

CHRISTIAN

It's Not What You Think
Session 6 – Angry Birds

We've seen in the gospel of John that in Jesus we have the full embodiment of grace and truth. And we go on in the New Testament to discover that as Jesus followers, we also must somehow get to that full embodiment of both grace and truth. If we're just grace, or if we're just truth, there will always be something missing.

In many scenarios from Jesus' life, we can see how he applied this. He surprises us with his amazing ability to dispense grace and truth in just the right amounts.

So how do we do that as well?

In our last session, we looked at how Jesus modeled the embodiment of grace and truth. In this session, we'll see where he actually taught this. And what made his teaching so significant on this occasion was his audience. It's an audience in which we're sure to find ourselves.

DISCUSSION STARTER

What is the most valuable thing you've ever lost? How did you respond to losing it? Did you eventually find it? If so, how did you react to finding it?

VIDEO OVERVIEW

As Luke 15 begins, Jesus finds himself surrounded by two very different groups. One group, "tax collectors and sinners," felt they were so alienated from God that he would never approve of them.

The other group, "Pharisees and the teachers of the law," believed they were so good that God already approved of them. And they were muttering this about Jesus: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

In response, Jesus told a simple story of a man with a hundred sheep who loses one. Jesus asked his audience, "Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" (15:4). Jesus described this man's joy upon finding his lost sheep. "In the same way," Jesus added, "there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (15:7).

He then told another story of a woman who lost a valuable coin. Again Jesus asked, "Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?" (15:8). Finding it, the woman was filled with joy. "In the same way," Jesus added, "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

Jesus then launched a third story; it was about a man with two sons. The older son was a "behave"; the younger was a "misbehave." Shockingly, the younger son spurned his relationship with his father and asked for his inheritance. He traveled to a distant country and squandered his new wealth on reckless living—another detail that would shock Jesus' hearers. Having lost everything, the disgraced young man was further battered when a famine struck the land. The only work he could find was feeding pigs with food that he himself began craving. Surely he was only getting what he deserved.

But Jesus went on to tell of this starving son coming to his senses and deciding to return home to confess, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (15:18–19). Surely servanthood for life was a worthy fate for this reprobate.

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But Jesus then painted a picture of a stunningly incredible reception for this boy. His father lavished compassion, tenderness, and restoration upon this son who had humiliated him. He called for a celebration feast.

But all this angered the firstborn son. He was angered in the way some Christians are today—Christians who self-righteously believe they deserve better treatment from God than they're getting, and who despise the grace God shows to the "undeserving."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do you sense alienation from God among people in your community?
2. In what ways do you see evidence of self-righteousness among religious people in your community?
3. Are you convinced there's nothing you can do to cause God to love you more than he already does? Why or why not?
4. Are you convinced there's nothing others can do to cause God to love them more than he already does? Why or why not?
5. In what ways are you tempted to grow slack in your understanding and acceptance of God's grace?
6. In what ways are you tempted to grow slack in your understanding and acceptance of God's truth?

MILEPOSTS

- We're called to capture and reflect the full embodiment of grace and truth that Jesus manifested in all his encounters with people.
- God seeks out the lost, and he wholeheartedly celebrates their return to him. In this same way, we're to have our hearts saturated with his love toward others.
- God wants us to become increasingly more comfortable with embracing the tension between God's grace and God's truth, refusing to let go of either.

MOVING FORWARD

Examine your heart. Do you realize God cannot love you more than he already does? That there's nothing you can do to cause him to love you any more or any less? Do you realize the same is true about God's love for others? Let this saturate your thinking, so that sin (yours and others') will always break your heart ... while repentance will always stir up your highest joy.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

In this concluding statement to one of the brief stories Jesus told, he points us to the joy we can share in as we share his heart toward others:

I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10

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PREPARATION FOR SESSION 7

To help you prepare for Session 7, use these suggested devotions during the week leading up to your small group meeting.

Day One

Look at the encounter Jesus had with certain religious leaders in Matthew 15:1–9. What exactly were these men doing wrong? In this situation, how did Jesus demonstrate his values and his heart and mind?

Day Two

Turn to Romans 13:8. What do you see personally as the right way of understanding the obligation Paul mentions in this verse?

Day Three

Look today at Romans 13:9. What particular significance for your life do you find in Paul's words here?

Day Four

Move today to Romans 13:10. How would you express in your own words what Paul is saying here?

Day Five

Look at the conversation Jesus had in Mark 12:28–34. How does the teaching of Jesus here relate to what you observed in Romans 13:8–10? And how does it relate to the words of Jesus we focused on earlier in John 13:34–35?