

THE PRODIGAL

GOD

THE PRODIGAL GOD

While Jesus' story about the prodigal son in Luke 15 is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible, it is also one of the most misunderstood. This Summer, we will walk through the most well-known story in the New Testament with fresh eyes, and encounter the radical love of Christ to both the older and younger brothers among us.

Part 5: Hope for Both Brothers

Read the text: Luke 15:1-24 (14-24 included below)

And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“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! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ 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. 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.’ 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. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

The parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and finally of the two lost sons reveals that God has great joy when the lost come home. This week, we focused on God's great joy when the rebel comes home and when the legalist comes home and that God desires to bring them both to one table. There are four implications to this good news: 1) God's grace is enough to wipe out our most notorious sins; 2) God's love for you is based on the work of Jesus, not your personal history; 3) We must search our hearts to see if we really love the lost, not just those whose sin looks like ours; and 4) We can become a people whose heart and actions welcome the lost back home.

Discussion Questions:

These questions are written for DNA groups, but you can use them in any setting, including missional communities. Because they were written for the intimacy of DNA friendships, you may need to adjust for larger groups.

1. Paul Dean said, "If you don't understand the scandal of this (story), you probably don't understand grace." What is so scandalous about the story of the prodigal son? Do you see your story as equally scandalous? Why or why not?
2. God's love for you is based on the work of Jesus, not your personal history. So, when God sees you, he sees Jesus' righteousness, not your failure or rebellion. How does that truth make you feel?
3. Are you known for how you love the lost? If you're honest, do you rejoice over the lost being found the way the father

rejoiced over his lost son returning? Why do you think that is?

4. Paul Dean called us to be a people whose heart and actions welcome the lost back home. Who are the “lost” in your world right now? Another way to think about it is, “Who are the people in your life you would be least expected to love? (Be specific) What would it look like to really love them? What is one step you could take in that direction?”
5. Welcoming the lost home often brings up the conversation of “boundaries.” We create, often wisely, boundaries to protect us from unsafe people. Welcoming the lost back into your life doesn’t always mean throwing these boundaries out the window. God may be inviting you to love someone while still maintaining an appropriate boundary. Do you feel that tension with anyone in your life? What would it look like to think through this question with others?