

**THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS**  
**“Our Forgiving Heavenly Father”**  
**LUKE 15:11-24**

Fathers, when your life has been lived, and you walk into eternity, what do you think your children will remember about you? Would your child or children be able to say that you were a loving, caring, forgiving father, or would your children say something like this, “I hate to say it, but my dad was hard, harsh, condemning, and belittling.

Whether we want to admit it or not, our children are going to remember us, and they are going to remember us for who we truly were. And the truth is, no one knows us better than our immediately family. The sobering truth is, our fathering has a tremendous effect on our children. Because many children draw notions of God, their Heavenly Father from those of their earthly father. If you had a father that was hard, harsh and difficult, then you are going to struggle believing and knowing that you have a Heavenly Father who loves you, cares for you in every way possible, and understands you completely. Yet, that is wonderful truth of Scripture.

When you read this passage of the Prodigal Son, the story is more focused on a Loving Forgiving Father, over and above a Prodigal that wandered away. Because the truth is, Jesus knows that we struggle gaining a proper image of our Heavenly Father, therefore He gives us a wonderful picture of the Father in this dialogue.

**1. OUR FORGIVING HEAVENLY FATHER IS FULLY AWARE THAT WE SIN AND ARE PERSONALLY DISOBEDIENT.** In the life of every single human being on the face of the earth there is sin and personal disobedience from time to time. In the life of the youngest son, he didn't want to listen to His Father. He wanted to live his way do his own thing, and have his own way. His heart was bent against obedience and waiting for the proper time to receive his inheritance. That may be exactly where you are today! You may desire to live your own way, do your own thing, without thinking of the consequences.

Because God is fully aware of our sin and personal disobedience, He doesn't fly into a rage when we sin and disobey. Before we commit one act of disobedience, God is fully aware of what it is, the degree it is, and the extent to which it is. Yet, in His nature, He loves and delights to forgive us of any and all acts of disobedience. If this is not your view of God then chances are you are basing forgiveness on a human level. You may have had an earthly parent who withheld forgiveness when you did things wrong, or disobeyed. But the God of Scripture, our Forgiving Heavenly Father is not that way.

The picture of this young son is a picture of utter rebellion and disrespect for the father, the family name, and there is even disrespect for his own person, to the extent that he will join his life to wine, women, and song. Yet, nowhere in this passage of Scripture does the Father ever desire to be disconnected, or disassociated with the son. In truth, all disassociation is initiated on the sons part. The wonder of our loving and forgiving Heavenly Father is that He knows us completely from birth to eternity...and every action in between...and He loves to forgive us and have an intimate relationship and fellowship with us.

One example of a person who sinned greatly before the Lord, was King David. King David had sexual relations with Bathsheba, had Uriah her husband killed. Yet, when David realized his sin, and meant business with the Lord, there was forgiveness and joy once again in his life.

Why in the world would God use David after committing murder. Surely, he was unusable. Absolutely not! There is not a person on the face of the earth that is unusable in the eyes of God when they confess and repent genuinely from their heart. The sins of this younger son may have been great...but no sin or number of sins exceeds the greatness and the love of holy God.

Though the son lived in a distant relationship to his Father, and in a distant country, he never left the love of his Father. And the same is true with us. We may wonder from the Lord, and choose to live in the distant land of rebellion, but we can never live away from His love.

The reality is...100% of all mankind is that we are all born into sin, and conceived in iniquity. Yet, it is the nature of Holy God to love us, and yearn to cleanse us, and give us the life of quality that only He can give.

**2. OUR FORGIVING HEAVENLY FATHER NEVER RESPONDS UNKIND TOWARD US WHEN WE DISOBEY.** When reading this passage, it is as important to notice what “isn't” there as well as what “is” there. One thing that you cannot find in this passage, is a father that is insensitive, unkind, belittling, degrading, demeaning and critical of his son.

The father in this passage is a picture of Almighty God. Regardless of what the son wanted to do with his life, or how he wanted to live, His father never treated him unkind, or with insensitivity. In spite of the fact that the son wanted to live his own way, the Father never badgered him, lectured him, criticized him, or run him down. Why? Because God is fully aware that all of that is useless and serves no good purpose...because human nature cannot change human nature, only God can change the heart.

When we choose to act disobediently, God is continually kind toward us. He is loving us, caring for us, and even protecting our lives.

However, if you believe God to be unkind to you in your disobedience, then it may well be as a byproduct of how your parents treated you when you disobeyed parental authority. In spite of the fact that the son wandered away, he could not help but remember the kind actions of his father when he was in the pigpens of life.

Fathers, if your son or daughter has gone astray, and wandered into rebellion, can they remember a dad that was kind, gentle, loving? Or do they remember a dad that screamed, yelled, belittled, and condemned them for their choices in life? It was the response of love that this dad showed initially that drew the son back home later in life.

Would your responses to your child in the pass be the type to draw them back home or would they be the type of actions that would keep them away? If you have responded with unkind actions toward your child's disobedience, that may very well be the reason they have little to no desire to listen to you now! The picture of our Heavenly Father when we disobey is one of continual loving and wooing us back to Himself! The wisest thing that we can do as parents is to ask "forgiveness" toward that child that we have hurt.

**3. OUR FORGIVING HEAVENLY FATHER IS FULLY AWARE THAT WE HAVE DIFFICULTY FORGIVING OURSELVES.** It wasn't until he reached the pig pen and was all alone that he came to his senses. Sometimes God will allow us to reach the bottom in our lives to get our complete and undivided attention. It was at "the bottom" that this young man came to his senses. It was "at the bottom" that this son realized he needed to return home. "It was at the "the bottom" that this son made a deliberate decision to return home. Contrary to popular belief...the bottom is often a wonderful place of turn around to the Lord and to a new life.

Yet, even at the bottom this son didn't think he deserved the right to enjoy life in any way! That was evidenced by the fact that he wanted to be made "a servant" once he returned home. No doubt he felt that his failures destined him for a life of mediocrity, and removal from the best that belonged to His Father ...while that is the furthest thing from the mind of the Father.

If for some reason you feel that certain failures and sins in your life have doomed you to a life of mediocrity...such thinking is completely foreign to our Heavenly Father. All who return in genuine repentance and renewed obedience receive His abundance and His best. For that is the loving nature of our Heavenly Father. In the kingdom of God, there are no second class "sons" or "daughters" who have a heart of obedience.

Are you one of those individuals that believe in your heart that you really don't deserve to enjoy life because of what has happened in the past?

No doubt this son didn't expect his dad to receive him back because of the fact that he struggled forgiving himself.

There is probably no better example of someone who faced difficulty forgiving himself than Paul. When Paul held Stephen's cloak the Bible says, that "he consented unto his death" ( Acts 8:1).

In his ignorance and foolishness as a young man, he participated in his death. In the mind of Paul, no doubt he went back to that time in his life even after he was saved of what he did in the life of Stephen.

Forgiving ourselves is one of the most difficult things in the world to do. Because, there are things that we say and do, that we would never anticipate ourselves saying and doing. Yet, the truth of Scripture is this...our Heavenly Father never holds over our head one single sin, once we have dealt with it and confessed it before His throne. Because of Jesus Christ who died on the cross over 2000 years ago, "He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness". Since the God of the universe forgives us, the question stands...what right do we have not to forgive ourselves?

**4. OUR FORGIVING HEAVENLY FATHER PROVES HIS LOVE FOR US BY OPENLY GIVING US HIS BEST.** Almighty God is fully aware not only of personal sin in our lives, but of our desire to walk obediently when we confess our sin and repent. As a byproduct of the love of God, He delights in blessing us personally, and visibly in ways that we can understand his love when we return to Him.

Every gift that the Father gave to the son speaks of love, and forgiveness. The robe represents restored position and honor. The ring represents restored authority. The shoes represents restored sonship. The celebration presents reconciliation, acceptance, and joy of returning home.

If today finds your life wondering away from the Father, the reality and truth of Scripture is this...you have a Loving Heavenly Father waiting for you to come home, and when you return home. He has only His best that He will give. Why? Because you are of great value and worth to the Father!

If your life is being blessed by God right now financially, it could well be the fact that God is showing you the degree of His love toward you. God does not hide His blessings from us when we return to Him in confession and repentance of personal sin and disobedience.

You maybe wondering why you have been blessed. It is the visible message of God's love toward you. Just as this father gave to his son visible, specific blessings, so does God give to us specific visible blessings as the proof of His love toward us. You can't obey God, return to God and get by without being blessed. That is His promise!