

How to Get Closer to God

The Lost Son & Loving Father: Luke 15:11-24

Jesus told this story: “A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘Give me my share of your estate now, instead of waiting until you die.’ So his father divided his wealth between his sons.

A few days later the younger son packed all his belongings and left home to live in a distant land. (He got as far away from his Father as he could.) There he squandered the gift he’d been given and wasted his life and money on wild parties and reckless living. About the time all his money ran out, a severe famine hit the land, and he began to starve because he was left with nothing.

The only job he could find was feeding swine on a farm. He became so desperate and hungry that even the pig slop he was feeding the swine looked good to him. But no one would give him anything for his hunger.

When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘This is crazy! At my Father’s home even the lowest paid workers eat well, while I’m far away dying of hunger! I’m going to return home to my Father and humbly say: Father, I have sinned against both God and you, and I am not worthy to be a part of this family or called your son. But please just make me one of your servants who works for you.’ With that attitude, he headed back home to his Father.

But while the son was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran out to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him! The son said ‘Father, I’ve sinned against both God and you, and I’m no longer worthy of being called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring me the finest robe in our house and put it on him. Then get my signet ring for his finger and shoes for his feet. Then roast the calf we have been fattening. We’re going to celebrate with a feast of eating and drinking. For this child of mine was distant and dead but now he’s back and alive! He was lost, but now he’s found! So the party began!’”

Steps to Closeness with God...

1. Wake Up – “A Moment of Clarity”

...he wasted it all...he had nothing left...he got desperate and hungry...he finally came to his senses... Luke 15:13-14, 17 (MSG)

[God] You’ll find me when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else. Jeremiah 29:13 (MSG)

2. Fess Up – “A Word of Confession”

When he came to his senses, he said...“I have sinned against God and you...” Luke 15:17-18 (MSG)

Your sins have separated you from your God, and have hidden his face from you... Isaiah 59:2

Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins! Wash away all my evil and make me clean! I recognize my faults and I am Conscious that I’ve sinned against you. Psalm 51:1-4 (TEV)

The Lord says, “No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow.” Isaiah 1:18 (NLT)

The Habit of a Regular Spiritual Check-up

Test yourself to make sure you’re solid in the faith. Don’t drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourself regular checkups. If you fail the test, do something about it. 2 Corinthians 13:5 (MSG)

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:28 (NIV)

3. Get Up – “A Moment of Transformation”

The son drifted away saying, “Give me my share...” Luke 15:12

He returned to the Father saying, “Make me a servant...” Luke 15:19

Because God is merciful to you, offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. And do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

The Father’s Response

Filled with love and compassion, he ran out to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him! “...Bring the best...” Luke 15:20, 22

4. Lift Up – “A Life of Worship”

We’re going to celebrate with a feast of eating and drinking...He was lost but now he’s found! So the party begins! Luke 15:23-24

Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him...his name is the Lord! Psalm 68:4 (ESV)

I will sing to the Lord because he has been so good to me! Psalm 13:6 (NLT)