

BIBLE DISCOVERY

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LUKE: Cost of Discipleship

Luke 15:11-32

We're diving back into the Gospel of Luke. After nine chapters introducing us to Jesus and His call, Luke now takes us with Him on the road to Jerusalem (Luke 9-19). Along the way, we'll hear some of Jesus' most famous teachings and stories, as He shows us what it truly costs to follow Him and why following Him is worth everything.

The Big Idea

(What is the author's point?)

The cure for a cynical heart is accepting the gracious embrace of God, as well as God's gracious plans for His own.

Why It Matters

(Why is this relevant to us?)

What triggers your anger more than anything else? Is there an area of life that, when it isn't working, you become furious? If it stays a problem, anger can easily sink into something worse: cynicism. We're no longer just angry; we doubt goodness itself. We cease to hope. Life starts to feel like a bad joke, and we're the punchline. "It is what it is," slowly becomes our mantra.

In the second half of Jesus' story in Luke 15:11-32, Jesus introduces His listeners to a paragon of cynicism: the older brother. As the cranky older son approaches the celebration, we feel his bitterness. When he finds out about the party, he rages and pouts (15:28). When his father comes out to appeal to him, the older brother spews insults. He calls his dad a slave-driving curmudgeon (15:29), with zero sense for justice (15:30). His very take on life itself is overwhelmingly negative.

The father in the parable makes a push to call the older brother back. The father offers a totally different take on reality—one full of grace and hope. The cure for the older brother's cynicism is to embrace his father's worldview. For example, his father isn't a slave driver; he's a good and gracious father. In fact, he's reserved plenty of space in his heart for both sons. He's ready to provide a rich inheritance for the older son (15:31) and a gracious reception for the lost son (15:32). The invitation is for the older son to embrace this grace-filled reality. Will he accept it and come in, or stay outside and prove himself to be the prodigal?

Good to Know

(What are some helpful insights into this passage?)

“Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf (Luke 15:27).” The earlier part of the story is crucial for understanding the angst of the older brother. The younger son had indeed humiliated his family through his foolish actions. Just as importantly, the father had lavished grace upon the prodigal.

“But he was angry and refused to go in” (15:28). The reader feels the irony of the story. The foolish (formerly prodigal) little brother stands inside the house in a fine robe. Correspondingly, the older brother now stands outside the family. The use of space is intentional.

“His father came out and entreated him” (15:28). The father here depicts God’s abounding graciousness toward rebellious sinners. Whether their sin is flagrant immorality or self-righteous justification, God indiscriminately pursues sinners.

“Yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends” (15:29). Notice how, when the older brother daydreams, he pictures himself celebrating apart from his father.

“This son of yours...devoured your property with prostitutes” (15:30). The older brother’s depiction of the younger brother refuses to acknowledge him as family. His father might call him son, but he is dead to his older brother. Notice, too, how the older brother adds the detail about prostitutes.

“Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours” (15:31). This appeal functions as the climactic moment of the scene. Will the older brother embrace his father and his father’s take on reality, or will he prove himself to be the true prodigal of the story?



**THIS WEEK'S
Bible Discovery Author**
Pastor Chad Reeser

Group Guide

Following the series with your group?

- Start with some [icebreaker questions](#).
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started.

Conversation Starters

1. What triggers your anger? Are there any areas where you are prone to judgment/cynicism?
2. What does the older brother’s response to his father reveal about his heart?
3. Who does he believe the father to be?

4. What does the Father's response in vv. 31-32 teach us about the Lord and how should that influence us today?

Prayer

Gracious Father, thank you for being so kind and gentle when we are harsh and cynical. Help us to remember your great love for all of the world when we are prone to judge. Let us never forget the way you pursue and redeem us. Amen.