



IDENTITY

SONSHIP

IDENTITY - PART 3 - SONSHIP (SECOND LANGUAGE)

Last week we looked at the difference between a son who lives as a son and a son who lives as a slave or orphan. Sons who live as slaves do not carry the revelation that their Father is God.

Jesus teaches about the prodigal son in Luke 15. This story should be called the prodigal sons. It is not just the younger son who doesn't know who he is (he is the son who spent all His Father's money on himself). The older son also does not know what it is truly like to be a son of the Father.

How do we know this? The behaviour of both of the sons shows us their lack of true sonship and identity.

Luke 15:11-32

And He said, "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.' And so he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey to a distant country, and there he squandered his estate in wild living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began doing without. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he longed to have his fill of the carob pods that the pigs were eating, and no one was giving him anything. But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired laborers have more than enough bread, but I am dying here from hunger! I will set out and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired laborers."' So he set out and came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let's eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you never gave me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

Or in other words;

Luke 15:11 – 32

The younger son went to his father and said to him, "Father, please give me now my part of your things." So, the father divided his wealth between his two sons. After a few days, the younger son took all the money and left home. He went on a long journey to a country far away. There, he did whatever he wanted to do and wasted all his money. After he had spent everything, there was no rain in that country. The young man had no money and nothing to eat. He went to a man who lived in that country and asked to work for him. So the man sent him into



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his fields to give food to his pigs. Nobody gave him anything to eat. He was so hungry that he even wanted to eat the food that the pigs were eating.

Then the son began to think about what he had done. He said to himself, "My father has many servants, and they have plenty of food to eat. They even have more food than they need. But I will die here because I do not have any food. So I will go to my father and tell him, 'I have done bad things against God, and I have done bad things against you. So I am not good enough for you to call me your son any longer. Instead, please make me as one of your hired men.'"

So he went off to return to his father. But he was still a long way from the house when his father saw him. He felt very sorry for his son and he ran towards him. Then he put his arms round his son and he kissed him.

"Father," the son said, "I have done bad things against God and against you. So I am not good enough for you to call me your son." But the father shouted to his servants. "Hurry!" he said. "Fetch the most beautiful coat that we have. Put it on him and also put a ring on his finger. Put shoes on his feet. Fetch the young cow that we keep fat and ready to eat on a special day. Kill it and prepare it. We will eat a big meal and we will celebrate together. I thought that my son here was dead. But now he has returned to me and he is alive! I thought he was lost, but now he is found!" Then they all began to celebrate.

While these things were happening, the older son was working in the field. On his way back to the house, he heard music. People were dancing. So he asked one of the servants, "What is happening?" The servant replied, "Your brother has returned home. Your father has killed the fat young cow for him. He did this because your brother is alive and he is well." When the older brother heard this, he was very angry. He would not go into the house. So his father came out. "Please come in to celebrate with us," he said. "Listen," the older son replied, "I have worked a lot for you for many years. I have always obeyed you. But you never even killed a young goat for me so that I could have a meal with my friends. But now this other son of yours has returned. He has wasted all the money that you gave to him. He has spent it on prostitutes. But you have even killed the fat young cow for him." "My son," his father said, "you are always with me. All the things that I have are yours. We thought that your brother was dead. We had to celebrate and be happy because now he has returned to us alive. We thought that he was lost. But now he is found."

Both brothers show that they do not know the Father. They also do not know who they are as sons in the Father. Their behaviour is the key thing that shows this. Why do they behave this way?

When he returns, the words of the younger son show us the position of his heart (his true belief). He said in verse 19 'I am not good enough for you to call me your son any longer. Please make me as one of your hired men'.

After the younger son returns, the words of the older son also show us the position of his heart and true belief. Verse 28 – 30 says, 'He was very angry. He would not go into the house. So his father came out. "Please come in to celebrate with us," he said. "Listen," the older son replied, "I have worked a lot for you for many years. I have always obeyed you. But you never even killed a young goat for me so that I could have a meal with my friends. But now this other son of yours has returned. He has wasted all the money that you gave to him. He has spent it on prostitutes. But you have even killed the fat young cow for him.'"

Some followers of Jesus don't understand that they truly belong to the Father. Their relationship with God starts with their own behaviour or the behaviour of other people.

The position of looking at behaviour first is a legalistic one (too concerned with legal rules and details). It is



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not a position of love. It is a position of self, not Spirit. It is the slave or orphan position – even though people have received Christ as saviour. Legalism (being legalistic) is very harmful to life in God. Legalism tears down the things that are of God and thinks that it is behaving righteously (being morally good).

Legalism cannot lead us into sonship. We can see the spirit of legalism living in the hearts of the two sons – the younger son and the older son.

A son of God who is really a slave, can be controlled by legalism. Legalism can believe it owes God something - like the younger son did. Legalism can also believe that it is owed something – like the older son did.

The divine order according to the spirit of sonship or identity is:

1. Belong
2. Believe
3. Behave

The order according to the spirit of legalism is:

1. Behave
2. Believe
3. Belong

This divine order is shown by the response of the Father towards both of His sons. The Father does not pay attention to the younger son when the younger son says he is not good enough to be a son any more. The Father cancels them out by these words and actions:

‘But the father shouted to his servants. “Hurry!” he said. “Fetch the most beautiful coat that we have. Put it on him and also put a ring on his finger. Put shoes on his feet. Fetch the young cow that we keep fat and ready to eat on a special day. Kill it and prepare it. We will eat a big meal and we will celebrate together.”’

The Father cancels out the words of the older son too. He says:

“My son, you are always with me. All the things that I have are yours. We thought that your brother was dead. We had to celebrate and be happy because now he has returned to us alive. We thought that he was lost. But now he is found.”

Mature sons of God know who they are. They are growing into the image of the Son (Jesus). They are able to live like the Father. They do not hold the behaviour of other people against them. They cover the actions of other people with the love of Christ that lives in them. Mature sons of God are able to restore other people by their actions and by speaking the truth in love.

Sons of God do all of these things so that the sons who are living as slaves will be changed from the inside by the love and truth that the mature sons of God pour out on them. You will know that you are maturing in the spirit of sonship when you can show this kind of wisdom.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is being able to show this kind of wisdom so important to knowing that you are maturing in the spirit



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of sonship?

2. Why is the spirit of legalism in a son so harmful to that person and to other people around them?
3. Why does being very sure that you “Belong” give power to what you believe and how you behave?
4. Can you give testimony (tell a story about) to when you had the love of God helping you to act? Have you been able to cover the sin or offence of another person towards you and love the person back? Share.
5. Can you be honest here? Do you see the spirit of sonship controlling your life or is it the spirit of legalism? You cannot have both.

ACTION POINT: What do we need to do from our reading and discussion tonight?