

# TE celebrates restoration and encourages repentance

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## Reflections on Luke 15:11-31

There are a number of evaluation principles in the story of the lost son that returns home. Consider the different conclusions reached by the father and the eldest son as they evaluated the return of the lost brother and son. The self-evaluation (coming to his senses) done by the lost son is an important topic, but this meditation focuses on how different evaluators perceive the same event differently.

The eldest son judged the past behavior of his younger brother in light of his own decision to remain at home and toil obediently for his father for many years. Apparently he was not concerned for the broken relationship in the family caused when his younger brother left the family and behaved badly. His evaluation conclusion was subjective in the sense that it did not consider the return from a perspective beyond his own interest. Every evaluator has self-interests that can influence the evaluation findings. Denying that they exist does not increase the evaluator's objectivity; in fact, such denial reduces opportunities for dialogue that may enhance the perspectives of others, and eventually produce a more objective set of findings. The evaluator needs to explore possible self-interests throughout the evaluation, and disclose them as part of the evaluation dialogue.

The father did not deny his younger son's bad behavior, but he gave more importance to the son's confession and return to the family. The evaluator should look for instances of repentance and forgiveness in the midst of documented problems, and highlight them. This is an essential part of the total picture, but usually it is less obvious than the concerns about the problem.

Confession and forgiveness are necessary before reconciliation and restoration of brokenness can happen. As the evaluator helps people identify problems and recommendations for improving a situation, the process should include encouragement of confession and forgiveness in appropriate ways.

Celebration is an important part of the evaluation process, regardless of the findings.