

# Lighten Up

*“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 hand and sandals on his feet, and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.” And they began to be merry.” Luke 15:21-24*

Do you ever take yourself too seriously? Do you find yourself being overly hard on yourself for past mistakes and failure?

I meet often with hurting people who hammer themselves over past failures. Satan carries a big, mean beat stick. Unfortunately, too many people pick it up and pummel themselves with it. *The result: life is hard for them and people they influence.*

**The parable of the prodigal son is a picture of God’s compassion and restoring love.** Study thoroughly this heart warming and life-transforming story in Luke 15: 11-32.

A wayward son who had lost his way and messed up his life found his way back to his father. Sincerely repentant over his sin, willing to return to his father’s household as a slave, he received his father’s embrace and was reinstated as son.

*The son had always been the father’s son, whether the son felt like it or not. The son’s failure didn’t diminish the father’s love for him. Upon his return home, the father didn’t hammer him and make his life miserable by reminding him of his sin and failure. On the contrary, dad threw a big party! He told everyone to celebrate because “this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”*

Can you imagine that party? I think I can. Relief and rejoicing filled the hearts and halls of that home. What a day! The lost son, who was spiritually and emotionally dead, is alive and come home!

**In the midst of the festivities, I am sure the son was tempted to feel unworthy. The older brother’s condescending, condemning comments didn’t help either. But I believe the father’s love and compassion made it possible for the reconciled son to lighten up on himself.**

I see two powerful applications in this parable.

*First, we can lighten up on ourselves when we have failed because of our Heavenly Father's love.* Compassion, not condemnation, flowed from the father's heart. The son was fully restored. His sinful past was history. That's the way our Heavenly Father treats us.

*Secondly, we need to lighten up on others who have sinned and failed.* The father corrected the other son and told him to lighten up on his brother who was now safe at home again. The brother needed acceptance, not rejection. People we know who feel like failures need us to believe in them again and give them a second chance.

**Here are a few reasons why we can be so hard on ourselves.**

- We believe and feel we deserve to be beaten down over our failures.
- We buy into the lie of the devil that we are worthless and deserve condemnation.
- We listen to the voices of insecure, holier than thou people who put us down and make our lives miserable by constantly reminding us of our failures.
- We spend time associating with people who beat themselves up and invite others to commiserate with them.
- We find it hard to believe that God is a forgiving, restoring and renewing God who delights in giving His children second chances and new beginnings.
- We sometimes think that it is just too good to be true that God believes in us to do better the next time.
- But it is true...God is no respecter of persons. All of us "prodigals" get to start over when we humbly and sincerely turn our hearts back to the Father.

I don't know about you, but sometimes Steve Roll is too hard on Steve Roll. And sometimes I am too hard on others. The devil loves it when I beat up on me and other people, but I don't.

**There is good news for you and me today. God's love makes it possible for us to lighten up on ourselves when we have sinned. Lighten up doesn't mean to take sin lightly. Lighten up does mean to deal with sin the way God does and then move on to live a better life.**

Thank God for Luke 15:11-32. The experience of the prodigal son reminds me of how much my Heavenly Father loves me and believes in me. And guess what? God wants me to love me and believe in me too! His message to me when I need to give myself a break: lighten up Steve! Maybe that is what abundant life in Christ is all about. .

**Life is a lot easier and a whole lot more enjoyable when we lighten up on ourselves and others.**

*“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light.”* *Matthew 11:28-30*

**A Word For Your Week:** Lighten up. Give yourself and others a break because Jesus has.