

Jesus told the story called “The Prodigal Son” in response to the condemning attitudes of some religious people. The younger son lived in open rebellion while his elder brother, “The Pouting Son” stayed at home, even though his heart appears to have been a long way from his father. Read the story carefully, for Jesus lets the elder brother show us more about ourselves than we might be willing to see.

The story Jesus still tells begins with the younger son saying, *“Father, give me my share of the estate.” So, he divided his property between them.* *Luke 15:12*

In that culture, the elder brother would have been asked to negotiate with his younger sibling since the request would have estranged the father. He would have seen the pain of his father’s broken heart.

Have you ever seen someone mistreated and taken offense?

We find it hard to avoid keeping the memory of evil deeds alive. As we take offense, we redefine the offending person by what was said or done. No one can change yesterday. Unfortunately, taking offense changes us and damages the Spirit of Jesus within us.

Remember: You choose how your spirit will be focused.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So, he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. “Your brother has come,” he replied, “and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.” The older brother became angry and refused to go in. *Luke 15:25-28*

The elder brother had no room in his heart for forgiveness. He did not want to be under the same roof as his brother. That boy caused the family to lose wealth, land, and prestige. The elder brother forgot about his responsibilities. He should have fulfilled his role of welcoming and serving guests. He should have taken his place with his father and his younger brother. But no, all he could do was complain and grumble.

Henri Nouwen: There is so much judgment, condemnation, and prejudice among the saints. There is so much frozen anger among the people who are so concerned about avoiding sin.

Resentment and lack of forgiveness blow things out of proportion and destroy our relationship with our Heavenly Father. As we associate with critical people, we develop a critical un-Christlike spirit. We wonder why people aren’t interested in our faith in Jesus.

Do everything without complaining or arguing...

Philippians 2:14

The elder brother’s sin was a broken relationship with his father. When anger and resentment define our relationships, God doesn’t.

“Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you (substituted what he did for what he was) and never disobeyed your orders (no concept of relationship). Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him’ *Luke 15:29, 30*

Both boys wanted the father’s goods. Both boys loved the father for what they could get from him. Neither was concerned about the father’s happiness.

Remember: You choose what makes you furious.

The elder brother could have discovered the father’s heart.

“My son,” the father said, “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” *Luke 15:31, 32*

Have you allowed God to redeem your brokenness?

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Hebrews 12:15

The weeds of bitterness need to be pulled up and given to our Heavenly Father every time light reveals them.

Remember: You choose to be lost or found by the Father.

Jesus Christ gave his life to remove your bitterness. Will you let him? If you really want to be close to the Father, you will.

The *New International Version* of the Bible is quoted in today's study.

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