

The Prodigal Sons: The Spirit of the Older Brother

October 5, 2025

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, ²⁶ and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

²⁸ “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

³¹ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³² 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!’”

— *Luke 15:25-32*

Discussion/Journal Questions

Do you have any siblings? What is your relationship with them like: good, strained, distant?

Have two or three people read Luke 15:25-32 out loud slowly. After some time of reflection, ask each other what words, phrases, or ideas stand out to everyone. What questions come to mind as you meditate on this scripture?

The younger son considers himself unworthy of being called a son and asks to be hired as a servant. The older son claims to have slaved for his father for years. What do both sons miss about their relationship with their father?

How does the father in the parable pursue each son? How does God the Father pursue us?

In the sermon on Sunday, Pastor John says, “So you have these two brothers, the younger tries to find happiness in self-discovery; the older tries to find happiness in his own morality.” Where do you find parallels to these two brothers in our culture today? Where do you find parallels in your own life?

The spirit of the older brother is anger rooted in selfishness, bitterness, and jealousy. How do you respond when you get angry? Are you a spewer or a steward?

Righteous anger is rooted in compassion and concern for others. How can we grow in compassion?

Are you more like the younger brother or the older brother in this story?

Pray for each other that you may put aside the spirits of the brothers and become more like Jesus.