8. In this story the son assumed he would be treated harshly upon his return home. Think of a time when someone treated you harshly and legalistically after you had done something wrong. Describe that time and the feelings you had.
- Q. 9. Think of a time when someone offered you forgiveness and compassion after you had done something wrong. Describe that time and the feelings you had.
- Q. 10. How does the lost son respond to his father's reception?
- Q. 11. What sort of life do you think the lost son would have lived had he not accepted his father's full welcome and only allowed himself to be a hired servant?
- Q. 12. In what ways might you be judging yourself and thinking of yourself as undeserving of love? Can you identify any wrong thoughts that are keeping you from fully receiving your heavenly Father's love?

Reflection

Music can help connect us to God in deep ways. If possible, listen to the song, "[When God Ran](#)" (To watch a video, you will need Internet access). If you cannot access the video, read the lyrics. Open your heart to the message.