

# THE CHOICES WE MAKE

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Objective: To show the importance of making the right choice.  
 Subject: Choice  
 Thesis: Making the right choice is attitude related.  
 Text: Luke 15:11-24

## ATTENTION

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God has placed value on us by giving us choice.

Choice used as a noun in the dictionary, is the act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities.

Adam and Eve exercised their choice and choose to be sinful.

Adam had the power of choice in a sinless environment but we have the power of choice in a sinful environment.

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In the parable of the prodigal son that we will discuss tonight, it shows that choice and attitude are synonymous.

William James is clearly understood when he writes, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes."

Martin Luther comments, "A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes."

EG White says in the book, Mind Personality and Character, "Satan uses peculiarities of attitude to work on human mind to deceive."

## NEED

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The prodigal son, our main character of study, had as it appears, an attitude problem.

In fact, the prodigal who left had an attitude problem and the prodigal who stayed also had an attitude problem.

And because they did, they made choices that were inconsistent with their upbringing.

The account of this parable in Luke 15 shows that it is a story of initiation into sin and its consequences.

The parable of the prodigal son is a story of relationship.

In fact, the prodigal is an archetypal character, who represents an impulse that lies in each of us

- The impulse to rebel
- The impulse to try something new
- The impulse to mix in with the crowd

This parable is an impulse away from the domestic and the secure; towards the adventurous, the distant and the abandonment of restraint.

And so there is no doubt that this parable shows the relationship between choice and attitude

## SATISFACTION

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The parable if looked at as a story can be divided into three parts

1. THE SCENE AT HOME
2. THE SCENE IN A FAR COUNTRY
3. THE RETURN OF THE YOUNGER SON

And the story concentrates on the relationship among three main characters.

There are many things that are hidden in the story:

1. No mention is made of his mother.
2. No specific reason is given why the son wanted to leave.
3. The father's reason for accepting his son's request is unclear.

But what is transparent in this narrative is the fact that it is a family affair.

## SCENE ONE

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From the outset of the story, the younger of the two sons has a thirst for experience and so he says to his father:

**Luke 15:12 ...Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them *his* living.**

The first shock of the parable to a Jewish audience would have been the foolishness of the Father agreeing to the Prodigal's demand to split the family fortune before the Father died.

It has been suggested that the prodigal's request would have been tantamount to telling the Father that he wished him dead.

And the Father's reaction in giving the son his inheritance was simply - contrary to conventional Jewish wisdom.

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The tragedy with this young son is that he wanted what his FATHER had, but didn't want his FATHER.

This is the PHILOSOPHY of today:

1. People want LOVE without MARRIAGE.
2. Man wants FREEDOM without RESPONSIBILITY
3. We want people to GIVE to us without our SERVING them.
4. There are some Christians who want CHURCH BENEFITS without the CHURCH.
5. There are even those who want FORGIVENESS without REPENTANCE and OBEDIENCE!

## SCENE TWO (Part One)

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The second part of the story shows the attitude of the younger son:

**Luke 15:13** And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country...

The younger son takes his money, packs his bag, and goes off to a distant country.

1. When the son went out the door he really didn't leave home, he left his FATHER.
2. He separated himself from the one who loved him more than anything.
3. When the son walked away from the father, he became LOST.

The younger son did not leave his FATHER and his home to become the "World's Worst Sinner".

On the contrary! He left thinking, "Don't worry about me. I'll be all right.

I can take care of myself!"

He would have vehemently denied the pig pen ending. "It will never happen to me. Just wait and see!"

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In the story Jesus did not tell us exactly what he did.

Jesus related that the boy:

Luke 15:13 ... **wasted his substance with riotous living.**

Jesus said the young man was involved in "WILD LIVING," but no particular sin is specified.

**Note:** Jesus didn't tell us what the young son did; He allows us to draw our own conclusions.

- Maybe he used drugs
- Drank beers
- Had many girls
- Partied all night long

In fact the older son said:

**Luke 15:30** **But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots...**

Maybe the older son was thinking, "If I were in the distant country, that's what I would do."

But Jesus does not tell us what the younger son did because He wants us to examine our own hearts to see what we might have done?

If you were in a far country with no one looking over your shoulder, what would you have done?

1. Go to church?
2. Sing in the choir?
3. Go witnessing? GO ON!!

In a far country:

1. Sex comes easy (talk about AIDS)
2. Drugs are at your fingertips
3. It is easy to compromise

While in the distant country, the younger son's world fell apart because he did not know that the devil was waiting to sink him.

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As Jesus relates the story the son's fortune took a turn that is predictable:

**Luke 15:14** And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

**Luke 15:15** And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

**Luke 15:16** And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

He is now in need

At one moment he thinks he's on top of the world:

- He's spending money
- Making new friends
- Enjoying his freedom being able to do whatever he wants

Finally the money runs out. He loses everything:

- No more MONEY
- No more FRIENDS,
- No more FREEDOM

He winds up in a pig pen slopping hogs.

And so his loss leads to initiation.

He is now exposed to a world of labor and deprivation.

He falls as a result of the consequences of his sin and attitude:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• money</li> <li>• business</li> <li>• degree</li> </ul> | <p>He could have invested the</p> <p>Used the money to start a</p> <p>Pay for his tuition to complete a</p> |
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And this is the worst possible place for a Jewish young man to wind up, especially since the Jews considered hogs ceremonially unclean.

The guy came from a Christian home; he came from a wealthy home; look where he is!

Any man who walks away from God ends up in the pig pen. (2 Peter 20-22)

## VISUALIZATION

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### SCENE TWO (Part Two)

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This part of the narrative shows conclusively that the prodigal son changes his attitude.

His suffering now leads to moral and intellectual growth.

In fact the turning point of the story comes when he reaches a perception of his moral failing

**PUNCH:** HE CAME TO HIMSELF

Hear me: You cannot begin the return home to God until you take an honest look at the misery you have caused your family and yourself.

The boy's problem was his attitude and so when he came to himself he changed his attitude.

And because he did, he remembered the way it was at HOME!

He began to think back:

**Luke 15:17** ...How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

**Luke 15:18** I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

As difficult as it might have been, the young son decided to return home to his father:

- He was ready to say, "I am sorry!"
- He was ready to say, "My way was not the best way."
- He was ready to turn around

**PUNCH:** Because of his upbringing; because of Christian Education; he had the courage to confess and repent

The problem with many people caught up in sin is that they stay there.

They refuse to come back even though some do come back lying in a casket.

If you plan to come back, come back now! Come back:

- Standing at the altar
- Come back in rags
- Come back in dishonor
- Come back empty
- Come back smelling of pig cologne
- But come back!

Just do not come back with 6 people rolling your casket. GO ON!!!

## SCENE THREE

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In the third and final part of the story the character and actions of the father become the focus of attention.

The father reverses our expectation by showing forgiveness even before the son had a chance to confess.

The Father is so pleased and thrilled to see his prodigal return that he doesn't care how undignified it looks. He literally "drapes himself on the neck of the prodigal".

And the father cried out:

**Luke 15:22** ...Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

**Luke 15:23** And *bring* hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

**Luke 15:24** For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found...

One author said that the father was:

LOVE ENDURING	The loss of the boy grieved the father
LOVE EXPECTING	He believed his son would come back home
LOVE EXCITING	He had compassion and ran
LOVE EMBRACING	He hugged him and kissed him

LOVE ENRICHING	Gave him the best robe
LOVE ENTHUSING	Ordered the fatted calf
LOVE EXPLAINING	His other son asked, "Dad what is the reason for all the festivity?" He replied, "My son was dead but he is alive, he was lost but now he is found."

## ACTION

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The 3<sup>rd</sup> character in the story, the older of the two sons is also referred to as a prodigal son.

In self-conceit he considers himself the perfect son based on outer conformity.

Outwardly he was in compliance with his father, but inwardly he too was far from home.  
GO ON!!!

He was home, yet not at home!

Both son had attitude problems, hence they made negative choices.

The son who left changed his attitude and made a choice that excited the father.

Choice has its price:

- You cannot jump into muddy water and come out clean.
- You cannot expect to have healthy lungs if you smoke cigarettes.
- You cannot expect to live a pure life if you keep looking at x-rated movies.
- You cannot move with the wrong crowd and do the right things.

**BUT!!** There is another character in the story that needs our attention.

That character is the calf.

The Bible says the father prepared the calf because he believed he would have returned.

The calf was innocent but the father gave the calf.

The blood of the calf was shed on the son's behalf

2000+ years ago God's son like that calf shed His blood.

Like the calf Jesus was given to the world by His Father (John 3:16)

I should have died but he died in my place:

- Took my punishment
- Took my whipping
- Took my insults
- Took my nails
- Took my cross

Brad Paisley wrote:

*So I'll cherish the old rugged Cross  
Till my trophies at last I lay down  
I will cling to the old rugged Cross  
And exchange it someday for a crown*

Thank God for the cross!

And what makes the cross special is the identity of the sufferer:

There were three crosses on the hill:

1. One man died in his sins – **the cross of rebellion**
2. The other man died to his sins – **the cross of repentance**
3. But the man in the middle died for our sins – **the cross of redemption**

Which cross is yours?

## THE CALL

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If it is your desire to identify with the cross in the middle come to the altar as we sing, “The Old Rugged Cross”

(Sing two stanzas of the song)

There is only one way you can identify with what Christ did for you on the cross. ONE WAY!!

That way is through baptism. (Romans 6:4)

If it is your desire to identify with Christ’s death and resurrection in baptism, join me on the platform as we sing the third stanza of the song “The Old Rugged Cross”.

GO ON!!!

THOUGHT

*People know what you are by what they see, not by what they hear.*