

The Prodigal Wolf

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There is a story of the Two Wolves that many people know from the Internet based on a Cherokee teaching. I'm going to tell you the abbreviated version.

The Story of Two Wolves a Cherokee story.

There once was an Indian elder. His little grandson often came in the evenings to sit at his knee and ask the many questions that children ask. One day the grandson came to his grandfather with a look of anger on his face.

Grandfather said, "Come, sit, tell me what has happened today."

The child sat and leaned his chin on his Grandfather's knee. Looking up into the wrinkled, nut-brown face and the kind dark eyes, the child's anger turned to quiet tears.

The boy said, "I went to the town today with my father, to trade the furs he has collected over the past several months. I was happy to go, because father said that since I had helped him with the trapping, I could get something for me. Something that I wanted.

I was so excited to be in the trading post. I have not been there before. I looked at many things and finally found a metal knife! It was small, but good size for me, so father got it for me."

Here the boy laid his head against his grandfather's knee and became silent. The Grandfather, softly placed his hand on the boy's raven hair and said, "And then what happened?". Without lifting his head, the boy said, "I went outside to wait for father, and to admire my new knife in the sunlight. Some town boys came by and saw me, they got all around me and started saying bad things.

They called me dirty and stupid and said that I should not have such a fine knife. The largest of these boys, pushed me back and I fell over one of the other boys. I dropped my knife and one of them snatched it up and they all ran away, laughing."

Here the boy's anger returned, "I hate them, I hate them all!"

The Grandfather, with eyes that had seen too much, lifted his grandson's face so his eyes looked into the boy's. Grandfather said, "Let me tell you a story."

"I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. Only you. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times. It is as if there are two wolves inside me, one is light and one is dark. The light Wolf is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way.

But the Dark Wolf is full of anger. The slightest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing. Sometimes it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them seek to dominate my spirit."

The boy, looked intently into his Grandfather's eyes, and asked, "Which one wins Grandfather?"

The Grandfather, smiled and said, "The one I feed most." He added, "If you feed them right, they both win."

I see the Dark Wolf as being our "lost" Selves and the Light Wolf as being Our found Selves. Whether you identify with the loyal son, the prodigal son or the father in the parable, we are each of these at times in our lives depending on how we respond to life's lessons and challenges and each other.

Who hasn't had that dark night of the soul moment when we are "lost" without hope when we discover humility and surrender and have to finally admit we cannot heal our pain on our own? Like the prodigal son we reflect on our errors or "sins of judgement" realizing our actions have brought us here. In fact the word "sin" has an original meaning of "missing the mark" as in an archery arrow missing the center of the target, an error.

The parable of the lost son is a parable for today. It offers hope for all who long for reconciliation. Whether it be with a child, a parent or a friend from the past, this story points to hope. It teaches that even when hope is deferred and the heart is sick, there is the promise that hope will blossom into a tree of life rooted in love and knowingness, in faith.

Imagine how happy is God when we come home to trust, hope, faith, love in life. The light Wolf or as Abe L called the "Better Angels of our nature." Too often we live in ego, unforgiveness, judgment, worry, jealousy because it gives us an illusion that we are in control. The Dark Wolf. All the while there is creator wishing to see us coming over that proverbial hill and never stopping loving and caring. We are all god's children and we are meant to shine, bask in that light and reflect it back to the world.

In her book, *A Return to Love* Marianne Williamson wrote, "*We're affected by the other person's loveness only to the extent to which we judge them for it.*" The best we can do for someone we are in judgment of is to "*release them to where they want to be, doing whatever they want to be doing with whomever wants to join them*" to paraphrase Williamson. In other words, let go and really really really let god do what god will do. Who are we say, but wait, I've been way better than that person, I recycle, I use my own bags, I am thrifty, I fast so why did they win the lottery and not me? When I am struggling with comparison and thoughts of unfairness I silently pray that God would find me where god knows me to be.

Eknath Easwaran, the author and spiritual teacher wrote, "*Human relationships are the perfect tool for sanding away our rough edges and getting at the core of divinity within us.*"

And it was Ram Das who wrote, "If you think you are so enlightened, go spend a week with your family."

The **Prayer of Abandonment** by Brother Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916) expresses openness and intention to give up control to God in life or even before our physical death.

Father, I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me
and in all your creatures—
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,

to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.