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**TITLE:** Who Will Cry?

**WRITTEN BY:** Rodney Goodlett

**MAIN SCRIPTURE VERSE OR PASSAGE:** Luke 15:11–32

**IN ONE SENTENCE WHAT IS IT YOU WANT THE STUDENTS TO HEAR:** The heart of the Father is always after the lost one.

**SERMON MATERIALS NEEDED:** None

**OPENING ILLUSTRATION/STORY/OBJECT LESSON:**The movie *Antwone Fisher* is a touching story of a sailor who is prone to violent outbursts and sent to a naval psychiatrist for help. Refusing at first to open up, the young man eventually breaks down and reveals a horrific childhood. Through the guidance of his new doctor, he confronts his painful past and begins a quest to find the family he never knew.

He writes a poem about himself as a gift to the psychiatrist. The poem contains the haunting line: *Who will cry for the little boy?*

After reading the poem, the doctor asked Antwone, “Who will cry for the little boy, Antwone?”

Antwone’s response in a broken, shaky voice reveals the roots of people who are hurting in life: “I will, I always do.”

Countless people in our world feel isolated and alone. Countless people in our world have been neglected, abused, and abandoned. Often, they self-medicate, self-harm, and try to cope through destructive behaviors. Whether it’s manifested through anger issues, depression, detachment, or other psychological or sociological problems, God still cares.

In the portion of Scripture that people may know as the Parable of the Lost or Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), we see some principles of the heartbeat of God as the Father.

**POINT 1:** The Father Allows Us to Choose Our Path

*[Read Luke 15:11–13.]*

Though the younger son probably had everything that he needed provided for him, he still wanted to be on his own. So, he chose to demand his inherited right and possessions, while his older brother chose not to do so. We also know his father allowed the younger son to have his inheritance and leave home with it.

**ILLUSTRATION/STORY/QUOTE:***[Share a personal story about someone who demanded something from you. Did you oblige in giving into their demands? Why or why not?]*

Sometimes life is not fair. As a teenager, you probably hear a lot about making good choices in life. However, life isn’t just always about your decisions, but the decisions that other people make and how those decisions affect you. Good things happen to us, but sometimes bad things happen to innocent or good people too. Why do these bad things exist? It’s because of free will; the Father allows people to choose their path like the son in this story who chose to home.

*[Share a personal story about someone in your life who made a decision that was beyond your control but still had an effect on you.]*

**APPLICATION:**No matter our life background, our childhood, or our spiritual development, God will always allow us to choose our path in this life. Out of love, He allows us to make decisions to be with Him or to live our life on our own.

**POINT 2:** The Father Allow Us to Have a Moment to Come to Our Senses

*[Read Luke 15:14–19.]*

When the son left with all his possessions, he set off for a distant land to live a life full of wild living. However, his money ran out and he found himself in need due to a famine in the land. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and the son began to work in the fields feeding pigs.

Pigs in the Jewish culture were considered unclean animals. However, for the farmer the son chose to work for, they were a part of life. The younger son had moved from viewing this animal as unclean to eat to now wanting to eat *their* food.

Away from home, broke, no friends, and working with unclean animals, Jesus said, “He finally came to his senses” (Luke 15:17).

**ILLUSTRATION/STORY/QUOTE:***[Share a personal story about a moment when you “came to your senses.” What circumstances led to that moment?]*

**APPLICATION:**

The father in this parable had the resources to keep up with his son and also had the right to deny his son. In the same sense, God has the ability to intervene in our life, but sometimes allows the consequences of our decisions to be an opportunity for us to come to our senses.

It doesn’t mean or imply that the Holy Spirit isn’t working in our life during our disobedience. The Holy Spirit is the one working in our life to help us come to our senses. In fact, Romans 2:4 says, “Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?”

In everything, God’s desire is to bring people to himself. In your poor decisions, in your wrong motives, in your rebellion, in your rejection of Him, He desires to draw you to himself through moments when you can come to your senses.

**POINT 3:** The Father Allows Us to Receive His Grace

*[Read Luke 15:20–23.]*

The son proceeded in pain and humility back to his father’s house. He was okay not returning as a son, but instead as a servant for his father. Yet when his father saw him, he ran to embrace him as his son. The father had every right to treat his son as a servant, but he chose to be gracious and celebrate his son’s return.

**ILLUSTRATION/STORY/QUOTE:**

“It had to do with the 8.2 earthquake that struck Armenia back in 1989 when the country was flattened, killing over 30,000 people in less than four minutes. Whether the incident took place in Gyumri or Spitak remains to be seen. Those were the areas that took the brunt of the loss.

In the midst of utter devastation and chaos, a father left his wife securely at home and rushed to the school where his son was supposed to be, only to discover that the building had been flattened as a pancake.

After the traumatic initial shock, this man remembered the promise he had made to his son: ‘No matter what, I’ll always be there for you!’ And tears began to fill his eyes. As he looked at the pile of debris that once was the school, it looked hopeless, but he kept remembering his commitment to his son.

He began to concentrate on where he walked his son to school each morning. Remembering his son’s classroom would be in the back right corner of the building, he rushed there and started digging through the rubble.

As he was digging, other forlorn parents arrived, clutching their hearts, saying, ‘My son!’ ‘My daughter!’

Other well-meaning parents tried pulling him off what was left of the school, saying:

‘It’s too late!’

‘They’re dead!’

‘You can’t help!’

‘Go home!’

‘Come on, face reality, there’s nothing you can do!’

‘You’re just going to make things worse!’

To each parent, he responded with one line: ‘Are you going to help me now?’

And then he proceeded to dig for his son, stone by stone.

The fire chief showed up and tried to pull him off the school’s debris, saying, ‘Fires are breaking out, explosions are happening everywhere. You’re in danger. We’ll take care of it. Please go home.’

To which this loving, caring Armenian father asked, ‘Are you going to help me now?’

The police came and said, ‘You’re angry, distraught, and it’s over. You’re endangering others. We’ll take care of it. Go home.’

No one helped.

Courageously, he proceeded alone because he needed to know for himself: ‘Is my boy alive, or is he dead?’

He dug for eight hours…12 hours…24, and 36 hours. Then, in the 38th hour, he pulled back a boulder and heard his son’s voice. The man screamed his son’s name, ‘Armand!’

He heard back, ‘Dad? It’s me, Dad! I told the other kids not to worry. I told them that if you were alive, you’d save me, and when you saved me, they’d be saved. You promised, ‘No matter what, I’ll always be there for you!’ You did it, Dad!’

‘There are 14 of us left out of 33, Dad. We’re scared, hungry, thirsty, and thankful you’re here. When the building collapsed, it made a wedge, like a triangle, and it saved us.’

‘Come on out, boy!’

‘No, Dad! Let the other kids come out first, because I know you’ll get me. No matter what, I know you’ll be there for me.’” (<https://armenianweekly.com/2011/06/21/vartabedian-are-you-going-to-help-me/>)

No matter what you do, our Father in heaven is always willing to offer His grace to you when you come to Him.

**CLOSING CHALLENGE/APPLICATION:**In a short story titled “The Capital of the World*,”* Nobel Prize-winning author Ernest Hemingway wrote about a father and a teenage son, Paco, whose relationship broke down. After the son ran away from home, the father began a long journey in search of him. Finally, as a last resort, the man put an ad in the local newspaper in Madrid. It read, “Dear Paco, meet me in front of the newspaper office tomorrow at noon . . . all is forgiven . . . I love you.”

The next morning in front of the newspaper office there were eight hundred men named Paco, desiring to restore a broken relationship. Never underestimate the power of relationships on people’s lives. (*The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, John Maxwell, HarperCollins Leadership, 2007, page 110.)

The Father in heaven is always searching for those who are away from Him. Though some might feel like they are alone and isolated, there will always be One searching.

**ALTAR RESPONSE:**Either lead a collective response from the front, walking through the three points, or have the students find a place of prayer on their own. Encourage them to prayerfully consider the three points in their life, and then ask the Lord to challenge them further.

**POWERPOINT SLIDES**

Slide 1 – Who Will Cry?, Luke 15:11–32

Slide 2 – We see some principles of the heartbeat of God as the Father

Slide 3 – The Father Allows Us to Choose Our Path

Slide 4 – Luke 15:11–13

Slide 5 – The Father Allows Us to Have a Moment to Come to Our Senses

Slide 6 – Luke 15:14–19

Slide 7 – The Father Allows Us to Receive His Grace

Slide 8 – Luke 15:20–23

**OUTLINE TEMPLATE**

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**POINT 1:** The Father Allows Us to Choose Our Path

* Luke 15:11–13
* The demand requested
* The demand granted

**POINT 2:** The Father Allows Us to Have a Moment to Come to Our Senses

* Luke 15:14–19
* Resources runs out
* Desperation sets in
* The Holy Spirit draws us to repentance
* Romans 2:4

**POINT 3:** The Father Allows Us to Receive His Grace

* Luke 15:20–23
* The return of the son
* The father’s grace

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