

The Story:

The thought had been brewing inside for quite a while. His days were filled with dreaming and wondering of another life. Breaking free from it all, erasing the past, and venturing out on his own to make it without the help of anyone else, especially his dad. After all, if he just stayed where he was, life would still be the same in 10 years. Doing the same old thing, day in and day out. His brother would still bug him every moment of the day and he would be dependent on his dad until he died.

The stories of what it was like in the big city intrigued him. He was confident that he had what it took to make it out there. All he needed to do was go for it, take the risk, think about himself for once, and pursue his wildest dreams. He eventually made the choice - nothing was going to stand in his way. He went to his dad and asked if he could get his share of the inheritance early and, surprisingly enough, his dad went for it and divided up the farm appropriately. Shortly after this, he packed everything he owned, cashed in what he could, and made the move. He left nothing to come back to, as he was confident of his success in the city he was moving to. The new life turned out to be wild and dramatic, changing every moment. Every new day brought something different. There were no boundaries and no one to tell him what to do next. He was his own boss and did whatever he wanted, 24 hours a day. He had more money than he ever could have needed and money was everywhere in the city, so there was no need for caution. Until one day when everything changed. The economy shifted and a famine hit the land. He lost everything he owned in what seemed to him like overnight.

He was forced to live in the dregs of society, feeding pigs in the hope that he could get some sort of shelter and food. Nothing came his way - it only got worse. He was pushed to the end of himself, ripped of dreams and passion. All he was left with was the feeling of failure and hopelessness. One day, in the midst of despair, he came to his senses and realized if he just went home he could at least have a job, some food, and a place to sleep. He humbly got up and started to make his way home.

His dad saw him coming in the distance and ran to meet him with tear-filled eyes. When they met, the son began to spill out his rehearsed speech of apology, only to be silenced by his father. His dad quickly got him a new wardrobe of clothes and pulled an extravagant party to celebrate his return.

Read More ||| Luke 15:11-32

- Have you ever messed up like the guy in this story?
 - + How do you normally feel after messing up?
 - + How do you normally recover after messing up?

One reason Jesus told this story was to give a glimpse into how God treats those who mess up. He makes the analogy of the dad being like God the Father.

- What would you have expected the dad to do in this story?
 - + What surprised you about how he treated his son when he returned?
 - + Why do you think the father accepted him back so willingly?

God's love is full of grace. He understands immaturity and knows that there is no real life without Him. He knows that if He is patient that people will eventually be faced with the fact that their big dreams are empty if they do not include Him. He loves it when people come back to Him, even when they have messed up. He is where we find the love and acceptance we long for when we are at the other side of hopelessness.