

The Prodigal God: Group Study

This Is Our Story: **Week 5**

Passage: Luke 15:20-24

Sermon Outline:

God doesn't only welcome us home, he restores us to whole.

- ❖ Coat = Honor
- ❖ Ring = Authority
- ❖ Shoes = Freedom
- ❖ Cow = Celebration

The life we were designed to live, is grounded in the love we were created to receive.

Discussion Questions from “This Is Our Story” Booklet

Discussion helps are indented, italic, & blue.

ICEBREAKER from the SERMON (not in the book): *Can you relate to Ryan's story of feeling uninvited but welcomed? Have you ever felt out of place? Do you think people ever feel out of place at church?*

What is the most kind act that someone has done for you?

The goal of this question is to start putting yourself and your group into the mindset of the son, who experiences an act like this. Ask follow up questions like: How did it feel? What did you think?

⬆ **Discover**

Read Luke 15 20-22.

Luke 15:23-24

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.

How do you think the son felt as he saw his father run towards him?

Put yourself in the son's shoes. You have prepared your apology. You are assuming that you are in big trouble. What do you do?

Compare what the son **planned to say** (*notice: this was a typo in the book*) to his father and what he actually said. Notice what he left off. Now, compare what he was going to say with what his father said to him in verses 23-24.

Luke 15:23-24

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.

Compare with Luke 15:18-19

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."

Why did the son think that he would need to earn his place back in the family? What did the father do instead?

Wouldn't the "natural" expectation be to earn back what he lost. Isn't that the way that we tend to operate? Isn't that what is "normal" and "typical." How is what Jesus is saying so very different?

What does the father's response suggest about the nature of God's repentance?

*As Ryan said it in the sermon: God doesn't only **welcome us home**, he **restores us to whole**. (Remember the story of the statue that was broken and restored).*

What can you learn about forgiveness from this passage? (this is where Ryan spends a lot of the message: Coat = Honor, Ring = Authority, Shoes = Freedom, & Cow = Celebration.) Notice how God's forgiveness gives back honor that we didn't earn, gives us authority that we don't even know we have, grants us freedom that we haven't earned (affection is more important than production), and a celebration that we don't deserve.

♥ **Nurture**

In this study, we have noticed how we are like the son. Now, let's ask the question: How can we be more like the father? How do we become people who forgive like this? How would you describe the attitude with which the father forgives?

Remember the definition of prodigal means "recklessly lavish." And as Tim Keller pointed out "if anyone is prodigal in the story, it is actually the father."

Have you ever celebrated repentance like this before? Have you ever thought about it being a joyous opportunity to forgive someone?

This is probably a rhetorical question, as it is a very rare thing to do. So don't expect an answer here. Instead, just get people thinking.

How can we become people who celebrate repentance like this? What kind of character traits does it take to forgive the way the father does?

Think about someone that has wronged you. What if you celebrated them? What kind of message would that send to people?

○ **Act**

Is there someone that you need to forgive today? How can you develop an attitude that would even forgive before a person has finished apologizing?

Depending on your group dynamics, you may want to ask people to share or just invite people to think about it.

Have a conversation about this group about whether or not to keep meeting after this study. We'll provide small group lesson guides for the next series that will take us up to Easter.

Please reach out to Janelle Wilson at jwilson@efcc.org or myself at jrose@efcc.org and let us know what you and your group has decided. Also, please let us know if there is anything that we can help you with. If there are people in your group that need help finding a new group, please let us know. Thanks so much!