

Lesson 5A – Performance Orientation and the Law

The Older Brother

In the story of the Prodigal Son, there is another brother who did not know the love of his father either. The older brother was faithful and stayed with the father in the house, but he still did not understand what it meant to be a son. (**Luke 15:28-31**) He "*served*" his father and was obedient, but did not realize what his inheritance entitled him to or that it was available to him **now**. He always thought that his inheritance was a reward for good behavior that came at some future time.

Differences between the Younger Brother and the Older Brother

Younger

1. Sins of the flesh – spirit of the world
2. A slave to sin
3. In humility, admitted his sin
4. Values relationship
5. Freely received Father's love
6. Experiences coming home and resting at home in Father's unconditional love
7. Restored to being a son of the Father
8. Can bring others to a loving Father

Older

- Sins of heart or disposition – spirit of religion
- A slave to law
- In self-righteousness, justifies his actions
- Values being right
- Worked to earn Father's love
- Only sees himself as a slave in his Father's fields, serving out of obedience
- Works as a servant in his Father's house
- Can only bring others to a hard taskmaster

Many Christians in the church have a tendency to act more like the older son:

- ❖ They are the loyal, hard-working, dutiful workers serving wherever they see a need.
- ❖ They appear to be the good members of the church, but in their hearts there may be competition, self-righteousness, resentment, pride and much more.
- ❖ Their sin is against love and misrepresenting the Father's heart.
- ❖ Obedience may flow out of fear or a desire for personal gain rather than a heart full of love.
- ❖ They serve God out of a sense of obligation, or by performing and striving to earn love.
- ❖ They think Father God's love is in proportion to the hours they have spent reading the Bible, time in prayer, soul-winning, and other ministry.

Symptoms of the Older Brother

1. Emotional and spiritual distance between him and his Father due to his negative attitude and judgmental attitude.

- ✓ Distance from God's love **leads to legalism and law.**
- ✓ Distance from God leads to **feelings of insecurity.** We cannot have intimacy or feel secure with others until we feel good about ourselves.
(Only unconditional acceptance and love of the Father gives us true value and self-worth.)

2. Aggressive striving and hyper-religious activity becomes a way of life trying to earn Father's blessing. It becomes a heavy burden if we think that we **have to "do"** to be loved.

- ✓ They attempt to earn God's love through religious activity, works, duty, and discipline.
- ✓ **They perform for acceptance and love.**
- ✓ Hard work may be out of **wrong heart motives.**

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- ✓ **They see love as a reward for service, not a gift.**
 - ✓ They get angry at others who do not agree with their ways or thinking.
 - ✓ The task, mission or project becomes all important so they will look good.
3. **Sibling rivalry and competing** for acceptance and love can increase. - **Quick to compare.**
 - ✓ They get upset if someone gets credit or recognition and “**I do not.**”
 - ✓ **Spiritual ambition is big.**
 - ✓ They often value relationships more for what that person can do for them.
 - ✓ They look for attention, affirmation, and acceptance from others.
 4. **Feel they are not favored, which leads to resentment.** They can feel “we are not honored or blessed if we are not the center of attention.”
 5. They begin to see the worst in people and do not treat them with love. (**Luke 15:20-24**)
 6. They become **defensive**, as they feel guilt or shame. **Being right is more important than relationship.**

Performance Orientation

Symptoms or Indicators of Performance Orientation

- ❖ It is **striving by human effort in our flesh** rather than resting on the finished work of salvation that Jesus purchased. We are held captive by the lie of performing to earn love.
- ❖ Living our life trying to **figure out what people want you to be and you becoming that.**
- ❖ We are so **busy being who everyone else expects us to be** and don't know who we are.
- ❖ We **require constant affirmation.**
- ❖ There is only anxiety, fear, and striving, no rest.
- ❖ **Our value is based on doing everything right.** Criticism is not handled well.
- ❖ New situations have intolerable stress levels as we try to find out what is expected.
- ❖ There is an overall **fear of trying new things.**
- ❖ All of life becomes a struggle to be acceptable or accepted.
- ❖ There is a strong **need for the approval of the group.**
- ❖ **We dole out affection based upon their performance.**
- ❖ We may crack mentally or emotionally if we are thrown into too much pressure.
- ❖ There is a “**false belief that I must meet certain standards to feel good about myself.**”

Freedom from the Older Brother and Performance Orientation

1. **Move towards love and Father's house.** How far from Father's house do you dwell?
 - ❖ We all have a little of the older brother in us. We must acknowledge our need for more revelation of Father's love to fill areas where we have not been at home with love!
 - ❖ A homecoming is an emotional experience. We can not devalue emotions like compassion, love, and intimacy, preferring truth and law.
 - ❖ Father desires a heart relationship with each of us as sons or daughters. (**John 5:22**)
2. **Move to repentance.** **Repentance** means a **change of heart** so deep it **changes our core values and behavior.**
 - ❖ Renounce aloud the whole pattern of performance as being against His love and grace.

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- ❖ Ask the Lord to reveal older brother and performance orientation patterns, wrong motives, and sins. Then you **need to confess your sins** such as pride, jealousy, aggressive striving, self-righteousness, rivalry, resentments, envy, criticism, etc.
 - ❖ Ask the Lord to also **expose the hidden resentments that stem from you feeling that your parents did not give you the kind of love** which could have helped you find true identity and security. Confess the things the Holy Spirit has revealed and receive forgiveness.
 - ❖ **Ask the Lord to reveal any ways you have felt there were benefits** to walking as an older brother or in performance. (Being top dog, getting even by keeping your cool while the other loses his temper...)
 - ❖ **Ask God to dismantle the structures that support false ways of thinking. Ask Jesus to bring wrong motives to death** and to give you peace and rest in Him.
3. **Ask for and receive forgiveness** for believing the lie that “I must work to gain Father God’s love and acceptance.”
- ❖ The older brother syndrome begins in childhood when we see more laws and rules of religion than love.
 - ❖ Ask Father to break through with the power of His love for you. **Ask Jesus to speak truth to your heart.** Then live in that truth daily.
 - ❖ Ask Father to reveal His total acceptance of you and give you His rest and peace. His unconditional love must be experienced on a level that brings healing to the childhood hurt and anger of not feeling unconditionally loved.
 - ❖ Ask the Holy Spirit to heal your heart, help you renew your mind to what God says, and transform your character.
4. **Ask the Lord to show you how you have hurt others** around you and feel the pain and heartbreak you have caused.
- ❖ Go to the people you have hurt and seek their forgiveness for each way you devalued them and misrepresented Father’s love to them.
 - ❖ Begin to work at restoring relationships with your family and others.
5. **Practice humility everyday by seeing Father God with open arms to receive you.**
- ❖ Expect to experience and receive His warm embrace, unconditional love, affirmation and affection.
 - ❖ Don’t focus on “What should I do?” Learn to rest in Father’s love and relax more, not taking things so seriously.

The Law

The Ten Commandments (the Law) (**Ex. 20:1-17**) became the heart of the covenant that Father made with Israel in the wilderness. (**Ex. 19:5**) The commandments were given to the nation at Pentecost, 50 days after Passover, because of their pride and independence when they said, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do." (**Ex. 19:8**) They were literally saying, "Anything you can do, we

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can do." (The Hebraic syntax on this sentence implies that it was stated in an arrogant way to God.) When Moses came down from the mountain with the two tablets, rebellion was already in the camp and they were worshiping the golden calf. So Moses had the Levites kill 3,000 of the people that day. (**Ex. 32:19-28**) (Note. At the first Pentecost after Jesus' death, which established the new covenant of grace, Peter spoke and 3,000 people were saved! **Acts 2:41**)

The Law was given to bring man to the end of himself so that he would need a Savior. Gal. 3:24

- ❖ The law was just, good, and holy, but it had no power to make us just, good, and holy.
- ❖ The law is a mirror that exposes our flaws and sins, but does not take them away. (**Rom. 5:20-21**) It gave us the knowledge of sin. (**Rom. 3:20**)
- ❖ We can never meet Father's standards of the Law. Only Jesus' blood can remove sin.
- ❖ The Law justifies no one, but condemns us all!
- ❖ We cannot of ourselves keep the Law for we must keep all of it. (**Jam. 2:10**) Jesus told us that it must be kept both outwardly and inwardly (If you lust in your heart, it is adultery. (**Matt. 5:28**) If you remain angry, it's murder! (**Matt. 5:22**))
- ❖ The Law has no power to overcome sin. It cannot produce holiness; it can only produce an awareness of sin and death! The strength of sin is the Law. (**1 Cor. 15:56**)
- ❖ The **Law demands righteousness**, but **grace imparts righteousness** to sinful man.
- ❖ The Law demands perfection, but does nothing to help us achieve it. It is impossible to fulfill all the demands of the Law, and we are cursed for breaking it. However, **grace imparts perfection and does everything for us through Jesus Christ.**

The only thing that the Law can produce is death.

- ❖ Paul calls it the "ministry of death and condemnation." (**2 Cor. 3:7-9**) Contrary to what some think that this is talking about the ceremonial laws of animal sacrifices, Paul specifically is talking about the Law "engraved on stones." The ceremonial law was never put on stones.
- ❖ Before this, Paul states. "...for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life." (**2 Cor. 3:6**)
- ❖ "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ." (**Rom. 6:23**) Without the Law, there was not an awareness of sin.
- ❖ "When the Law came, sin revived and I died." (**Rom. 7:9**)

Father found fault with the covenant of Law and brought about a new covenant making the first obsolete! (**Heb. 8:13**) He puts His laws in our heart, is merciful to our unrighteousness, and no longer remembers our sins because of the finished work of the cross. (**Heb. 8:10-12**)

- ❖ Sin no longer has dominion over us because we are no longer under the Law! (**Rom. 6:14**)
- ❖ The only thing that we have with the Law is religion, not relationship with Father. All our effort is now focused on trying to do well and avoid doing evil.

Most of the church, like the Galatians church, tries to mix Law and grace together.

- ❖ Salvation is not enough; you also have to keep the Law.
- ❖ The focus is on "sin-consciousness" and performance. "Do good; get good." "Do bad; get bad." We only get the blessing when we do it right. Many think that these sins in our life stop our prayers, our inheritance, and the blessing.
- ❖ Since we are human and destined to fail in our own efforts, the result is frustration, despair, depression, shame and self-condemnation.

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- ❖ "I'm an old sinner saved by grace."
- ❖ We are trapped in this cycle of: "sin - unrighteous - confess - righteous again - sin again - unrighteous again - confess again." (1 John 1:9) We are told to keep a "short list" of sins by continually confessing our sins as the Holy Spirit brings them up to us. Then we can be cleansed even of the sins that we were not aware of and become righteous again. (Actually, John was addressing this verse to the Gnostics who believed that there is no sin. (see 1 John 1:8, 10) – All our sins are already forgiven on the cross, past, present, and future! (see 1 John 2:12) You don't need to keep confessing your sins to be forgiven of them and cleansed of any unrighteousness because they are already forgiven through the finished work of the cross. Your righteousness doesn't change just because you sinned again! Just repent and make restitution, if necessary, and keep your righteousness!)

When we mix Law and grace, we are denying the finished work of the cross.

- ❖ Works and the Law nullify Grace. (Eph. 2:9-10)
- ❖ You can't put the new covenant of Grace into the old covenant of Law because both will be destroyed. (Mark 2:22)
- ❖ The Law brings us to Christ, but then we are no longer under the Law. (Gal. 3:24-25) The Law is impossible to keep. It only brings us to the end of self. We can't save ourselves.
- ❖ If we are justified by the Law, then Grace has no effect. (Gal. 5:4) If we can "fall from Grace," that implies that grace is higher. When we "fall from Grace" is when we fall back into the Law. (In the Ark of the Covenant, the Ten Commandments were in the box under the mercy seat!)
- ❖ The Law focuses on man's efforts, but Grace gives all of the glory to Father!
- ❖ We must come to the end of trying to save ourselves. (Gal. 1:10)
- ❖ The Law focuses us on sin, but under Grace sin no longer has dominion over us. (Rom. 7:7-8)
- ❖ Grace gives us the power to get out of sin and walk in life. (Rom. 6:4)
- ❖ **Christ is the end of the Law!** (Rom. 10:4)
- ❖ Our own righteousness is from the Law, but His righteousness is from Jesus. (Phil. 3:9)
- ❖ The strength of sin is the Law. (1 Cor. 15:56)
- ❖ **Law can destroy our faith.** Since the Word is true, there must be something wrong with me for my prayers not to be answered. (Wrong!) I "should" forgive, pray more, read my Bible more, repent of my sins, get rid of the unbelief, obey the Law, walk in love, etc. Do! Do! Do! The blood qualifies us. We need to stop disqualifying ourselves! (Col. 1:12-13)
- ❖ **Love is the fulfillment of the Law!** (Rom. 13:9-10)

Mixing Law and Grace are like pulling petals off of a daisy and saying, "He loves me." "He loves me not." When I do good, forgive, repent, confess my sins, He loves me; but when I walk in unforgiveness, unrepentance, unconfessed sins, He doesn't love me.

If a man is full of love, joy, and peace, there is no Law in him!!

We need to stop trying to please the Father and receive His love and acceptance just the way we are. We need to rest and "be loved, be blessed, be happy, be free, and be victorious! Salvation, forgiveness, our inheritance, and the blessing are all free gifts from the Father. Be a good receiver and walk into your future and the plans He has for your life!

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1. Look at your life and ask yourself, “Why am I doing what I am doing?” Ask the Father, “Are there any wrong motives behind what I do?” Write down what the Father shows you.

2. Do you see any of the symptoms of the older brother syndrome in your attitudes toward your family, other Christians or your own ministry? Ask Father, “What would you have me change to have a heart of compassion for others?”

3. What areas in your life today does the Father want you to give to Him so that you can step back into His rest and not react to external circumstances? Ask Father, “Reveal who you are in the situations that I am dealing with right now.”

4. Ask the Father, “Show me any areas where I am still living under the Law or mixing Law and Grace in my Christian walk.” Write them down and then ask Father, “Show me truth about how I am to live my life.

5. What area of your life do you need to have Father reveal His grace to you? Ask Father, “Show me one practical way I can start walking in grace rather than living like I did in the past (in my old man).”

6. Journal – Reread the story of Jesus’ disciples in the boat in the storm. **Mk. 4:35-41** See yourself in the midst of a situation that is trying to overwhelm you. Ask Jesus, “How can I walk in peace through this time and what can I learn from this situation?”