

Identity Crisis: Loyal Love

#TargetPractice: Which characteristic of God are we learning today? Also listen for a parable that demonstrates it.

This month we have been learning about the characteristics of God, or who He is. **What is the characteristic we heard about in the message today?** (loyal love)

What does it mean to be loyal? (being committed to someone or sticking with them even when it is hard) So what do you think loyal love means? (loving and keeping promises no matter what, being super generous- more than expected)

In the Bible, we can read parables that Jesus told. Do you remember what a parable is? (a story with a meaning to teach a specific lesson or idea) **What parable did you hear in the message today?** (parable of the lost sheep found in Luke 15. It didn't make sense for the shepherd to leave the 99 sheep to go get one that was lost. But he loved that sheep and it was important. This is how Jesus feels about us. He loves those with Him but will always seek out those who are lost and not with Him.) Also in Luke 15, Jesus tells a story of a man and his two sons.

(Video of prodigal son if prefer watching parable

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfDfMZ6MTJs>)

The oldest worked hard and helped his dad with the land and animals. The younger son was more interested in doing what he wanted. One day, the younger son asked his dad for his part of the inheritance. In those days, when a father died, he would leave his money, land, and

everything to his sons. So this son is wanting the money now. The father was gracious and went ahead and gave the money to his son.

Not long after that, the son took the money and left. He did what he wanted and spent lots of money on himself and his friends. But he didn't think about saving any or working for more money. One day, the son had spent all of his money. His friends (which weren't really friends to begin with) left because he no longer had money. On top of that, the country was in a famine (not enough food for everyone). The son had to get any job he could find. He ended up feeding pigs. That's not a very pleasant job I'm sure! He was also hungry. In fact, the pig slop was beginning to look good to him! Yuck! This guy had lost a lot and was living a miserable life.

One day he thought of his father. He realized that even his father's workers had food to eat, a place to sleep, clean clothes to wear. He didn't expect his dad to accept him back because of how badly he had treated his dad. But if he could just go work for his dad, at least he wouldn't die.

As this son was on the road home, his father saw him coming and got so excited! He ran to meet his son, hugged him, and kissed him. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son."

But do you know what the father did? He called for a servant to bring new clothes, shoes, and a ring to his son (which showed the son was part of the family). He also ordered a large feast to be made so they could celebrate the son coming home.

The older brother became angry about the celebration. He felt like it wasn't fair that he had worked hard and obeyed all of this time and never had a celebration. Yet the son who had gone and wasted all his money came home and was celebrated. The father loved his youngest son, even though he had done bad things. He was excited when he returned home because he had been lost but now was found.

The father in the parable showed loyal love to his youngest son, just like God shows us loyal love. Even when we mess up and do the wrong thing, if we go back to him and ask for forgiveness, he welcomes us and celebrates.

Now does this mean we should do wrong things knowing that we can just ask God to forgive us? No. Even though God will love us no matter what and welcome us back over and over again, we should still try hard to follow Jesus' example and do the right thing.

Should we keep God's love to ourselves or share it with others? Definitely share!!

Let's watch a quick video on how God shows us love and why we need to share that love with others.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cd92G4vIZ3w>

Why is it important to share God's love with others, even those who may not like us? How can you show God's love to others?

Additional Resources:

- God's Story Video: Jesus Loves Everyone
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8ypf0wR6A0&t=67s>
- God's Love Video:
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aQER20Qr_A