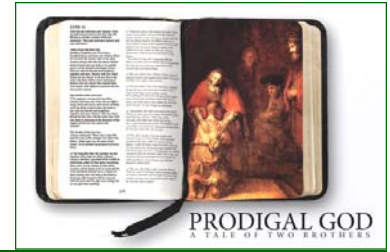


The elder brother is furious with the father for receiving his younger brother back into the family. He alludes to it when he says, "you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends." The elder brother is angry because of the cost of this reconciliation.



**Luke 15:1-6, 25-32**

<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

**Reflections**

*"...everything I have is yours..."*

There is a woman who is the eldest daughter. She is a wife and mother who stayed home when the children were young and served her church in a variety of ways. She did all she could to please her mother and yet found it seemingly impossible to do so.

This woman's younger siblings had relatively few responsibilities around the house while she handled most of the cleaning and cooking. They had part-time jobs and went to school, then did what they pleased with their spare time.

When one of the younger offspring was leaving to go out, the mother waved and wished them a fun evening even when they were going to a bar or nightclub. On those evenings, the eldest was at home, caring for children and doing housework. To this child the mother directed criticism on everything she did, and spoke harshly to her on the occasion that the daughter and

her husband went out for the evening.

*"...everything I have is yours..."*

For years the eldest daughter felt that her mother hated her and wondered why she could never please her. She felt righteous in her lifestyle and took pride in the fact that she was the "good child". She would often lament that she was treated unfairly – that she was doing everything right. At least that was her perception.

A few weeks ago this woman heard (and then read) the story of The Prodigal Son in a new light, with the focus on the elder brother.

*"...everything I have is yours..."*

The elder brother was right there – he shared the care of the property and animals and house. He also shared the responsibility for all in the family – including his younger brother! It was his duty to care about him, be an example, even go search for him if necessary.

*"...everything I have is yours..."*

Reality has dawned slowly for this woman: she shared all that her mother had – and all her mother seemed to have was responsibility for the house and the younger children. The woman needed to see that she was already living her inheritance just like the elder brother – not just the fattened calf and the money, but the care of the place and the people.

After hearing last week's sermon the woman learned this - on the eve of her 56<sup>th</sup> birthday. What a shame to have waited so long.

*"...everything I have is yours..."*

So she wonders ... Did the Elder Brother ever 'get it'? Did he ever welcome his brother home? Did he finally embrace him as the True Elder Brother (Jesus) would?

What's the rest of the story?

—Wendy Woods

**Series Resource:**

The Prodigal God, Timothy Keller, Zondervan, 2008.

# Readings

## Sunday, March 14

**Luke 15:1-6; 25-32**

What was the cost of reconciliation to the younger brother? The elder brother? The father?

## Monday, March 15

**2 Corinthians 5:11-21**

Who was strategic in helping you be reconciled to Christ?

## Tuesday, March 16

**Matthew 18:15-19**

**Galatians 6:1-2**

In what ways are you part of the ministry of reconciliation for others?

## Wednesday, March 17

**Matthew 7:1-5**

What are the consequences of a judgmental attitude?

## Thursday, March 18

**Ephesians 2:11-22**

**Matthew 5:1-12**

What social barriers should the love of Jesus be affecting in your community? What is your role in that happening?

## Friday, March 19

**1 Corinthians 10:31 – 11:1**

**Acts 15:5-33**

What example of reconciliation have you seen that truly glorifies God and honors his mission?

## Saturday, March 20

**Ephesians 2:4-9**

We will never find God unless he first seeks us. How has this been true for you?

***Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).***