

Messy People

Session 3: Elder Son—Pushing through the Mess of Resentment

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. “ Luke 15:25

The parable of the prodigal son is actually a story of two lost boys. And their Father seeks and longs to be relationship with both of his ‘lost’ sons.

Read Luke 15:25-32

What is messy about the relationships in this portion of the story?

What is the elder son feeling? Are his feelings justified?

Can you identify with the elder son? If you can, how does it make you feel?

Would you agree with this statement: Bitterness, resentment and anger will eat you up?

Read Ephesians 4:31-32

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.”

Main Point: Rather than become judgmental and resentful when someone gets better treatment than you think they deserve; you can, with God’s help, push through your bad feelings and actions to restore what is broken in your relationship.

Final two steps in restoring messy relationships involves pushing through feelings of resentment and hurt.

4. Allow for mistakes

“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Colossians 3:13

“Meanwhile the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ‘Your brother is back,’ he said, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’”

“The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in and the father went out and pleaded with him.” Luke 15:25-28

What allowances did the father make for his younger son?

What allowances did the father make for his older son?

Which would have been harder for you? Why?

We don't have control over others people's thoughts, feelings and actions.

But we do have control over our own. So it is helpful to think about in advance how you are going to respond when relationships get messy.

This is hard to do because we are usually reactive rather than proactive. And yet, we always get to choose how we will respond.

The role of forgiveness in healing messy relationship

Forgiving those who hurt you is not overlooking or condoning sin. It is not pretending that the hurt isn't real.

Look at I Peter 4:8

What does it mean to love someone deeply and yet hold them accountable for their sin against you?

5. Seek peace!

"His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and Has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18

Reread and rewrite Romans 12:18 in your own words.

Read John 13:34-35

How would you describe what it means to love as Jesus loved?

In arguments, do you fight to win – which makes the other person(a) the loser, or do you hope to come to a better understanding and a peaceful resolution – a mutual win?

How is the father in this parable like our heavenly Father? What does it mean to you that the father showed grace and love for BOTH sons?