

Parable of the Two Sons

God Wants the Real You

WEEK 5

OVERVIEW

1. Honesty brings closeness
2. Hiding brings only temporary relief
3. Honesty brings the changes we desire

OPENING QUESTION

If you gave a percentage to how honest and transparent you are about what you really think and feel, what would it be?

INTRODUCTION

The more honest we are, the more personal God becomes. In the Parable of the Two Sons, Jesus tells us about how two sons interacted with their father (who represents God). This story teaches us that God wants us to be honest, and when we are, positive changes will come in our lives.

1. HONESTY BRINGS CLOSENESS

“There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

*‘I will not,’ he answered, but later **he changed his mind** and went.*

– **Matthew 21:28-29 NIV**

- **Say what you really think.** Have you ever been asked to do something good, but you didn’t feel like doing it? That’s where the first son was at. Instead of trying to hide what he really thought, he told his dad directly.
- **Honesty brings closeness.** His dad probably wasn’t happy with the answer, but at least his dad knew where his son stood. There was no lie between them that could create distance in the relationship.
- **Honesty brings good changes.** The son clearly thought about what his dad told him to do. After some thought, he changed his mind, obeyed, and went to work.
- **How does this relate to me?** When you are honest, you don’t have to spend your energy covering up a lie or being insecure about what others think. Honesty provides an opportunity for real reflection because you can see clearly who you really are. When your mind is clear and uncluttered by deceit, there is the space to tell yourself the truth and change when you need to.

Pause and reflect

- How do you feel about being real with God and others, especially if that honesty might not paint you in a flattering light? Why do you feel that way?

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2. HIDING BRINGS ONLY TEMPORARY RELIEF

*"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but **he did not go.***

– Matthew 21:30 NIV

- **Giving the "right answer" isn't what God wants.**
- **Why do you think the second son wasn't honest, like the first son?**
Maybe he was afraid of what his father would think of him if he were honest. Maybe he thought he could get away with it without his father finding out.
- **Lying only brings temporary relief.** This son may have avoided some conflict with his dad temporarily by giving a good-sounding answer, but he missed out on a close relationship.
- **Lying hurts relationships.** Lying to someone causes distance and damage in our relationship with them, whether they know about it or not.
- **The honest son experienced change, while the dishonest son didn't.**
The two biggest hindrances to change are lying to yourself and lying to others about what you need to change.
- **God is interested in who you really are,** and he wants to help you change the things you don't have the power to change on your own. Hiding doesn't give you that power, but honesty does.

Pause and reflect

- In what situations is it hard for you to say what you really think? Why?

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3. HONESTY BRINGS THE CHANGES WE DESIRE

*“Which of the two sons **obeyed his father?**” The Jewish leaders answered, “The first son.” Jesus said to them, “The truth is, you are worse than the tax collectors and the prostitutes. In fact, they will enter God’s kingdom before you enter. John came **showing you the right way to live, and you did not believe him.** But the tax collectors and prostitutes believed John. You saw that happening, but **you would not change. You still refused to believe him.**”*

- Matthew 21:31-32 ERV

- **Religious or really changing?** Jesus told the religious leaders that they were worse than those with obvious sins—the tax collectors and prostitutes—because the religious leaders hid their sins and didn’t believe they needed to change.
- **Obeying God brings change.** No one helps you change more than God and nothing helps you change more than the Bible.
- When you obey God by applying the Bible to your life, your relationship with God gets closer and you become who you are meant to be. Also, God puts people in your life, like John, to help you change by pointing you to God.

Pause and reflect

- What are some things you would like help to change?
- After sharing these things with God and a few friends, find verses of the Bible you can obey to start to change.