

The Prodigal Son

Lesson * 8: (Luke 15:11-32; COL 198-211)

The Symbols and Purpose of the Parable

1. Though the parable does not overtly identify the meaning of each symbol, what do you suppose each of the following symbols represents?

The father represents _____. (Hint: John 16:27)

The younger son represents the _____ and _____. (Hint: Lk. 15:1)

The older son represents the _____ and _____. (Hint: Lk. 15:2)

The killing of the fatted calf represents the death of _____. (Hint: Leviticus 9:2-3)

The owner of the swine symbolizes _____. (Hint: Revelation 18:2-3)

The best robe represents “the robe of _____.” (Isaiah 61:10)

The father’s house symbolizes the _____ (Hint: I Timothy 3:15)

2. Christ’s central purpose in teaching this parable was to illustrate the matchless love of God and to condemn the self-righteous and condemnatory spirit of the _____ and _____ (Lk. 15:1-2)

Note: It is ironic that Jesus, who was holy, blameless and undefiled, attracted the most vile and filthy of sinners to Himself. The “scum of the earth” was attracted to the purest being in the universe. On the other hand, those who were undefiled in their own estimation, felt very uncomfortable in the presence of Jesus.

The Pharisees and Scribes knew they were cherishing sin on the inside and tried to cover it up on the outside. This is why they felt so uncomfortable in the presence of Jesus. They knew He could read them like a book. On the other hand, the publicans and sinners knew that they were sinners and had nothing to hide from Jesus so they felt comfortable in His presence.

The Younger Son’s Early View of His Father

1. Why did the younger son ask for his inheritance and leave home? “This younger son had become weary of the _____ of his father’s house. He thought that his _____ was restricted.” “In his restless youth the prodigal looked upon his father as _____ and _____ (COL 198, 204)

Note: The younger son felt restricted by the laws of his father house. He looked upon his father as a taskmaster and himself as a slave. He wanted freedom and independence to live his life as he saw fit.

2. How does the younger son’s view of his father describe the view of the sinner toward God?

“They [unrepentant sinners] regard Him as watching to _____ and condemn, as unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there is a _____ excuse for not helping him. His _____ they regard as a _____ upon men’s happiness, a burdensome _____ from which they are glad to escape.” (COL 204)

3. How did the younger son view the present as compared with the future? “He is bent on _____ enjoyment, and cares not for the _____.” (COL 199)

Note: The spirit of the younger son at this stage is very similar to that of Esau, Jacob’s older son (see, Hebrews 12:15-17) but with a different ending. Esau did not care about the birthright, he only cared for his present moment of hunger! The younger son lives for the here and now, not for the sweet by and by.

4. With what words did the younger son display his spirit of selfishness? “Father, _____ me the portion of goods that falleth to _____.” (Lk. 15:12)

The Younger Son Leaves Home

1. Why do you suppose the younger son went into a “far country”? (Luke 15:13) _____
_____.

Note: The father knew that reasoning with his son was fruitless because the son was full of self-sufficiency. The father did not force his son to stay; he gave him freedom of choice to leave home.

2. What attitude did the younger son have upon his departure from home? “With money in plenty, and _____ to do as he likes, he _____ himself that the desire of his heart is reached. There is no one to say, Do not do this, for it will be an injury to yourself; or, Do this, because it is right.” (COL 199)
3. What kind of lifestyle did the younger son live when he left home? He “wasted his substance with _____ living.” (Lk. 15:13).

Note: For a while things went well. He had fun partying and playing around. He had loads of friends. He felt free and unrestricted to do his own thing. At last no rules or regulations! “The wealth which he has selfishly claimed from his father he squanders upon harlots. The treasure of his young manhood is wasted. The precious years of life, the strength of intellect, the bright visions of youth, the spiritual aspirations—all are consumed in the fires of lust.”(COL 199-200)

The Enslavement of the Younger Son

1. What happened to the younger son after he squandered his father's goods? "And when he has spent all, there arose a mighty _____ in that land; and he began to be in _____." (Lk. 15:14)

Note: When we separate ourselves from God and his family (church), we lose our freedom and dignity and become slaves of sin. The young man had thought that freedom from the father's law meant joy and happiness but he now found out that it brought bitterness and pain!

2. Where did the younger son end up when calamity struck? "And he went and _____ himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed _____." (Lk. 15:15)

Note: The expression "joined himself" in the Greek means "to glue together". That is to say, he was bound to another as by glue. His freedom came to a screeching halt and he now became the slave of the "citizen of that country."

3. How does Ellen White describe the younger son's bondage? "To a Jew this [working with swine] was the most menial and degrading of employments. The youth who has boasted of his _____, now find himself a _____. He is in the worst _____—'holden with the cords of his sins.' The glitter and tinsel that enticed him have disappeared, and he feels the burden of his _____." (COL 200)

4. Which two commandments did the younger brother especially break? (See Exodus 20:12, 14) _____

5. What did the father mean when he said: "For this my son was _____, and is _____ again." (Lk. 15:24; Ephesians 2:12, 13). In what sense was the son dead while he was away from home? _____
In what sense was the son alive when he came home? _____

6. Who do you suppose is represented by the "citizen of that country?" (Lk. 15:15 in the light of Revelation 18:2 and Mark 5:12-13) _____.

The Return Home

1. What happened when the younger son hit rock bottom? "He came to _____." (Lk. 15:17)

Note: While he was away from home, he was "out of it." "The deceptive power that Satan had exercised over him was broken." (COL 202) Now, through the influence of the Holy

Spirit, he regained his senses and began thinking straight. While he was in the “far country” he was not himself because he was the slave of another.

2. What is it that wooed the younger son to come home? “How many hired servants of my father’s have _____ enough and to _____, and I perish with hunger?” (Lk. 15:17)
3. Ellen White describes the drawing power of the father: “Miserable as he was, the prodigal found hope in the conviction of his father’s _____. It was that love which was _____ him toward home.” (COL 202)
4. In Romans 2:4 the apostle Paul assures us that the “_____ of God leads us to _____.”
5. How does the son’s prepared speech reveal that his repentance was genuine? “I have _____ against heaven and before thee and am no more _____ to be _____ thy son.” (Lk. 15:18-19)
6. Notwithstanding the drawing power of his father’s love, the younger brother has a stunted view of that love. How do we know this? “And [I] am no more worthy to be called thy _____: make me as one of thy hired _____.” (Lk. 15:19)

Note: Whereas when the son left home he manifested his selfishness by saying to his father, “give me,” he now shows a spirit of humility by saying to his father, “make me.”

7. What indication do we have that the father was anxiously awaiting for the return of his son? “But when he was yet a _____ way off, his father _____ him.” (Lk. 15:20)

Note: Ellen White beautifully remarks: “If you take even _____ step toward Him [God] in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in his arms of _____ love. . . . The very _____ reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. Never a _____ is offered, however faltering, never a _____ shed, however secret, never a sincere _____ after God cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Even _____ the prayer is uttered or the yearning made known, grace from Christ goes forth to _____ the grace that is working upon the human soul.” (COL 206)

8. **Thought Question:** Why do you suppose (in contrast to the shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep) the father did not seek his son in the far away place? _____

9. How did the father reveal his love for the reckless son? He “had _____, and _____, and fell on his _____, and _____ him.” (Lk. 15:20)

10. Is there any indication that the father rebuked his son or put him on probation? _____

Note: “In the parable there is no taunting, no casting up to the prodigal of his evil course. The son feels that the _____ is forgiven and forgotten, blotted out _____.” (COL 204). The son’s behavior deserved the sternest rebuke yet the father received him with open arms. This is grace—unmerited favor!

11. What blessings did the father bestow on his wayward son?
To satisfy his hunger the father killed the fatted _____ (Lk. 15:23)
For his tired feet the father provided new _____ (Lk. 15:22)
To replace his filthy, smelly garments the father provided the best _____ (Lk. 15:22)
For his ragged hands, the father provides his very own signet _____ (Lk. 15:22)

12. What is represented by the son’s filthy rags and the father’s best robe? (Carefully study Isaiah 64:6; Genesis 3:21; Isaiah 61:10; Zechariah 3:1-5; Revelation 7:13-14 and 19:7-8)
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13. What is represented by the killing of the fatted calf? “And he said unto Aaron, ‘Take thee a young _____ for a _____ offering.’” (Leviticus 9:2).

14. The son had carefully prepared the speech he would make when he got home. Which part of his speech was cut short? _____ (Lk. 15:18-19, 21)

Note: “No opportunity is given him to ask a servant’s place. He is a son, who shall be honored with the best the house affords, and whom the waiting men and women shall respect and serve.” (COL 204)

15. How did the household react when the younger son returned home? “Let us eat and be _____ . . . And they began to be _____ . . . he heard _____ and _____ .” (Lk. 15:23-25, 29).

Note: The Greek word for music is *sumphonia* and the word for dancing is *xoron*. That is, the father called out the symphony and the choir!

The Riddle of the Older Son

10. Whom does the older son symbolize? “By the elder son were represented the unrepenting _____ of Christ’s day, and also the _____ in _____ age, who look with contempt upon those whom they regard as _____ and sinners.” (COL 209)

11. How did the older brother show his disdain for both his father and his older brother? He did not address his father as “father” (Lk. 15:29-30) and he referred to his brother as “_____ son.” (Lk. 15:29).

12. How did the older son reveal his arrogance and self-sufficiency? “Lo, these _____ years do I _____ thee, neither transgressed I at _____ time thy _____: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” (Lk. 15:29)

Note: The older son refused even to enter the house (Lk. 15:28). He has served his father, not because he loved him but because he wanted his father’s recognition and reward. He was the consummate legalist. He was a son with a servant’s mentality. He thought he had to earn his father’s inheritance by his hard work. The older brother was lost at home as many legalists are lost in church!

13. What two things characterize a legalist? The older son dwelt “upon his _____ life in his father’s house as a round of unrequited service, and then places in mean _____ the favor shown to the son just returned.” (COL 207)

Note: This is the most deadly of all sins. How can God help someone who feels like he needs none? This sin characterized the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22), the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-12), the Pharisee (Luke 15:9-14) and the Laodicean church (Revelation 3:14-21).

14. When we truly repent from sin, what will be the result? “When you see yourselves as sinners saved only by the love of your heavenly Father, you will have tender _____ for others who are suffering under _____.” (COL 210)

Note: The older son complained to his father: “You killed the fatted calf for that sinful son of yours but you never even killed a kid in recognition of my loyalty to you.” What the older son is saying is this: “You have done the maximum to reward a sinner while you have not even done the minimum to reward a righteous person like me.”

15. Why are we not told in the story how the older son reacted to his father’s logic? “Did the elder brother repent of his jealousy and hardheartedness? Concerning this, Christ was _____. For the parable was still _____, and it rested with His hearers to determine what the outcome should be.” (COL 209)

