



[TEACHER NOTE: Open with an illustration about a time when someone or something made you feel significant and valued. Below you’ll see the illustration I used.]

In the summer after my senior year of high school, I travelled to Reynosa, Mexico with the church I had been going to for a about a year. I was 17, a new Jesus follower, and until that time I had never left the United States.

The trip was incredible. We built a house for a family, because of course a bunch of high school students from suburban Chicago know how to build a house, said no one ever! Somehow it went better than one might expect. We met some great people, had some amazing Mexican soda, and met with God in big ways.

When I arrived home from the trip, my parents picked me up with excitement for my arrival. They drove me home and when I walked into the house, my 11-year-old brother had made me an impressive sign. It said “Welcome Home! Way to Make a Difference!”

Nobody in my family shared my newfound faith, but they were eager to hear about the trip. They listened to my stories. They interacted with sincerity and care. Experiencing this while knowing my brother worked so hard to make the sign just really made me feel like I mattered. It caused me to see what I did really mattered.

Isn’t it true that we all want to feel that we matter? To matter means to be important, to be of significance. We live in a world today where so much of what we see people project on social media can often just scream, “Someone value me, someone make me feel like I matter!”

There’s a longing in our hearts to be significant. Now I recognize you guys don’t really use this term, but sometimes a boyfriend or girlfriend or a husband or wife is referred to as the “significant other.” I think significant is also a math term, but for many of us learning math is useless because we have calculators and quickmath.com.

Let’s look at this concept of significance by focusing on a story Jesus told in the Bible. In Luke 15, told a story about a man who had two sons. The younger of the two sons decided that he didn’t want to live at home anymore. He even went beyond that, declaring that he wanted to completely cut off his family and run away forever. He asked his dad for his share of the family inheritance, which in those days, was essentially telling his father that he wished he was dead.

This younger son, let’s call him Christopher, took the money, grabbed all his stuff and traveled far away. Jesus continued this story saying that Christopher went to crazy town. He straight up partied, raged constantly, and tried to satisfy his every desire.

Then, Christopher came to a point where he ran out of money. To make things worse, there was also a major food shortage throughout whole country. Christopher was in trouble. He had no money and was starving. He took a job feeding pigs and was so hungry that he wanted to eat the pig’s food, but wasn’t allowed to. At this point, even pigs were eating better than Christopher. He tried to sneak some pig’s food, but the boss as always watching. Things were not going super well for Christopher.

Finally, he came to his senses. He realized how foolish he was being, and thought to himself, what in the world? Even my dad’s servants get more food than they can eat, and here I am watching pigs eat! What am I thinking?

So, Christopher decided to go home. He planned to tell his dad that he had sinned, and admit he was wrong. He’d ask if his dad could make him one of his servants, because there was just no way he could ever be called his dad’s son again. Christopher messed up so bad that he felt all he could do was throw himself at his dad’s mercy and ask for the minimum so he could survive.

Christopher started his journey home. I imagine that he practiced his speech to his dad over and over again. When he passed shepherds in the fields, they probably looked at the scraggly guy talking to himself and thought he was insane. Christopher kept his focus and kept going. It was a long trek home. Eventually he saw the family farm. He saw the animals in the distance, the outline of the house and the barn on the horizon. As he got closer, he saw his dad is working outside. Dad noticed someone on the

road and squinted to see who was coming. He thought it looked like Christopher but there’s no way it could be, right? Eventually, his son came into focus and Dad did something Christopher never expected. With his heart full of compassion, he ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and hugged him with the most loving embrace you could imagine. He even kissed his cheek and felt great relief that his son was alive.

When this moment ended Christopher looked at his dad with his head down and said, “Dad, I was wrong. I sinned. There’s no excuse for what I did. I am simply no longer worthy to be called your son.”

His Dad gave him a confused look and shook his head. He yelled to his servants, saying, [TEACHER NOTE: Say these next lines with great emphasis]

“Grab the best robe, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Do it quickly!” Then he told some others, “Go and get the fattest calf you can find because we are going to celebrate! My boy is home! He was lost and now he’s found.” And the party began!

The older son, who we will call Antonio, was working in the field while all this happened. He approached the house to see what the commotion was all about. He heard music and dancing. He asked one of the servants, “Hey, what’s happening?” The servant, replied, “Antonio! Your brother Christopher is home! Your dad is having a feast for him because he’s home safe and sound.”

Antonio wasn’t having it. He said, “There’s no way I’m going to that party.” His dad came out and said, “Come on son. Your brother is home. Let’s celebrate.” Antonio fumed. He said, “Look padre, I’ve worked my tail off for you consistently over all these years. I always do what you ask. Despite this, you have never even thrown me a themed birthday party with my friends. Now Christopher goes and blows all his inheritance. He acts like a complete fool, doing things that you’d never want to say in front of grandma. Now you’re giving him the best party ever?”

His dad sighed and then put his hands on Antonio’s shoulder. He said, “My son. You are always with me. Everything I have is yours. But tonight, we are celebrating because Christopher was dead. He had left us forever and now he’s alive again. He was lost, and now he’s found.”



The Big Idea: Because of Jesus, you are loved.

GETTING STARTED

1. What stood out to you from the “Just Because” song?
2. When have you felt the most loved in your life?

IN THE WORD

1. Read Isaiah John 1:18, John 4:24 and 1 Tim 6:16. What do we know about God from these verses?
2. Read Romans 5:8 together. What do these verses tell us about ourselves and about God?
3. Read Isaiah 6:8. Why do you think Isaiah responded the way he did?

MAKING IT PERSONAL

1. What do you think it looks like to accept and embrace God’s love?
2. How can high school students embrace the mission of Jesus?
3. What is one step God is calling you to do today to accept His love and/or embrace His mission?

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