

Spiritual Anorexia

It is surrender to love that I really resist. I am willing to accept measured doses of love as long as it doesn't upset the basic framework of my world. That framework is built on the assumption that people get what they deserve. That's what I really want. I want to earn what I get. David G. Benner

By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends." Their grumbling triggered this story.

"Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, 'Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!' Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.

"Or imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and scour the house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it? And when she finds it you can be sure she'll call her friends and neighbors: 'Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!' Count on it—that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God." Luke 15:1–10, The Message

"Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can't believe that, believe what you see – these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing...A loveless world," said Jesus, "is a sightless world. If anyone loves me, he will carefully keep my word and my Father will love him – we'll move right into the neighborhood!" The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

Pause to Prepare

"The God of whom Jesus spoke searches the horizon looking for signs of the return of broken, damaged, missing-the-mark people like us. God is delighted when we become visible, when we can be seen." *Soul Repair, p.47.*

Food for thought

1. If we study the story of the prodigal sons in Luke 15, paying special attention to the teachings found about this story in the book *Soul Repair*, and combine that with what we've studied today, what preconceived notions about God do we need to let go of? How about notions about ourselves? Why is self-pity so self-destructive?
2. Considering the fact that, if most people knew us really, really well, we too would have a doubtful reputation, why are these such awesome stories for us to absorb?
3. Why is it worth throwing a party when we acknowledge that we are living independently of God?
4. Find a way to celebrate your disreputable state this week in a way that would cause God's angels to throw a party.

John 14:11-12, John 1:14, The Message