



Approaching God

Begin your time with an opening prayer

Take a moment to quiet your heart and ask God to help you experience his presence today. Ask Him to free you from any distractions as you begin to read and meditate on today's passages.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Slowly Read the Following Passages

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Matthew 7:1-5

1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. **2** For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. **3** "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? **4** How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? **5** You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Matthew 23:37-39

37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. **38** Look, your house is left to you desolate. **39** For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Luke 15:11-32

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. **13** "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. **17** "When he came to his

senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' **20** So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. **21** "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27** 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' **28** "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29** But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' **31** " 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

Thoughts to Ponder - Making Room for The Self-Righteous

Read the short essay from Claire Gibson - <https://shereadstruth.com/making-room-for-the-self-righteous/>

As a teenager I was a pretty lousy prodigal. The youngest of three daughters, I had the benefit of watching my sisters' rebellious moments backfire, and so I learned quickly that the best way to stay in my parents' good graces was to toe the line. Add to that the fact that we lived at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, surrounded by structure, discipline, and people who knew how to do things right. Early on, I decided I wanted to be like them. While good leaders might make honest mistakes, they usually don't blow a bunch of cash partying. They go to college, get good grades, and become generals and senators. I applied that same logic to my young Christian faith. I thought if I lived "rightly," all my dreams would go just as I'd planned. I even claimed Scripture to back me up! (See [Proverbs 16:3](#).) Instead, my self-righteousness grew like a cancer, slow and undetected, hidden by a life focused on pleasing others. There is so much irony in self-righteousness because it is exactly the self-righteous who don't think they have a problem. That's why it can be a toxic sin, one that creeps into our lives without our awareness. Today, I find it most apparent in my marriage. When I'm having a bad day, God forbid my husband sneeze too loudly, miss a button on his shirt, or accidentally leave the stove on. I'm quick to point out or dwell on his minor flaws while ignoring the far bigger issue: my critical spirit.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the older brother starts a long argument with his father. He was angry and, legally speaking, he probably had a case against his younger brother. But followed to the root, his anger was really a deep-seated resentment. He tells his father, "I have been slaving many years for you" ([Luke 15:29](#)). His angry confession reveals that all along, he'd felt bitter about the work his father had asked him to do. He mentions that he'd never had a party thrown in his honor. Deep down, he felt he deserved one, along with the accolades that would surely come with it.

Self-righteousness blocks our ability to find joy in the redemption of others. When I'm being self-righteous, I'm far better at calling other people names than I am at naming my own sin. Reading the parable of the prodigal son has never been fun for me because I know I'm the older brother—heart hardened and locked up tight—and I would much rather be the younger brother, who knows he's in desperate need of forgiveness.

In church circles, people often talk about the father running out to meet his son. I've heard it told that men in that culture didn't run; they never picked up their robes, exposing their ankles. What the father did was unabashedly and radically loving. But something I've never noticed before was that he didn't stop there—he didn't just run out to greet the son who'd been lost and gone astray. The father also sought out his self-righteous son; he looked around and noticed that his eldest was missing from the party. There is hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ, even for self-righteous people like me. Out of His abundant love, the Father comes after us too. There is room for all of us at His table.

Daily Reflection Questions

1. What do today's Scripture passages say about making room for the self-righteous?
2. How can we make room for those who are self-righteous? What comes to mind for you today?

Close in Prayer:

Consider the ways that you are self-righteous. Repent, and thank God for His grace that covers even your pride