

CANCELLED

5 Week series on FORGIVENESS

Week 4 - Luke 15:11-32

English Standard Version

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

¹¹ And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

BELONG

Ask this Ice Breaker Question: Have you ever lost something valuable to you? How did you feel when you lost it? How did you feel when you found it? How did you feel in the waiting?

Forgiveness - is a promise not to keep a record of wrongs against someone.

This week we are focusing on the Father.

BELIEVE

Commentaries from the Father's Perspective:

Blue Letter Bible, David Guzik, 2018.

- I. The father clearly illustrates God's love. His love allowed rebellion and, in some sense, respected human will. The father knew that the son made a foolish and greedy request, yet allowed him to go his course nonetheless.
- II. The Focus is on the Father, and returning to him, not the village or the home. That is how we need to come back to God — to come back to *Him* first and foremost, before coming back to church or coming back to Christian friends.
- III. The father's love waited and never forgot. It was a love that fully received, not putting the son on probation. This was especially remarkable because the son had disgraced the family by his prodigal living.
- IV. "The depth of the son's repentance is matched only by the depth of the father's love." (Pate)
- V. None of the four things brought to the repentant prodigal were necessities; they were all meant to honor the son and make him know he was loved. The father did much more than merely meet the son's needs.
- VI. When speaking to the older son, "The father did not call him *son*. He called him *child* — so it is in the Greek — and child is a word of tenderest affection." (Morrison)
- VII. In each of the parables from Luke 15, the message to the tax collectors and sinners was clear: repent, **come home to the father**. The message to the religious leaders was also clear: be happy when the lost are found, when they repent and come home to the father.

Have someone in your group read aloud: Luke 15:11-32, Remind the group we are observing the Father's Perspective this week.

Ask these questions to prompt group discussion:

1. This week we are focusing on the father. What emotions and thoughts do you think the father experiences at the younger son's request for inheritance?

- a. What part of the passage affirms the Father's Love for the younger son?
- b. Share about a time you experienced a person's forgiveness, even though you didn't deserve it? How did this make you feel?

Leader Context:

- *He may be experiencing concern. He may be thinking about wisdom.*

- *He might be like the parent at Christmas who says to his child, "You really want a little gift when I would be happy to give you a big gift?"*
- *He is definitely experiencing love for his child.*

2. Despite his younger son's rebellion, the father welcomes him back with open arms. What does this tell us about the nature of God's love and its connection to grace and forgiveness?

- a. When in your life have you extended compassion and shown grace for someone you had to forgive?
- b. What makes the father's quick response to the younger son returning home so intriguing?
- c. Are you someone who's quick to forgive or do you struggle to take the first step to make amends? What makes this challenging?

Leader Context:

- *Patriarchs, as a general rule, do not run. It would be unbecoming.*
- *This father runs to meet his son.*
- *This father waits on the front porch for his child to return home.*
- *This father hugs him, kisses him, puts a robe on him, gives him a ring, puts sandals on his feet.*
- *This father throws a party.*
- *Guess what - God does all this and more each time we go to Him in prayer.*

3. When the older brother pouts outside of the party tent, the Father goes out to meet him as well. What does this tell us about the nature of God's love and its connection to grace and forgiveness?

- a. When in your life have you pouted about a situation that caused you to question someone's love? What did you learn about yourself from this?
- b. While reasoning with others, what are helpful ways you've learned to engage with mercy and grace?

Leader Context:

- *This father reasons with the son*
- *Sometimes, when we are being pouty, God may extend mercy and grace in the form of reason.*
- *1 Peter let people know the reason they came to you*

BECOME:

Reflection Question: *Am I living in light of the forgiveness that has been extended to me? Do I choose mercy and forgiveness before I choose bitterness and anger?*

Prayer:

Thank you God for extending endless mercy and forgiveness towards me. Help to reveal who in my life I need to extend mercy and forgiveness to this week, even if it's myself.

Next Step: *Who am I extending mercy and forgiveness towards, even if it is myself. What does that look like for me in my life today? Take a step toward forgiving yourself or others.*