

# INVESTIGATIVE BIBLE DISCUSSION

## Luke 15:11-32

[11] Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. [12] The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

[13] “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. [14] After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. [15] So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. [16] He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

[17] “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! [18] I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. [19] I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ [20] 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.

[21] “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

[22] “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. [23] Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. [24] For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

[25] “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. [26] So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. [27] ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

[28] “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. [29] 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. [30] But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

[31] “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. [32] But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ “

## Questions

1. Highlight the main and minor characters
2. Where or when does the story take place?
3. What are the key events, activities or ideas presented in this passage?
4. How did the characters respond to Jesus personally, to what he said, or to what they saw?
5. How is Jesus described (by himself or others, claims made, character traits displayed)?
6. What values were taught/demonstrated by Jesus?
7. What truths/principles, were taught or demonstrated by Jesus?
8. What conclusions or observations can you draw?

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## BACKGROUND

According to Old Testament law, one-third of the parental estate would go to the younger son upon his father's death. Two-thirds would go to the elder son. In this case, the estate was probably divided up and a portion sold for cash to accommodate the younger son's request.

According to Jewish custom, it was a curse to take care of pigs. The job of feeding pigs would have been considered the lowliest point of humiliation.

A hired man was usually a day-laborer. The term didn't even apply to a regular full-time servant.

The best robe, ring, and sandals were symbols of authority. He was not to be a servant but a free-man.

The fatted calf was reserved for special occasions when important guests were expected.