

# Devotionals: FaithWalk

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Date: March 27 - April 3

Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Theme: Spiritual Integrity...  
Without Holding Back

## Welcome

Sometimes in life it is easier to give than to receive gifts and other times it is easier to receive gifts than to give. Can you think of examples in your own life when you found it easier to give a gift than to receive a gift? How about a time when it was easier to receive a gift than to give a gift? What was the difference? Why? Sometimes some of the most giving people have trouble receiving and sometimes the most receiving people have difficulty giving. Why do you think we struggle with giving and receiving gifts? What makes us uncomfortable? What brings us joy?

### Prayer...

Lord, although we feel unworthy of your grace in our lives, we thank you for loving us anyway. We pray that you would shine your light on our lives in those areas that dwell in darkness. Show us how to turn from our sin and repent. Finally, help us to graciously receive your forgiveness. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## Equip

Read Luke 15:11-32.

This story or parable that Jesus told is known as both "The Prodigal Son" and "The Lost Son."

• Which of these titles do you think speaks more clearly about this story? Explain.

• What are the major themes of this story?

There are several characters within this story with whom we can relate at different times in our lives:

• When have you felt like the younger son in your life? What was that experience like?

• When have you felt like the older son in your life? What was that like?

• When have you felt like the father in your life? What was that like?

• With which of these characters can you most relate? Why?

• With which of these characters is it most difficult for you to identify? Why?

The father in this story displays an extravagant kind of love. It is a love that welcomes and receives a sinful child back into his arms.

• Why is it so difficult for us to believe that our God is this kind of Father?

• What barriers stand in our way of walking away from our own junk and running into the arms of our heavenly Father?

• Why do we struggle to receive this kind of extravagant love?

## Send

While you may not feel like God wants your junk, Scripture proclaims that God most definitely wants your garbage. The Lord Jesus paid an enormous price on the cross for you. This sacrifice grew out of an extravagant love from your Father.

• How do you most need to experience God's extravagant love in your life today?

• What areas of your life are you needing to confront most directly?

### Prayer...

Father, you are merciful and gracious. You are slow to anger and overwhelm us with your love. Help us to receive your grace, even though we don't feel worthy. Help us to know that we are forgiven. Help us to feel your loving arms surrounding us. Thank you for new beginnings and new life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# Devotionals: DailyWalk

Date: March 28 - April 3

Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Theme: Spiritual Integrity...

Without Holding Back

## Day 1: Monday, March 28 —Look at the Father!

Read Luke 15:1-3. Who is intently listening to Jesus' teaching; who is troubled by Jesus' concern for "notorious sinners"? Jesus often teaches deep and poignant truths by sharing simple stories; what truth(s) do you find in Luke 15:4-10? These parables prepare us for a familiar account that teaches much about the heart of God the Father. Pray that as you read the story of the Prodigal Son and the Forgiving Father (*Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*), the Spirit will reveal to you new treasures of truths that are cradled within. Try to notice everything about the father. Consider recording everything you see that reveals the father's (God's) extravagant, redeeming love.

## Day 2: Tuesday, March 29 —To Whom Do You Relate?

Read Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32. To whom do you most closely relate: the religious people who were quick to label and judge; the foolish son who later repents and seeks forgiveness; the cold-hearted son who (like the Pharisees) resents the father's mercy and grace; or the loving father, whose heart's desire is for his errant son to return home to him? Is God waiting for you to repent and return? Are you resentful of God's grace shown to, perhaps, even "notorious sinners" (*Jonah 3:10-4:11; Luke 15:1-2, 30*)? Is your heart breaking with the loss of one who has strayed far from you and from God? Spend time talking honestly with God your Father; God will listen and hear.

## Day 3: Wednesday, March 30 —What Do I Hold Most Dear?

Read Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32. The religious leaders can't see beyond their limited view of how God should act. The younger son in the parable believes the lie that the riches and pleasures of this world will bring joy and satisfaction. The older son seems motivated by duty; he doesn't grasp the value of forgiveness, love, and grace. Only the father's heart cries for reconciliation, restoration, and relationships based on unconditional love. What do you hold most dear? Do you order your life in ways that honor this value? Read and ponder Jesus' words in Matthew 6:19-21, 33; 22:37-39 and John 17:20-26. Pray your life will reflect eternal values and abiding love.

## Day 4: Thursday, March 31 —Repentance...The Door to Reconciliation and Restoration

Read Luke 15:11b-32, considering that it is the beacon of his father's love that beckons the wayward son to repent and return

home. Why is repentance important? Read Psalm 32:1-5; 51:17; Matthew 4:17; 12:41; Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10; and 2 Peter 3:9. When we repent, we humble ourselves, turning from sin and toward God. We seek forgiveness, and God, who is gracious and kind, offers reconciliation and restoration. Pray Thompson's lyrics, "Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling for you and for me...calling, O sinner, come home!"

## Day 5: Friday, April 1 —Watching and Waiting

Read Luke 15:11b-32 and consider how long the father has been waiting, watching, hoping, and longing for his son to return; nothing his son has done or could ever do would diminish the father's love. Such love is beyond extravagant. It is the love God offers us; it is the love we are to offer others. Do you mete out love based on other's actions? Have others withheld love from you? God our Father understands how it feels to have love rejected. Remember Jesus' cry over Jerusalem (*Luke 13:34*); hear God's heart in Isaiah 49:15-16; 65:1-2a. Pray God will heal your broken places, and ask Jesus to fill you with his love for others (*John 13:34-35; 15:12*).

## Day 6: Saturday, April 2 —"When God Ran"

Slowly, prayerfully, read Luke 15:20. In ancient times, men of social stature did not run, and yet the father ran. Remembering that the father in the parable represents God, ponder this amazing picture. Pray you will see God's heart as you consider lyrics by Benny Hester and John Parenti: (*When God Ran, 1985, Word Music*): "...It's the only time I ever saw Him run. When He ran to me, took me in His arms, held my head to His chest, said, 'My son's come home again'; lifted my face, wiped the tears from my eyes, with forgiveness in His voice, He said, 'son, do you know I still love you?' He caught me by surprise; He brought me to my knees. When God ran..."

## Day 7: Sunday, April 3 —The Extravagant Love of God

Read Luke 15:11b-32, reflecting again on all the ways the parable points to God's extravagant love. Consider the words of Deuteronomy 33:27a (RSV): "The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Do you dwell in God's immutable, eternal love? Tell your heavenly Father that you want to bask in the radiant glory of God's relentless love. Ponder the unending greatness of this love as you read John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 8:35-39; Ephesians 3:17b-19; and 1 John 3:1a; 4:9-10. Praise God and rejoice in God's love.