

When Good doesn't mean Better.

Set the Stage

-The younger son left the father and wasted it all.

1. The son disrespected and rejected the father when he asked for his inheritance.

-The Father ran to His lost son.

1. He restored him back into the family as his son.
2. He forgave him and threw a huge feast.

-There is nothing we can do that can make God not love us.

-**God's forgiveness** can restore any type of sin and wrong doing.

Read Luke 15:25-32

-For this study, I want to focus our attention on the **older brother** and see how being good does not mean we are better.

-The older brother represents two types of people:

The religious who tries to work their way to God or the Christian who prides themselves on their moral behavior.

-The older brother was the model citizen:

- He always said yes, sir, and no, ma'am.
- He did what he was told to do.
- He followed the instructions of his parents, teacher, and boss.
- He was faithful to church services and events.
- He followed God's Word to the T.
- He seemed to be a good Christian man.

-In this parable, Jesus reveals that such a good person was ultimately bad!

Lets take it to the Next Level

The response of the older brother to his father reveals his real condition.

On the outside, the older brother seemed one way, but deep on the inside he was truly another. On the outside he seemed good, but on the inside he was really bad. He was no different than his younger brother, or as Jesus reveals, being good doesn't mean better...

1. The Reaction of the Older Brother

A. He was angry. (28)

-His selfish response to the father's love is anger.

-The Father rejoiced, but the older son was angry.

-*What was he angry about?*

1. He was furious at the cost. (robe, ring, fatted calf)

-He has **worked** and **earned** what he had, but his younger brother did nothing to earn anything.

-He was angry and resentful that **his efforts** never received a celebration.

2. He was furious at the injustice of the father.

-I have worked hard and never disobeyed you, and he has done nothing but squander and disobey.

-**This isn't fair. Where is the justice? You can't do this for him.** (We can feel his way)

3. He was furious that the father was acting so extravagantly in his love.

-The father had forgiven the irresponsible son and had completely restored him.

B. He refused to go into the Feast (28)

-The "bad" son enters the celebration of the father, but the "good" son does not.

1. He would not forgive his brother.

- Why?* He did not think his brother deserved forgiveness. He had done too much and had gone too far. (We can be this way.)
- He felt superior to him, and it is hard to forgive someone you feel superior to.
- Why did he feel superior, and why is it hard to forgive when you feel this way?*

C. He misunderstood himself. (29-30)

1. He misunderstood why he obeyed his father.
 - It was out of what the Father could do for him rather than what he should do for the father.
 - It was out of **fear** rather than **love**.
2. He misunderstood the true nature of sin:
 - “I have never disobeyed you”
 - As a result God must do things in my life like I want.
 - Sin is a matter of the heart that will eventually display itself in behavior.
 - The **most dangerous place a Christian can get it** to the place where they think they don't sin or at least in comparison to others think they are good.

D. He disowned his brother. (30)

- The older brother should have **gone after the younger brother** to bring him back to the father.
- Why?* Because he loved the father and the brother.
 - The older brother does not actually love the father or the brother. **He only loves himself.**

E. He mistreated his father.

- The treatment of the older brother was no different than the younger brother.

-They both only wanted the father for what they could get from him.

-They just went about it in completely different ways.

-Both rebelled against the father. One by being really bad and the other by being really good. You can disgrace God by either breaking the rules or keeping all of them.

-As good as he thought he was, he broke the two greatest commandments. (*I have never disobeyed you*)

1. Love God all your heart, mind, soul, & strength.

-How often we break this one!

2. Love others. He broke both of these.

-Here is the good obedient son breaking the two greatest commandments.

Why does the older brother react this way?

1. *He thinks he is good on the inside because of his good behavior on the outside.*

2. *He has an incorrect view of the Father and the Father's love.*

3. *He has not recognized the reality of sin in his own life.*

Taking your next step

Here are a few resulting attitudes from this type of person.

A. Our motivation behind our moral behavior.

-We live good lives out of fear, not joy and love.

-We serve God out of fear, not out of love.

-This results in us serving God out of a check mark, and not out of joy and love.

-*"If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that*

*hath my commandments, and keepeth them,
he it is that loveth me:" John 14:15, 21*

- Being motivated by a moral duty results in bondage.
 - It creates severe emotional frustration.
 - It creates boredom in living the Christian life.
 - Religious and moral duties are a huge burden and can become crushing.
- Ever wonder how such strong Christians can have a huge moral failure? It's so shocking!
 - The pressure to appear good and happy becomes too much. The frustration and bondage become too much, and they explode and blow up their own lives.**

B. Our pride in our moral behavior.

1. Creates a dangerous superiority complex.
 - This causes us to look down at other people, thinking we are better.
 - Anyone who doesn't act like me, talk like me, go to the church I go to,
2. Creates a self-righteous attitude.
 - We will openly announce other people's sins but not our own.
 - We will see other people's sins and be blind to our own.
 - We compare ourselves with others that we feel are worse than us to make us feel better about ourselves.
 - This allows us to feel we are good.
3. It creates a judgmental spirit.
 - A spirit that judges quickly, harshly, and unjustly.
 - A spirit that is unwilling to forgive.

-Some of the most judgmental people I have known were Christians.

4. It creates prejudice, discrimination, and racism.

-Some of the most racist people I have known were Christians.

C. Our rights because of our moral behavior.

-This attitude makes us feel we have leverage over God, that we can control him by our behavior, that we can put him in a position where He owes us one.

-We obey because of “**what**” we will get, not “**who**” we will get. Self-centered.

-We feel that God owes us because of the way we have lived.

1. God owes me answered prayers.

-When God doesn't answer our prayers the way we want, we can get frustrated, angry, doubt, or just give up.

2. God owes me a good or smooth life.

-Because we have lived a good life, we should get a good life.

-The problem...if a trial comes into our life, we can get angry, furious, and bitter with God.

-Or wonder if we are living right. Think God is out to get us because we have messed up. (Strive harder.)

-Why God? Why is this happening to me? I have obeyed and served you.

-Why me? Why not the younger brother?

-I don't deserve this.

- We expect our goodness to pay off, and when it doesn't, we are confused and disappointed.
- This can turn to anger and bitterness.
- Our frustration, anger, and resentment are our own fault because **we have tried to control life through our own effort.**

Application

- The gospel says that everyone is wrong, everyone is loved, and everyone is called to come to the Father.
- The Gospel says we are all created equal in the image of God no matter what _____!
- We need to truly evaluate the deep-seated reason we do what we do.

Elisabeth Elliot recounts a story (not in the Bible) that reveals the reality of why we do what we do.

"One day Jesus said to his disciples: "I'd like you to carry a stone for Me." He didn't give any explanation. So the disciples looked around for a stone to carry, and Peter, being the practical sort, sought out the smallest stone he could possibly find. After all, Jesus didn't give any regulations for weight and size! So he put it in his pocket. Jesus then said: "Follow Me." He led them on a journey. About noontime Jesus had everyone sit down. He waved his hands "Now it's time for lunch." In a few seconds, Peter's lunch was over. When lunch was done Jesus told them to stand up. He said again, "I'd like you to carry a stone for Me." This time Peter said, "Aha! Now I get it!" So he looked around and saw a small boulder. He hoisted it on his back and it was painful, it made him stagger. But he said, "I can't wait for supper." Jesus then said: "Follow Me." He led them on a journey, with Peter barely being able to keep up. Around supper time Jesus led them to the side of a river. He said, "Now everyone throw your stones into the water." They did. Then he said, "Follow Me," and began to walk. Peter and the others looked at him dumbfounded.

Jesus sighed and said, "Don't you remember **what I asked you to do?**
Who were you carrying the stone for?"

"His story reveals the destructive self-centeredness of the younger brother, but it also condemns the elder brother's moralistic life in the strongest terms. Jesus is saying that both the irreligious and the religious are spiritually lost, both life paths are dead ends, and that every thought the human race has had about how to connect with God has been wrong."
Timothy Keller

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