



Lesson 2: Starting Again

Main Point

Jesus taught that God is a loving Father whose mercy welcomes us into a life of repentance.

- Being sinful involves turning our hearts away from the God who loves us to pursue our own selfish desires. Repentance is the opposite: It involves turning our hearts back to God and pursuing our relationship with him. This is not just a one-time decision—but a daily choice to walk with Jesus.

Scripture: Luke 15:11-24 NLT

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

“A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’

“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. **Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.** His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’

“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, **for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.**’ So the party began.

Exploring the Scripture:

- What does the younger son do while in the distant land, and what happens to him?
- Re-read the line the son practices before returning home. What does the son assume about how his father will receive him?
- How does the father respond when his son returns to him?
- Through this parable, Jesus illustrates sin as the breaking of relationship and repentance as a return to relationship. What does this story teach us about repentance?
- How do you see yourself (or others) chasing things that are not good for them?
- What does Jesus teach us about God and the kind of relationship he desires with us through this parable?

Applying It to My Life:

- How do you see yourself in the lost son's story? In what ways have you turned your heart away from God, and how can you respond?
- How do feelings of shame and guilt impact your relationship with God and your walk with Jesus?

Journal Prompt:

During the next few minutes, use the Upward-Inward-Outward tool to write a prayer in response to Jesus' teaching. If you are not sure what to write, you can use these prompts as a guide:

- Upward: God, I thank you for being....
- Inward: I have sinned by.... Please forgive me and help me to turn back to you today.
- Outward: I pray that you help....(*my family, a conflict, a personal need, etc.*)... Bless us with your love and forgiveness and guide us towards a closer relationship with you.