

WEEK 42:

OLDER BROTHERS

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 15:25-32

RELATED SCRIPTURES:

Psalm 32:1-2, Matthew 20:1-16,
Romans 4:1-8, Galatians, Philemon 1:8-9

“The fatted calf, the best Scotch, the hoedown could all have been his too, any time he asked for them except that he never thought to ask for them because he was too busy trying cheerlessly and religiously to earn them.”

— Frederick Buechner

“Neither son loved the father for himself. They both were using the father for their own self-centered ends rather than loving, enjoying, and serving him for his own sake. This means that you can rebel against God and be alienated from him either by breaking his rules or by keeping all of them diligently. It’s a shocking message: Careful obedience to God’s law may serve as a strategy for rebelling against God.”

- Tim Keller, Prodigal God

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

Read Luke 15:25-29. How does the older brother view his father and their relationship? In what ways do you believe that God is a slave-master who is primarily concerned with what you do for him?

Read Luke 15:29-30. Describe the older brother’s view of his younger brother. What prevents the him from rejoicing with the return of his brother? What individuals or groups of people do you tend to look down on as unworthy?

Read Romans 4:1-8 and Galatians 2:21. How does the older brother misunderstand the heart of Christian faith? Why are you tempted to try to work to earn something from God instead of trusting Him by faith?

Read Luke 15:28-32. Look at the father’s response to his older son. How does he approach him? What is his tone? How is the father’s response to both sons similar? Do you believe this is how God responds to you in both your rebellious and religious sins?

What is the heart-level difference between the younger son who receives the father’s grace, welcome and party and the older son who does not?

PRAY FOR:

- God’s Spirit to help us to live by faith in Jesus; not religious work.
- protection from becoming an older brother, graceless, condemning group of people.
- empowerment and wisdom to rejoice and join God rescuing the lost.