

## I. Intro

- A. Cancel culture.
  - 1. Politics/views
  - 2. Very public
- B. Also happens with relationships (friends/family)
  - 1. One mess up and you're out.
  - 2. Subjects you know not to bring up
  - 3. Walking on eggshells

## II. WE

- A. Often how it feels with religion/church
  - 1. Toe the line.
  - 2. Sin and you're out.
  - 3. **SIN**- religious word usually means stuff you want to do but aren't allowed to.
- B. Affects our view of God
  - 1. Even if we're not sure he exists, if he does, he's expecting us to act a certain way and if we don't we're out.
  - 2. Waiting around to smite us with his holy smiter

### C. Religion makes us feel we are always one step away from being rejected.

- 1. Either get good at hiding (hypocrisy) and working really hard to be holy or just leave.
- 2. Why you...?

### D. The same things people reject about religion Jesus also rejected.

- 1. Hypocrisy, judgmentalism, exclusiveness, prejudice, isolation...

### E. Jesus clarified the idea of Sin

- 1. **What we think it is**- all the bad stuff you do that makes God mad at you and disqualifies you from his love.
- 2. **What it is**- Breaking the law of love. Anything that hurts our relationship with God and/or others.
  - a. Separates and destroys- Why God hates it.
  - b. All in the same boat- Religion grades sins on a scale but God says ALL sin separates. No one is better off than anyone else.
  - c. Can't get rid of it
- 3. **What we usually do with it**- Run and hide or Bribe
  - a. Both create Uncertainty / Fear; just waiting to be caught/punished/found out
  - b. And they do nothing to remove it.

### F. When Jesus talked about sin it was not for punishment, guilt, condemnation, but for restoration.

### G. Religion rejects "sinners." Jesus restores them.

## III. GOD (Luke 15)

A. Background of Luke

B. **V. 1-2** *Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!*

1. Two groups of people that didn't understand God or sin
2. Tax collectors thought they were rejected and unworthy of God's love... Felt they needed to **Run and Hide**
  - a. Why?
3. That's what the Pharisees had told them( Might be what religion has told you!).
  - a. Pharisees thought they were close to God b/c they acted holy and religious... **Bribe**. Behave well and God will like me; behave even better and God will like me even better

C. So to set things straight Jesus told a few stories of lost things... sheep and coin... then one more about a father and son.

1. Let me pause for a second b/c this is really import Probably clearest story about who God is. If you left the church in the past for any reason because of who God was made out to be, or are in a stage of curiosity about God, pay close attention! The key question here is- what is God REALLY like?
2. My opinion... one of the most important Jesus told

D. **V. 11-12** *To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.*

1. You just won't die!
2. Very evil for that culture based on family, honor...
3. Always someone who represents God and someone represents us
4. Story not about son but about father. Focus on what the Dad does here...

**E. Paraphrase v. 13-16**

1. Leaves
2. Loving father lets him make his own choices. **Doesn't force him to stay.**
3. Son squanders, suffers.
4. Running

F. **V. 17-19** *"When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."'"*

1. Came to his senses... not messed up or mistakes, SIN. Broke the law of love and hoped he could do something to fix it.
  - a. Separated from father, self, others. That's what sin does and that's where he was.
  - b. **First step to restoration is admitting there's separation.**
2. "Not worthy"- Truth is he's right.
3. Done running and hiding... Gonna go try to make a deal (bribe) to get back in.
4. Maybe he can appease his father's anger by groveling?
5. Didn't know his father very well.
6. Many of us are in the same position with our heavenly father.

- G. **V. 20a** *“So he returned home to his father. [Probably rehearsing his speech] And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming.*
1. A lot in this... by now Jesus’ audience is catching on that God is father and we are son.
  2. Father saw him A LONG WAY OFF... constantly scanning the horizon waiting for him.
  3. So he could tell his son off? “I told you so...”
  4. Get his money back?
  5. The religious people in your past/life... how would you expect them to react?
  6. Your parents?
  7. Expect God to react?
  8. If this were your child how would you react?
  9. Building the tension... what is the father going to do? Twist ending! Not what anyone expected.
- H. **V. 20b** *Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him*
1. Had never given up hope... Eagerly waiting to be reunited... Here’s a beautiful and important truth about who God is...
  2. **God has never and will never give up on you.**
  3. FILLED- No room for anything else.
  4. RAN to close the gap
  5. Embraced and Kissed--- had the son done anything to make amends yet?
- I. **V. 21** *[Starts his speech] His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned [again admitted separation] against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son [both knew he was right].’*  
***BUT....***
- J. **V. 22-24** *“But his father said to the servants [Cuts him off mid-sentence], ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.* [Love that]
1. Father- “I don’t care what’s happened...I AM sorry you had to go through that, BUT you’re here now... here’s the best of everything I have... You never stopped being my son.”
  2. Doesn’t make the son earn his place back—‘work for two years then we’ll see’
  3. No Guilt trip... “Do you know what this has done to your mother?!”
  4. Doesn’t make him confess all his failures to the village
  5. Doesn’t make him pay him back
  6. Son turned and the relationship is immediately healed.
  7. Father instantly and completely gives the son the one and only thing that heals broken relationships... FORGIVENESS.
  8. Don’t we all wish we had fathers like that? Maybe yours way, maybe not... your heavenly father always is!
  9. **The only thing that restores relationships is Forgiveness.**
  10. **1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*
- K. Hope you see the point... There’s a BIG difference between who God isn’t and who God is**
1. Isn’t:
    - a. Our Heavenly Father isn’t standing around judging, waiting to smite us, to say I told you so...
    - b. Hasn’t rejected you, written you off, canceled you
  2. Is
    - a. He is ready to run to you... whole point of Jesus...
      - a. Picture of God he wants us to have
      - b. God coming to us to offer forgiveness.

- c. Came from heaven to earth showed us who God really is and then demonstrated it by dying for our forgiveness.
  - d. More Next Episode
3. Doesn't require anything but for us to realize the truth that we have been separating ourselves... **admit** we've sinned and then **accept** his forgiveness.
  4. **There is nothing in your past, present, or future that disqualifies you from God's immediate acceptance and forgiveness.**

#### IV. WE

- A. Religion says once you've sinned you're out... and it's a long, difficult (sometimes impossible) road to get back in.
- B. Jesus says... "God loves you and is eagerly waiting for you to come back to him."
  1. He's not waiting to judge... He is eagerly looking for you, full of love and compassion... ready to sprint to you the second you call to him."
  2. Removed every barrier, paved the road...
  3. The only thing in our way is us... ADMIT and ACCEPT
  4. Doesn't force us... loving father lets us make our own choices.
- C. **Religious response**- Too easy! Freedom to sin all the time...
  1. Do you think that son would think like that?
  2. Do you think he'd try to find ways around what his father wants for him? Loopholes?
  3. NO! He's living a life of thankfulness to his father... doing what the father wishes b/c he knows his father cares for him and he trusts his father. He has truly experienced the fullness of his father's love.
  4. And to everyone who is willing to listen he tells them how amazing his father is.
  5. No shame... if his father forgave and accepted him what is there to be ashamed of? What is there to hide?
  6. AND... when someone wrongs that son... do you think he holds it over THEIR head?
  7. Or is he quick to forgive and restore the way his father did for him?
- D. **Offer for you to admit and accept**
  1. Be done with hiding.
  2. Be done with bribing
  3. He's waiting to run to you.
  4. Won't force it on you.
  5. It's your choice.
  6. Never been a point in your life...
- E. **Have accepted...**
  1. Trust him. Don't have to hide or bribe anymore.
  2. AND B/c of the forgiveness we have received we are free to give it to everyone else.
  3. Those who have wronged u s
  4. Share the forgiveness available to everyone.
  5. **Experiencing forgiveness empowers you to offer forgiveness.**

#### F. Challenge- Read Luke 15

## **V. GOD**

- A. We know there is separation with our Father, our relationships, ourselves.
- B. Religion makes us run and hide from God or try to bribe him.
  
- C. But... Rules don't restore. Judgment/Guilt doesn't restore. Spirituality / penance, knowledge doesn't restore
  - 1. Only forgiveness is strong enough to restore what sin has destroyed.
  - 2. Only forgiveness offers real healing.
  - 3. The only place to find true forgiveness is in the arms of our heavenly Father.

## **D. Religion rejects and separates. Jesus forgives and restores.**

- E. And he will never give up on you.

## **F. Song**

- 1. Different angles to listen from... wherever you are...
- 2. God to you. You to others. Us to you.

## Questions

- 1. In the past, what did you think God was like? What fictional character would God resemble to you?
- 2. Read John 1:16-18. From what you know, what has Jesus revealed to you about what God is like?
- 3. What is something from this message you want to act on/ remind yourself of/ live out this week?