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Instead of rejoicing with his father, his anger begins to boil. It was the kind of anger that is described as being furious, raging with desire for revenge, very intense. He refused to go in to the party. His father heard about it. This was considered an insult to the father. This father Jesus portrays is not the traditional father, and he comes out to the son who would not go in. Though he has insulted him, he pleaded with this son to please come and join them. His love for him was greater than anything he could say or do for him. He listened as the son began to list his accomplishments and exemplary behavior as compared to this other son of his. He accused his father of never giving him even a small goat to enjoy with some of his friends. “But look what you have done for this rebellious son of yours who spent your inheritance and has nothing to show for it! You killed the fatted calf for him,” the son said. Then the father’s heart, filled with love for the older son said, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.” Had he not perceived his father’s love for him either? Did he think he had to earn his love through his performance? He didn’t seem to know that he could draw on that love without having deserved it. The father continued by saying that it was the right thing to do to be glad that his brother was home again. For “your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.”

The father’s love was demonstrated to both of his sons. He told them “I love you” through his actions. He loved the lawbreaker, and he loved the law keeper. His love was unconditional. Jesus came to show us what His Father is like. Take a good look. How will you respond to His love for you?

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The Father’s Love

By Wendy Krow

In Luke 15:11-32, Jesus tells a parable of a father and his two sons. This father was not the traditional Eastern father; he didn’t act, or react, as one would be expected to act. What stands out about this father is his love for his boys. It is an unconditional love that seems to have no bounds. It seems that Jesus is describing a father who is more than a mere man.

The story goes like this, “A certain man had two sons,” and the younger son decides that he wants his part of the inheritance. His father was a wealthy landowner, with herds of goats and cattle, and a big house.

Normally an inheritance was not divided until the passing of the father, but sometimes it was done, though the money was never distributed. This father gave him the money he wanted. He loved him. He also gave him the freedom to do with it as he wanted. He didn’t have to agree to spend it wisely before it was given to him. It wasn’t given to him conditionally. The Bible says that he wasted it; he spent it all. He had nothing to show for his inheritance, no investments or goods.

A severe famine arose in the place where he was living, which was probably among Gentiles; we are told that it was a country far away from his home. Being very hungry and out of money, he looked for a job. He found one feeding pigs. That was a new experience for him. He’d never been around pigs before. Pigs were considered unclean animals to the people of his culture. They didn’t touch them and never ate them. Now

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he was feeding them, and was so hungry that he wished he could have a bite of what they were eating, but nobody gave him anything.

Then he remembered home and his father. He remembered how good his father was, how he had generously provided for the household, and how they all had plenty to eat. Something was drawing him home. It was remembering this good father and how the father had loved him. Then he also remembered how he had wronged and hurt his father by his rebellious actions and lifestyle of late. It hit him, the depth of the wrong he had done to his father who had loved him. He wasn't sure if he could go back and be welcomed as a son. Normally this would not happen in this culture. So, he devised a plan to ask if he could come back and work for him, and probably pay the money back this way. This is what he had hoped he could do. He still hadn't perceived the love that his father had for him, a love that had always been offered to him, unconditionally. He thought only of himself.

The decision was made to go home. Being a servant in his father's house would be much better than feeding pigs any day! The pigs were dirty and stinky, and he'd had enough of them. He had to at least ask, give it a try. Maybe it would work. Love was drawing him home.

Meanwhile, the father was watching for him to come home, waiting and watching. Every day he looked out across the village to the road in the distance, where his son had disappeared. He hoped he would return home.

Then one day as he looked out, he saw him coming! He recognized him from far off! His love for his son welled up in his heart, and he wanted to go to him. Normally this would not be done. He should wait for the son who had wronged him to come to him first, but he couldn't contain himself. He had to go to him! He gathered up his robe and went running down the road to meet his son. This was very undignified behavior for

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a distinguished man such as himself. In doing this he shamed himself before the whole village. They watched him running to this ungrateful, rebellious son to see what he would do next.

Before the son could deliver his planned speech, his father ran up to him, put his arms around him, held him tight, and kissed him. He loved him so much. It didn't matter that he smelled like pigs and was very dirty. He loved this son who belonged to him, and his love was unconditional. Finally, the father, probably with tears in his eyes, stepped back to get a good look at this son of his who has been gone for so long and whom he loved so deeply. As he did, the son begins to perceive the love his father had for him and that he had been welcomed back. He saw his opportunity to speak and said, "I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son."

Did his father hear him? If we were there we might have seen him look lovingly at his son, and if we could hear his thoughts they would be "you can't earn my love; there is nothing you can do, good or bad, that can change my love for you. You are mine. You belong to me." Then he told the servant, who had run along with him to go get the best robe and put it on him, get the family ring and put it on his finger, and put some really nice sandals on his feet. These three gifts represent restoration. The robe was restoring honor to the son. The ring restored his authority in the family, and the shoes, well, only sons wore shoes, slaves did not.

Now it's time to celebrate! Kill the fatted calf! Invite the whole village to join us, for "this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." So the preparations for a grand party were in the making. Everyone gathered for the celebration.

Now the older son was out in the field working while all this was taking place. As he arrives he heard singing and dancing and wondered what was happening; no one had told him about a party. He asked a servant

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