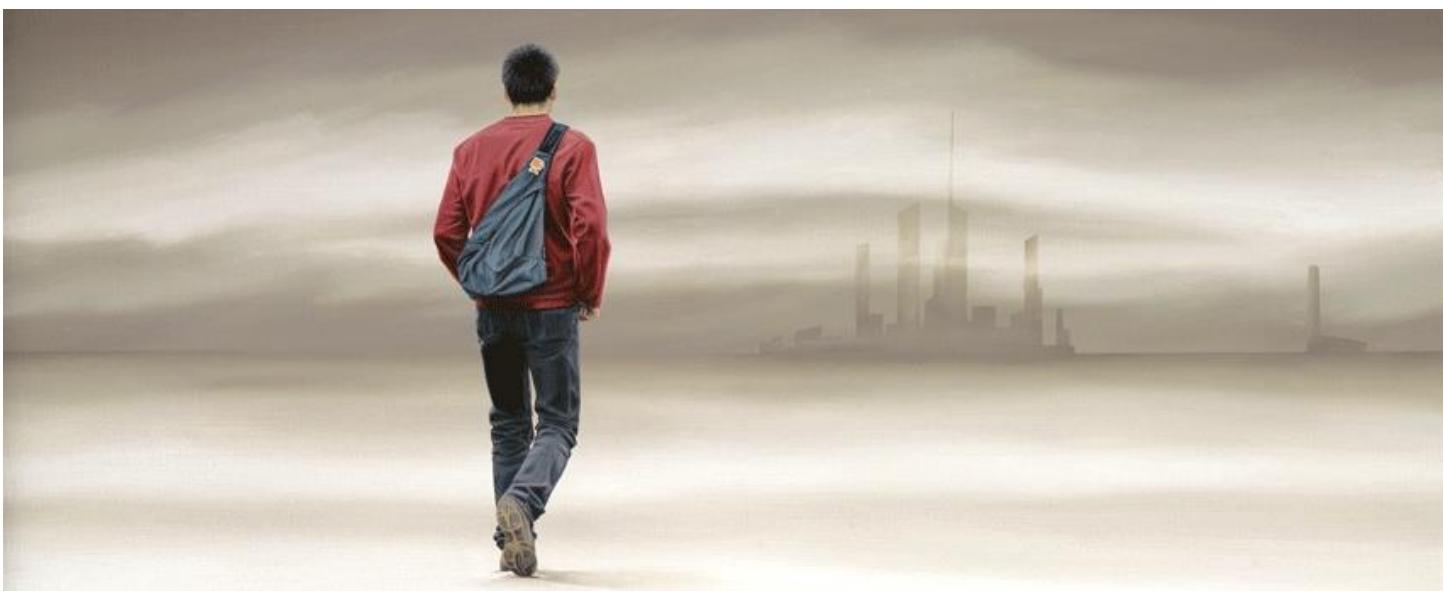




Lost + Found Reflections—Week 1: Now



In psychology, there is a famous test called the **marshmallow experiment**. Basically, they put a marshmallow in front of a kid and tell him/her that they can eat it, or if s/he can wait 10 minutes they will give him/her another marshmallow for waiting. Apparently, the kids that can wait have a much higher probability of success in life. I hate thinking about this test because I feel for the agony of the poor child struggling with his/her own patience.

But patience is an important skill. In the story of the prodigal son, **the son gets lost in large part because of his lack of patience**. The son goes to his father and asks for his inheritance now. His father is very much alive but the son doesn't want to wait. He wants wealth and the success and freedom that come from it now.

Few of us are insensitive enough to ask for our father's inheritance now, but we often want security, and safety now. **It is good to be prudent, but often we can close ourselves off to generosity, and to what is really important to us if we are too focused on protecting our future.**

This is why churches ask their members to pray about giving a percentage of income. You never know how much to have in your rainy day fund because you don't have any idea how much rain is coming. This is why we give based on income. Usually we encourage people to either give 10% or to work toward that goal. You give a share of everything rather than waiting until you have enough because if you wait then nothing will ever feel like enough. **The spiritually healthy thing is not "I want it now," but rather "give it now."**

Still making it through the anxieties of the world is no easy thing, which is why you shouldn't take our word for it. **Pray about it.** It wasn't just that the Prodigal Son didn't have the patience to wait for his inheritance, it is also that he didn't have the ability to see the value he had living in his father's house. Prayer helps us see value much more clearly. When I was a kid, I think I would have failed the marshmallow test spectacularly. I probably still would if I didn't remember to pray. That is because prayer focuses us on our gratitude rather than our hunger.

Lost and Found: Special Focus Scripture

For this series we have a theme of the story of the prodigal Son from Luke 15:11-32. Today we're focusing especially on the bolded section below.

Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.

A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' " So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound."

Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."



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