

International Conversation Cafe

New Testament: God Gives People a Choice, Luke 15

Parents hope to guide their children into good choices that will help them be successful throughout their lives. Cultures have very different ways of transitioning their children into adulthood.

How do parents direct and advise young adults in your family? For example, do parents have anything to say about the choice of college or a spouse for their children?

What responsibilities do children have to their parents as teenagers and young adults?

In your culture, what kinds of things do you do to restore relationships in a family?

The following story tells about a major conflict between a father and his adult son. Divide the parts and read it as a script.

The Lost Son Luke 15: 11-32

Scene 1

Jesus: There was a man who had two sons. The younger son spoke to his father.

Younger Son: 'Father, give me my share of the family property.

Narrator: So the father divided his property between his two sons.

“For the son to ask for the inheritance before the father’s death is to sever his relationship with the father.” Bock, Darrell. 1996. Luke 9:51-24:53. Grand Rapids: Baker Books

Scene 2

Narrator: Not long after that, the younger son packed up all he had. Then he left for a country far away. There he wasted his money on wild living. He spent everything he had.

Scene 3

Narrator: Then the whole country ran low on food. So the son didn't have what he needed. He went to work for someone who lived in that country, who sent him to the fields to feed the pigs. The son wanted to fill his stomach with the food the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything.

Narrator: Then he began to think clearly again.

Younger Son: How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food! But here I am dying from hunger! I will get up and go back to my father. I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven. And I have sinned against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers."

Narrator: So he got up and went to his father.

Scene 4

Narrator: While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him. He was filled with tender love for his son. He ran to him. He threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Younger Son: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.

Father to his servants: Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattest calf and kill it. Let's have a big dinner and celebrate. This son of mine was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.

Retell the story in your own words.

The son represents people who do not honor God and use people for their own gain and enjoyment. In other words, they do not love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. They do not love others as themselves.

- *In what ways are we like the son?*
 - *How do we not love God?*
 - *How do we not love others?*

The Father in the story represents God.

- *The father gave to the son all he requested and let him go. What do you think that says about God?*
- *Towards the end of the story we see the father looking for his son.*

"While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him."

What would this suggest about God's attitude toward us?

- Though ashamed, the son comes to his father with a confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son."

This confession reveals an attitude of repentance. Repentance is a willingness to admit one's faults and turn to God for mercy. This story represents people who repent and turn to Jesus.

- *What seems difficult about repentance?*
- *How can repentance restore relationships with each other?*
- *Does this story change your attitude about God? In what way?*



Rembrandt Harmensz, van Rijn. The Return of the Prodigal Son, 1642. Drawing with pen and brush. 19x23 cm. Teylers Museum, Haarlem.