

The Parable of the Lost Son

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[0:00] Happy Father's Day everyone. So today is a special day, a day we take time to celebrate and thank our dads and father figures! So I thought it would be meaningful to reflect on some father figures from the Bible and what! we can learn from them. So let's start with Adam. Adam was the very first human father, but as we know he made a big mistake. He disobeyed God and that decision had huge consequences.

But here's the thing, instead of owning up to it, Adam blamed others. How often do we do this? So what can we take from that? Godly fathers and really all of us should take responsibility for our actions. It's not about being perfect, but about being honest and accountable.

Next up, Moses. Now Moses was a pretty big deal. Father of two sons, led the entire Hebrew nation out of slavery in Egypt. That's no small task. Can you imagine how hard that would have been? He spent 40 years guiding the Israelites through the wilderness, helping them grow and learn along the way. So what does Moses show us? That with God, all things are possible. And also, that even the best leaders aren't perfect. Moses had his struggles too, and he reminds us that we all need God's grace.

So now, let's talk about the father and the prodigal son. We don't get his name, so let's just call him the father for today. And as we've just heard, the story starts with a wealthy man and his two sons.

[1:41] One day, the younger son asks for his share of the inheritance, basically saying, Dad, I want my money now, even though you're still alive. Bold, right? The father gives it to him, and the son takes off to a faraway place. He blows all the money on wild living, ends up broke, and finds himself working in a pig pen just to survive. How awful would that be? The smell, the mud, the mess. Eventually, he realises, you know what? Even my dad's servants live better than this. So he decides to go home and work as a servant. The brave decision shows how challenging his life must have become. But here's the beautiful part. While he's still a long way off, his father sees him. He doesn't wait. He runs to him, hugs him, kisses him, and throws a huge feast to celebrate his return. How would we feel if this happened? So what does this tell us? The father never stopped hoping. He probably looked out every day, wondering if his son would come back. And when he did, the father did not scold him or make him grovel. He welcomed him with open arms. Even the smell of the pigs couldn't keep this dad away. Did we do this? So what's the takeaway for us today? Whether you're a father, a mentor, or just someone trying to live a life of love and faith, be like the father in this story. Be kind and compassionate, even when it's hard. Learn from Adam's mistake and take responsibility.

Follow Moses' example of perseverance and trust in God. Jesus said in Matthew 5, verse 48, Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect. This might sound impossible, but God wouldn't ask us to aim for something that we couldn't grow into. It's about striving to be more like him every day. Let's finally remember Proverbs 27, verse 23.

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks. Give careful attention to your herds. In other words, look after people God's place in your life and care for them deeply. While I was at Focus Bible study last week on Wednesdays, we were discussing Proverbs 3, verse 5. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean on your own understanding. When times get tough, we need support, like the sun in the parable. God gave me a picture while reading this verse. Perhaps if you close your eyes and imagine it with me. You're standing in a maze and you're lost and you can't find your way out. Every turn you take brings you up against the hedge and as you pray for direction, you feel God clearly saying to walk in a straight line. You're scared as last time you did that, you walked into a hedge. You trust in him and as you walk, God orientates the maze, rotating it around you so you just have to walk a straight line. In no time at all, you reach the exit of the maze and see the sun and the beautiful day in front of you. This is kind of what like dads do. They help us go through tough

journeys and help us wear everything. So let's say it loud and clear. Thank you for always being their dad. Let's rise to the challenge of being faithful, loving and compassionate, just like our Heavenly Father. Now go into a short time of a closing prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for today as this is a special day, a day to honour and celebrate the fathers and father figures in our lives. Thank you for their strength, their guidance, their sacrifices and their love. Lord, we lift up every father here today. May you bless them with wisdom, patience and courage as they lead to their families. Help them walk closely with you to reflect your love and to be a source of strength and comfort to those around them. We also remember those whom today is difficult and those who have lost fathers, those who never knew theirs and those who carry pain from the past. May your peace and healing be with them. Teach us, Lord, to love, to like and to be like the Father in the parable, to forgive freely, to embrace with compassion and to hope without giving up. Help us grow into the people you've called us to be. As we go from here, may we carry your love in our hearts and share it with the world around us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.