



HOW GOD FEELS

ABOUT US (pt 2) --

God's love is never imposed on anyone, but it is offered to all.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tells the story of a father and his younger son. Motivated by foolishness and greed, the son demands his inheritance early, as a special exception. (Luke 15)

The father knew it was not a good idea, that the son had made a foolish and greedy request, yet he allowed him to go his own way nonetheless.

Parents who hear this story probably realize that sometimes you have to let your children make mistakes; you can't live their lives for them. God is like that, too. He lets us make mistakes and gives us free will. Even when our decisions hurt Him, we still get to make them. His love respects human will and, in a sense, allows rebellion.

So the son journeyed to a distant country, and there he squandered his possessions in a reckless, foolish, extravagant lifestyle. When he had spent everything, a severe famine struck the land. Driven by hunger and need, the son took a job tending swine—a work that was unacceptable and offensive to any righteous Jewish person, for swine were unclean under the Law.

Having hit rock bottom, the wayward son finally came to his senses, and decided, « *I will go home to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Please take me on as one of your hired servants.'*

"While [the prodigal son] was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. He was waiting for his son to return. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

The returning son begins his prepared speech, but his father cuts him off and starts issuing commands to honor him : *"Quick ! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. . . . We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost, but now he is found. »*

—The best robe, the best ring, the best feast! The father does not question his son or lecture him ; instead, he joyfully forgives him and receives him back into fellowship.

Just like this father, there is nothing God loves more than welcoming back a prodigal child. No matter what they have done, God delights in their return.

His heart is full of love and compassion. He drops everything and runs to meet us, with joyous celebration, without a word of judgment or condemnation.

However, the Father does not force us to come back to Him. God's love is not imposed on anyone, but offered to all.

The unconditional love of God values even the most sin-stained person as a uniquely precious runaway child, longing to bring them home to the loving embrace of our heavenly Father. And every time we return, without fail, He will run to meet us and embrace us.

Every time. So why would we ever stay away ?