

The older brother in the parable of the prodigal son is, to use a non-theological term, a big sourpuss. He deeply resents his father's celebration of his brother's reappearance. He can't even bring himself to acknowledge the younger son as his brother, calling him "this son of yours." If we are honest, we would probably feel the same way, that waywardness has been rewarded over duty.

We can see this sour attitude toward God blessing others elsewhere in Scripture. Jonah sits in the sun and pouts over Nineveh having been spared. Peter appears to question whether John will receive a greater blessing in John 21. The first and most extreme example is Cain murdering Abel because God has accepted his sacrifice.

Scripture condemns envy in every form. The Tenth

Commandment tells us not covet, which is to desire something your neighbor has and you don't. But the sourpuss attitude is even worse. It is *not* wanting your neighbor to have something you yourself already possess. Neither Jonah nor had Peter lost anything. Cain was not excluded from God's favor. The father in this parable assures the older brother that "*all that is mine is yours.*"

Their error was to see God's blessings as a "zero sum" game where someone else can only gain through my loss. This is absurd in relation to a God who "*is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.*"

Resentment and suspicion toward the blessings of others, whether material or spiritual, should never characterize a properly thankful Christian.

Questions:

1. What can we learn about the character of God from the three figures in these parables: the shepherd, the woman, and the father?
2. Mr. Kelly says of verses 6-7, "There is a far deeper joy; and this is the foundation of all proper worship. In fact, our joy is not the mere sense of our own personal deliverance, but our appreciation of His delight in delivering us, His joy in our salvation. " What does this mean?

3. In verse 12, why do you think the father agrees to his son's reckless request?

4. How does the progression of the younger son's thinking parallel that of a sinner on the path to conversion?

5. These parables seem to imply that someone who departs from God and then returns gives Him more joy than one who is consistently faithful. Is that true in any sense? Other examples?

6. Do you sympathize with the older brother? Have you ever felt or reacted the same way?

7. What does this chapter teach us about grace?