

the rack

The Vows



The Vows

In a faraway land a long time ago, there was a king who had three daughters—Ayesha, Mariam, and Latrice. His daughters were known throughout the land for their beauty. Each successive daughter was more beautiful than the last. Unfortunately, the king's daughters were also known for their pride and haughtiness.



The king's fondest desire was for his daughters to be married at the same time. So, when his youngest daughter had reached the age of 17, the king decided that it was time to look for suitors for all three daughters. A proclamation was sent throughout the land. Soon, hundreds of suitors were lined up at the palace gates, hoping to claim the hand of one of the princesses. These were the richest, most eligible men in the land—worthy suitors. The king was pleased with the choices.

Not so for the princesses. Excuses such as “He’s not handsome enough,” “He’s too short,” “He’s too tall,” “He seems stupid—not my intellectual equal at all” flowed like water until one by one the suitors disappeared. The day came when no one lined up at the palace gate.

The desperate king was at his wit’s end. More than a year passed and no one had come.

“Wali,” he said to the prime minister of the land, “I do swear that the next three men who come to this palace shall have my daughters for their wives.”

“Are you certain about this, Your Highness?” Wali said cautiously.

“You heard me. The next three! I don’t care who they are! Send them to me at once!”

“Well, Sire, it just so happens that there are three suitors here, but I don’t think you’ll want—”

“Didn’t I say the next three?! Well then, send them in, man! Don’t stand there like an idiot! Hurry it up!”

Wali went out, soon returning with the three men. A sorrier, more repelling sight never met the king’s gaze. All three of the men were dressed in the most decrepit of rags. One man even mumbled to himself in an incoherent fashion, while another eyed the attire of the court attendants in a sly, greedy fashion. The third walked with a decided limp.

“These . . . are the men you were talking about?” the king asked Wali, hoping by some miracle that he had brought the wrong men in by mistake.

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“I do swear that the next three men who come to this palace shall have my daughters for their wives.”



THE RUNAWAY

A PARABLE IN THREE SCENES

The real turning point in this story doesn't involve the runaway son, but his father who was waiting at home. Read the action in these three scenes, based on Luke 15:11-24.

Scene 1

1. Home on the Ranch . . .



Cut.

Read Luke 15:11-12.

What made the son ask for his share of the estate?

4. Really Missing the Ranch . . .



Cut.

Read Luke 15:17-18a.

How did the son "come to his senses"?

2. Leaving the Ranch . . .



Cut. Read Luke 15:13.

Describe the son's decision.

Scene 3

5. Back at the Ranch . . .



Cut.

Read Luke 15:20-21. Why do you think the father forgave his son so quickly?



Bible Study

Scene 2

3. Missing the Ranch . . .



Cut. Read Luke 15:14-16, and describe what happened to the son.

THE END



Cut.

Read Luke 15:22-24. Did the son deserve what his father did for him? Why or why not?

Today's Scripture

Luke 15:11-24

¹¹Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

¹²The 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. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He 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! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰So 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. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

Illustration: Shawn Finley

"Yes, Your Highness." The king knew that he could not break his vow. "Although I spoke in haste, nevertheless, I can't go back on my word. If only my daughters had accepted the others! I spoiled them, Wali. And this is the result."

With a heavy heart, he sent for his daughters. They soon came with their entourage. As soon as the king saw his lovely daughters, his heart almost broke. How could he bear the thought of any one of them marrying these men? Nevertheless he told his daughters, "Look well upon these men, for I have given your hands to them in marriage."

The three princesses, needless to say, were shocked beyond measure.

"Father, you can't be serious!" Ayesha finally spoke.

The king could only nod, so heavy was his heart.

The other two sisters looked at the men in distaste.

The man with the limp, who also had kind eyes, smiled at them. They frowned in return.

"No! I won't do this!" Mariam screamed, stamping her foot. "I vow never to marry than to be stuck with one of these men!"

"Well, then, so be it," said the king. "You will

never marry."

Mariam, stunned, ran from the room.

Ayesha, heedless as to what occurred, said, "Father, if I have to marry any of these men, I vow to forfeit my position as a princess and live out my days as a beggar."

"So be it." Ayesha carefully unwound the elaborate headdress she was wearing and threw it at her father's feet.

Latrice, though haughty, was not so stupid. She decided not to make a rash vow. "I'll take the one with the kind eyes," she said quickly.

The man with the limp quickly stepped forward.

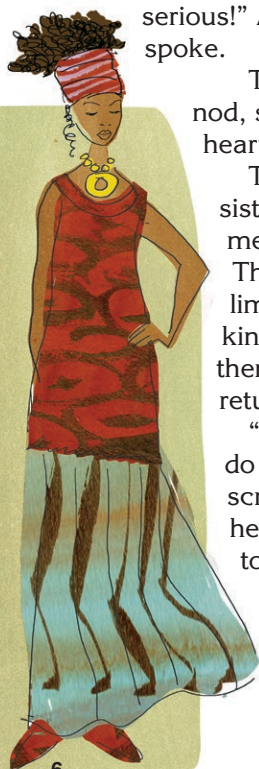
"May you both be very happy," the king said with a sigh.

Suddenly the man threw off his rags. He stood before them in a resplendent robe edged with jewels. The king's own apparel looked like rags in comparison.

"Allow me to present myself. I'm Prince Raymond of the nearby kingdom of Acmia." He gave a low bow. "And these two are my brother Richard and my cousin Rudolph."

Each man in turn threw off his rags, revealing costly clothing. "We decided to travel in disguise," Rudolph proclaimed. "You see, we'd each made a vow that no woman would marry us just for our money. That's why we dressed like beggars to fool you."

Latrice, relieved and humbled, was only too happy to accept Raymond's hand. They lived happily ever after. Ayesha and Mariam spent the rest of their days regretting that they had said anything.



The prodigal son discovered there was only one way to get out of his mess: to head home and ask his father's forgiveness. Try to find your way home in this maze. Start and finish at home, but watch out—all the roads in this maze don't lead home.



GET HOME



HOME



every
day
devos

FORGET

Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

—Psalm 32:2

People who hold grudges might claim to forgive, but they never claim to forget the wrong. God, however, forgives and forgets when you confess your sins and ask His forgiveness.

MONDAY Read Psalm 32:2. The word “blessed” means happy. Rate your happiness on a scale of one to five, with one being down in the dumps about sin and five being happy for God’s forgiveness.

TUESDAY Is there one sin that keeps tripping you up? Like lying, stealing, or gossiping? You’re not alone, and God can forgive you as much as He forgives other people. Read Psalm 51:10 as a prayer, and thank God for His forgiveness.

WEDNESDAY Do you get down on yourself because you feel as if you’re always asking God to forgive some sin? Read Psalm 103:8-12 and write your own psalm, thanking God for forgiving and forgetting your sin.

THURSDAY Rewrite Psalm 32:2 in your own words. Here’s a tip: The last part doesn’t mean the person never lies, but that the person is honest with God about his or her sin. Use your version as a prayer of thanks to God.

FRIDAY Using arrows and words, draw a picture of your personal cycle of sin, and what you do to break that cycle. Look up 1 John 1:9 if you need some help.

SATURDAY Read Psalm 32:2 again. When you do something wrong, do you cover it up or confess it? Describe what happens when you cover a sin. What happens when you confess it? List the benefits of confession.

Cover illustration, pp. 2, 3, 6: Richard Syska; Cover, p.2 hand lettering: Scot McDonald

