

LESSON 3

PARABLES OF A
GOD WHO PURSUES US



LOST

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The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Open It

1. What's your favorite gift you've ever receive?

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Luke 15:11-24

2. How would you describe the character of the younger brother in this parable?
3. How did the Father respond when he saw the son come home?
4. What message do you think Jesus was communicating through this parable?
5. What can we learn about God from this story?

Day 2

TODAY'S THEME: IT'S BEEN GOOD KNOWIN' YA!

Read Luke 15:11–12

The sons knew that upon their father's death, they would gain a sizeable inheritance, comprising the family's assets and property. But the younger son demanded his portion early. In Middle Eastern culture, such a request would be unspeakable and scandalous. Today's equivalent would be a teenager spitting in his dad's face and screaming, "I WANT YOU DEAD!" Asking for the inheritance early insinuated that the son couldn't wait for his father to die. He wanted what his father could give him now, at the expense of their relationship.¹

This would have been startling to Jesus' listeners because of how scandalous it would have been at the time. But we sometimes treat God the same way. We use a relationship with God to get all the blessings from God and when it comes down to it, we don't always care that much about the relationship. We just want what He can give us. Some of us aren't too far off from being that younger brother.

6. How would you feel if you found out your best friend was only your friend because of something you could give him?

7. How do we sometimes do the same thing to God?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✎ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

Lord, thank you for making a way for me to have a relationship with you. Help me to not take that relationship for granted. I want to find joy in knowing You, not just in what You can give me.

¹ The Prodigal Son a blog written by Trevin Wax found @ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/the-prodigal-son-1/>

Day 3

TODAY'S THEME: HE'S THE WORST!

Read Luke 15:13-16

Jesus is making sure that this younger son is portrayed as the absolute worst he could be! He has disgraced and dishonored his father. He has brought public shame upon his family. He has lived carelessly with his fortune and wasted it all in "reckless living." After losing everything and having hit rock bottom when famine struck, he hired himself out to feed pigs. And the parable says that he was so desperate that he even wished to eat the pig food, but he had nothing. He has become less than even the pigs.

And that's saying something! Pigs were considered "unclean" animals according to the Law (Leviticus 11) because they didn't chew cud. Jews weren't to eat pigs or touch their carcasses when they died. Yet, here this son now is a servant of these unclean animals and isn't even able to eat what the pigs eat! Jesus is portraying this person to be the worst of the worst, the most despicable of all sons.

8. What point do you think Jesus is trying to make by going to such an extreme in portraying this younger son?

9. What does Jesus reveal about the reality of sin in this parable?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

Lord, help me to see sin the way you see it. I want to take sin seriously in my own life and not let it take hold of me. Show me any areas of my life where I'm being sinful, and help me to overcome those struggles so I can live a life that is honoring and glorifying to You! Amen

Day 4

TODAY'S THEME: DRAWN BY GOD'S CHARACTER

Read Luke 15:17-19

This is the first time in the series of these parables that no one apparently goes out seeking for what's lost. The shepherd searched for the lost sheep, the woman sought diligently for the lost coin, but in this parable, the father doesn't go searching for his son. The older son doesn't go out after his brother. But even still, the lost son is drawn back home. By what? His father's character. When he had nothing left at all, he remembered how generous his father was to his servants and realized that even servants in his father's house had more than he did. This helped him realize that he wanted to go home.

God's character draws us to Him by how kind and merciful He is. God gives many blessings to everyone, even people who aren't Christians. These blessings are called God's "common grace." Grace is receiving something we don't deserve. So common grace are gifts that are given to all people, even those who aren't followers of Christ. The Bible says in Romans 2:4, "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

God's love and kindness are meant to lead us to repent of our sins and turn to Him, just like the goodness of the father to his servants lead his son to return home from his reckless lifestyle.

10. What are some examples of God's kindness that you've seen in your own life? What are some examples of God's common grace that all people get to enjoy?

11. What is it about who God is that you seem most drawn to? What is one of your favorite things about God?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

Spend some time thanking God for how good He has been to you.

Day 5

TODAY'S THEME: GOD WELCOMES THE REPENTANT SINNER

Read Luke 15:20–21

When the son had hit rock bottom, he realized how badly he had screwed things up. So he determined to go home and confess his sins to his father. And this was quite the risky situation. The cultural practice at the time would have been that the other men in the village could have kicked him out of town for the shame he had brought upon his father, or his father could have rejected him altogether. But he had to own up to the mistakes he had made; he had to face them head on. He was so broken over how he had treated his father that he didn't even consider himself worthy to be considered his son anymore!

The depth of the father's love for his son is seen clearly in contrast to how great the sins of the son were. Despite how terribly he had treated his father, his father still loved him deeply. Just so, God loves us so deeply that He has welcomed us with open arms despite our sins, our struggles, our shame, our shortcomings. He has embraced us with His love, His mercy and His grace, and we deserve none of it.

12. Think of someone you care about who has deeply offended you, maybe it's even broken your relationship. Have you truly forgiven them for the hurt they caused you? Could you welcome them with open arms?

13. Describe a time when you hit rock bottom and realized just how broken you were and how great your sins were against God. How did you get to that place? What did you learn when you were there?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✎ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

Lord, thank you for your love for me even though I've sinned so greatly. I admit that sometimes I don't appreciate Your love for what it really is. Help me to understand just how much you love me each and every day! Amen.

Day 6

TODAY'S THEME: GOD RESTORES THE SINNER

Read Luke 15:22–24

This younger son counted himself as unworthy of being considered a son anymore. He determined that if he could even just be a servant in his father's house, that would be enough for him. So he goes home and as he approaches his father's house, his father comes out to meet him. And after he confesses everything to his father and asks if he could be treated as one of his servants, his father did more than that. He didn't just receive his son back as a servant, but he restored him as his son! He got the best robe (a nice suit), a ring, and shoes. Dad dressed the boy up and then threw him a party to celebrate his return.

God does all the same for us. When we turn from our sins and come to Him, we realize just how unworthy we are. We realize that we aren't even worthy to be called His children, but God doesn't just let us come be janitors in His kingdom, He calls us His children! We are not just received, but we are restored! God doesn't just take us as we are, He dresses us up in His own righteousness.

There's a big theological word called "double-imputation." Before you check out, let me explain what it means. Double-Imputation means that when Jesus went to the cross, He took our sins on Himself (our sins were imputed to Him) and He gave us His righteousness in return (His righteousness was imputed onto us). So we weren't just left as dirty sinners who were forgiven, but we've been given the very best of heaven, Jesus' righteousness, as well. What an amazing gift God has given us!

14. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14–21. Why was it necessary that God not only forgive our sins, but also give us the righteousness of Christ?

15. The clothes, ring, and banquet would be external reminders to all around of the father's grace and love. What has God given us that might serve as a reminder of God's grace and love for people? How can we show that to others?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

Lord, thank you for making me new and restoring me to a relationship with You. I want to live every day to declare that I am Your child. Help me to share Your grace and love with people around me! Amen.