

The Prodigal Son

Bible Study Leader's Guide

TO BEGIN

Open the group in prayer (or ask one of the teens to do so).

GETTING FAMILIAR

READ: Luke 15:11-32

Q: What is going on in this story?

A: Allow the students to explain in their own words, prompting them only as needed.

READ IT AGAIN: Luke 15:11-32

Q: Who are the main characters in this story?

A: The main characters are:

- 1) The younger son

DEEP DIVE: THE YOUNGER SON

READ: Luke 15:11-20

Q: The younger son asks for his share of the inheritance, what does that mean?

A: An inheritance is what you receive when a family member dies... so by asking for his inheritance,



the younger son is basically saying "You're dead to me" or "Hurry up and die!" It is extremely offensive!

Q: Why do you think the father agrees to give his son his inheritance?

A: He respects his son's free will, just like God respects our free will.

Follow Up: If God didn't respect our free will, what would that mean?

A: We wouldn't have any choice but to follow Him—we would be slaves to Him.

Q: What did the younger son do once he received his inheritance?

A: He sells the land and takes the money to a far-off land where he squanders it on loose living.

The **Family Land:** Land that has been passed down from generation to generation. It is very important

to the family and it is considered shameful to sell it.

To a **Far-Off Land:** He takes the money to a pagan land, the land of the gentiles, where he is free to live a life of sin.

On **Loose Living:** He wastes all he has on a life of sin (on prostitutes).

Q: What happens to the younger son when famine strikes?

A: He is left with nothing. He has spent all of his money and is forced to work in the fields feeding the pigs.

This is the lowest point he can be. He is working in the fields, feeding the swine, and starving. He even

longs to eat of the pigs' slop!

Q: So, the younger son is broke, starving, feeding pigs for a living.... And what does he realize?

A: His father's servants have more than enough to eat.

Follow Up: What does he decide to do?

A: He goes back to his father's house.

Q: What three things does he plan to say to his father?

A: Luke 15:18-19

- 1) "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you"
- 2) "I no longer deserve to be called your son"
- 3) "Treat me as one of your hired servants"



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READ: Luke 15:21-24

Q: What happens when the son returns home? How does the father react?

A: Luke 15: 20—"While he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

- While he was **yet at a distance**: The father saw him when he was still a long way off. This means the father was looking and waiting expectantly for his son to return.
- His father **ran to him**: In Jewish culture, fathers NEVER ran. It is considered shameful for a father to run! But he is so happy to see his son, he is willing to be embarrassed and runs to him
- He **embraces him and kisses him**: He is showing his son **merciful love**—the son experi-

DEEP DIVE: THE OLDER SON

READ: Luke 15:25-32

Q: How does the older son react when he comes in from the fields and finds out his younger brother has

returned?

A: He is angry that his father is throwing a party for his brother, who has greatly offended the family and his father.

Q: How does the father react when he hears that the older son refuses to come in?

A: He goes to him, just like he went to the younger son.

Q: Is this how you would have expected the father to react? Why or why not?

Q: How does the older son describe how he has behaved throughout his life?

A: Luke: 15:29

"For many years I have served you, I have never disobeyed you."



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UNPACK

Q: Who do you relate to more? Why?

A: The Younger Son:

- The younger son is someone who tries to find happiness in things of this world. They may have fallen into sin and turned their back on God. They do not understand the love of the Father, and so search for that love and happiness in other places. They have turned away from God and the Church and are living—or have lived—a life of sin, or even mediocrity.

The Older Son:

- The older son sees the Father as a master, not as a loving Father. This person may see religion as a set of rules and regulations and God as the person who enforces them. Maybe they have grown up in Church their whole life, but have not experienced the Father's love for them personally.

WRAP UP

Close in prayer by asking God to reveal His merciful love to each of us and for us to be open to a relationship with our loving Father.



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