



The Prodigal Son Prodigal (Feb 10)

Series Summary: This two-week series focuses on the characters in the famous Parable of the Prodigal Son. It will examine each character's roles and show how the Gospel comforts those who feel too far gone but also challenges those who think an association with God is equal to truly knowing him.

Big Idea/Question: We have all wandered from God in our living and faith before. Some of us have outright rebelled. The question is how will we respond? Will we turn and repent or hide in shame.

Get Them Talking: How do you know if somebody is truly sorry for what they did?

Luke 15:11-19 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. **13** "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. **17** "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'

Leader Note: In some groups, you may need to break this parable down. Explain who the father is and who the son is. The Father is God himself. The rebellious

nuyounger son is a believer who has rebelled and turned away from God.

What is this parable telling us?

What does it look like for us to do this today? What does it look like when we rebel against God?

The Prodigal Son in this passage was repenting of his sin. What does it mean to repent and how do we do that? How is repenting of our sin different (or more) than just saying I am sorry for what I did?

Leader Note: Repentance is simply confessing our sin to God and committing to do things His way, not ours. Confessing cleanses us and commitment changes us.

Why is it important for us to do this?

Theology Note: We are forgiven once and for all when we believe in Christ. Our sins are wiped away as far as the east is from the west (Pslams 103:12). But repentance should still be a part of our lives because we are striving to throw off our old way of living to pursue Christ. Part of how we do that is repentance.

Advanced Question: How would you describe the son's response? What did he get right about repentance? What did he get wrong about repentance?

THE FATHERS RESPONSE

Picking up on the last question

- Right - He owned his sin. He did not make excuses for it
- Wrong - He was walking in shame. Shame helps no one. Shame buried us.

Transition - The Mercy and love of God does not lead us to shame it leads us to conviction.

Luke 15:20-24 So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. **21** "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

How did this father respond? How does God respond to us in these situations?

- He was waiting for the son. He was looking for him.
- He was eagerly awaiting his return.
- The sin of the son did not remove his status as a son.
- The father celebrated his son's return?

This is how the father/God responds to our sins. But we often do not have this image in our minds. We often believe lies that God will respond differently than this

- We believe the lie that he will not forgive us
- We believe the lie that God no longer loves, us as if our good acts were what earned God's love in the first place.

Personal Reflection

Do you need to stop rebelling against God in any area of your life?

What's keeping you from returning to Him?

If you are ready to "go home" to God, what do you need to do?

Introspective Question: Each one of us has done some things that we are not proud of. The question is do we truly believe that God responds to us repenting of our worst mistakes the same way the father did in the parable?

Do you think the rebellious son thought the father would respond this way? How do you think you think he thought his father would respond?

How should this passage lead us to pray?

Leader Note: This passage leads us to value repentance. Prayers of repentance are not our favorite prayers because we have to be vulnerable and own our stuff. But the good news is that God's response is always like that of the father in the parable.

Leader Note: Use this time to encourage students to confess their sin and to commit to following the Lord in very specific areas of their life, ie language, relationships, purity, actions, friendships, etc.