

Removing Barriers to the Father's Love

1. The Father wants us not only to know the TRUTH of his love (agape), but also to experience the TOUCH of his love (phileo). God wants us to have something more than DOCTRINAL UNDERSTANDING; he wants us to have a RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE. Doctrines inform us; love transforms us. Doctrines expose sin; love extinguishes sin.
2. Luke 15, the story of the prodigal son, reveals a process by which we can overcome the barriers which keep us from experiencing the Father's love.

I. RECOGNIZE THE FATHER'S TRUE IDENTITY (Luke 15:11-17)

Luke 15:11-17 (NASB) *And He said, "A man had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. ¹³ And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. ¹⁴ Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. ¹⁷ But **when he came to his senses**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!'"*

1. We all need to *come to our senses* about our Father in heaven.

Romans 5:8 (NASB) *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Luke 15:18-20 (NASB) *I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."'" ²⁰ So he got up and came to his father. **But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.***

2. The Father is eager to demonstrate his love for you.
3. Experiencing the Father's love requires **recognizing the truth** about who our Father is and then **returning to him**.

II. REPENT FOR YOUR SINS AGAINST THE FATHER

1. In order to receive love, we must deal with our sin. Repentance doesn't earn forgiveness, nor does it force God to forgive us. Our repentance simply empties out our soul, making room for God's forgiveness and love to embrace us, cleanse us, and abide in us.

Luke 15:18-20 (NASB) *I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."* ²⁰ *So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ 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."* ²² *But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; ²³ and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate..."*

- a. Repentance and forgiveness are kingdom dynamics. They remove the barriers that have been hampering our ability to be touched by God's love.
 - b. Notice how quickly the father forgives and how thoroughly he removes the barriers keeping him from getting his arms around us!
 - c. The process of restored intimacy with our Father in Heaven goes like this:
 - i. Repent = run home to God
 - ii. Confess = Tell God what you've done and tell him you are sorry. Speak the words out loud for maximum impact and transformation
 - iii. Receive = Christ, grace, forgiveness, restoration of relationship
2. Issues of repentance / salvation / and intimacy with God:
 - a. Initially this process, called salvation, is what allows us to become a child of God. You become a child of God by **repenting** of your sins and **receiving** Jesus as your Savior.

Acts 2:38 (NIV) *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

- b. Salvation is not just for the purpose of forgiving our sins so we won't go to hell. **Salvation is meant to restore us to an intimate relationship with God.**
- c. Salvation is not the goal; it is the gateway to restored intimacy with God.

John 17:3 (GNT) *And eternal life means to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent.*

- d. True salvation will result in restored and progressive intimacy with God.
3. Specific sins and barriers to the Father's love must be removed.
 - a. Strongholds of guilt

Romans 8:1 (NIV) *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...*

- b. Strongholds of fear

2 Timothy 1:7 (TPT) *For God will never give you the spirit of fear, but the Holy Spirit who gives you mighty power, love, and self-control.*

1 John 4:18 (NIV) *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

- c. Immorality

Luke 15:30 (NIV) *But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!*

- d. Bitterness

Luke 15:29 (NIV) *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."*

- i. Where there is heat there is hurt.

III. SUMMARY

1. Recognize the truth of who your heavenly Father is.
2. Repent of specific sins. (i.e. guilt, unforgiveness, fear, immorality, bitterness, etc.)
3. Trust yourself to God's great compassion, mercy, and love. (See Isaiah 55:7; 1 John 1:7)
4. Run home now because your heavenly Father is waiting.

Luke 15:20 (NIV) *So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*