

Jesus' shocking relationships -

- He welcomed the poor & sinners.
- He ignored politics & power.
- He confronted the Scribes & Pharisees.



C.S. Lewis

“Of all bad men religious bad men are the worst.”

The Parable of Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

1. The Prodigal runs away to a distant land.
2. He becomes destitute through worldly living.
3. This brings him to repent and return home.
4. His father graciously receives him back.
5. His older brother becomes bitter, feeling the father is not fair in graciously receiving the wayward younger brother.



Luke 15

“²⁵ Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.”

“²⁹ But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; ³⁰ but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was lost* and has been found.’”

Henry Ward Beecher



“You and I do not see things as they are. We see things as we are.”

Luke 15

“¹ Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ² And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’ ³ So He told them this parable, saying.”

Observations

- The older son is awakened only when the father’s grace is revealed.
- The older son is a mirror, thrust in the face of the Jewish leaders with the hope that they, like the Prodigal Son, might come to their senses.

Characteristics of the older brother’s “religious spirit”

- Scorekeeping
- Superficial
- Separatist

“scorekeeping spirit”

“²⁹ But he answered and said to his father, ‘**Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours;** and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

“scorekeeping spirit”

- Rules driven.
- Performance focused.
- Justice sensitive.
- Reward motivated.



Blaise Pascal
(1623-1662)

“There are only two kinds of men: the righteous, who believe themselves sinners; the rest, sinners who believe themselves righteous.”

Luke 10:20

“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

The issue is not what God does **through** us but rather what God has done **for** us.

“³¹And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was* lost and has been found.’”

The older son lost nothing. He just did not want the prodigal to get anything.

John 21

“²¹ So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, ‘Lord, and what about this man?’ ²² Jesus said to him, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!’”

Life is a game and we keep score to be sure it is fair.

A scorekeeping spirit reacts to grace given to others.

Matthew 20

“¹ For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who was the master of a household, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. . . . ¹¹ When the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise each received a denarius. When they received it, they murmured against the master of the household, ¹² saying, ‘These last have spent one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat!’ ¹³ But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Didn’t you agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴ Take that which is yours, and go your way. It is my desire to give to this last just as much as to you. ¹⁵ Isn’t it lawful for me to do what I want to with what I own? Or is your eye evil, because I am good?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

the bad news
God is not fair!
the good news
God is not fair!

“superficial spirit”

Matthew 23:27

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.”

Both sons seem preoccupied with the father's wealth more than the father.

The Prodigal Son wants his inheritance early to leave home.

The Older brother is thinking only about the wealth not the family.



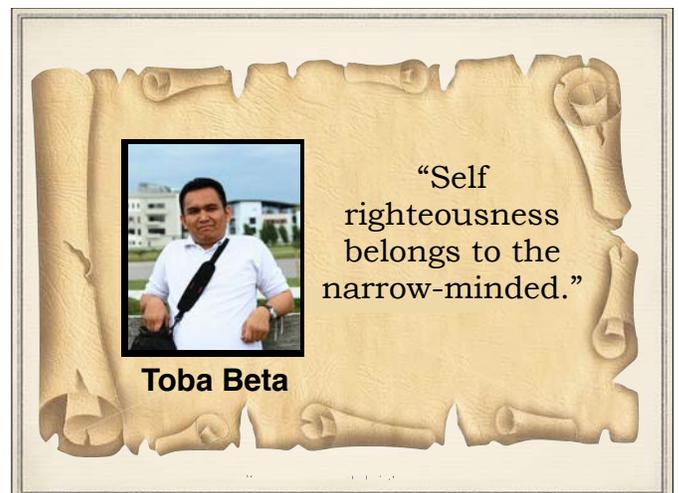
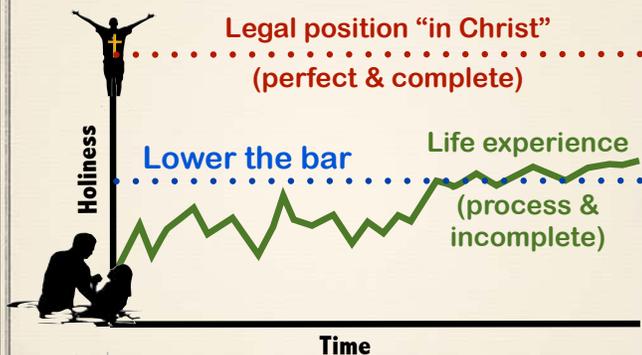
Matthew 23

“¹ Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, ² saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; . . . ⁵ But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. ⁶ And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷ and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi.”

Luke 18:10-14

“⁹ And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰ Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. ¹² I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Superficial holiness



The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5

“²¹ You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘*You shall not commit murder*’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ²² But I say to you that **everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court**; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and **whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.**”

“separatist spirit”

“²⁸ But he became angry and **was not willing to go in**; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him. . . .
³⁰ but when **this son of yours** came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes,”

The “separatist spirit” in Eve, Martha, Older brother

Moving out

It’s all about ME!

It’s about hope in the stuff, here, & now!

It’s about the kingdom without the King

Isolation

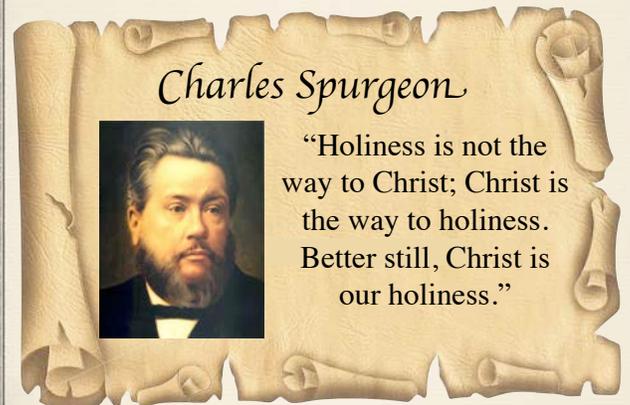
Moving in

It’s all about WE!

It’s about hope in the cross now & a crown later!

It’s about the King in His kingdom

Intimacy



Charles Spurgeon

“Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. Better still, Christ is our holiness.”

10 signs of a “Religious spirit”

1. Keeping score for credits & demerits.
2. A sense of spiritual entitlement.
3. Uneasy with grace given to other sinners.
4. Rules & justice oriented life.
5. Superficial standards that I can manage.
6. A segregated spiritual “class system.”
7. Welcoming the failure of outsiders.
8. Tendency to judge others by my strengths.
9. Struggle with shame when I fail.
10. Stingy with grace.

What can I do to change?

1. Evaluate the company you keep.
2. Know yourself, accept yourself, forget about yourself, give yourself.
3. Commit yourself to be a BE-ATTITUDE disciple.
4. Take the Scripture seriously - noting Jesus’ relationships.