

PRODIGAL GOD

COME HOME TO THE FATHER

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GROUP ICE BREAKER

What's the most impulsive purchase you've made and how did it work out for you?

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

What, if any, next step did you commit to last week, how did it go?

- I will join a small group because connection is critical.
- I will not let the fact that people are messed up prevent me from being in community.
- I will take off the mask in community and be honest about my sin and struggles.
- I will encourage others and spread hope in my community.

MESSAGE SUMMARY

This is a story about a son who had two choices; he could live at home with the father, or, to use the language of this story, he could live in a distant country. Everyday, we choose between these two alternatives as well.

There are four decision points in the life of this lost son. The first is the *Point of Temptation*. "I wonder if I would be happier if I went my own way. I don't know if I trust that if I stay at home with the father it will lead to the best life." The son sees the initial allure of temptation, but he never thinks about the consequences.

The second crossroads is the *Point of Action*. He crossed the border now from toying with the idea to actually carrying it out. If you toy around with the idea of sin long enough, you will move into action. It will happen as soon as you find an acceptable rationale to do it.

Next is the *Point of Pain*. This is a major crossroads in your spiritual life; what are you going to do when you hit pain? You can mask the pain and distract yourself by getting momentary happiness or engaging in negative escapist behavior, or you can courageously face the pain. How much pain do you want to go through?

The final decision was the *Point of Transition*. The son comes walking up to the village, expecting to be mocked and maybe physically abused. Instead, his father runs to meet him, throws his arms around the son that he thought was lost to him, and he can't let go. This is the heart of God toward you.

However bad it seems to you, if you just turn, the father longs more than anything to run to you and embrace you. However long you've been living in a distant country, now is the time to come home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 15:11-24. Share one thought or observation you have from this story.
2. What is your opinion of the father's decision to give the son what he wanted? If your child or another family member made a demand of you like the younger son made of his father, how would you react?
3. Matt made an observation that "the son sees the initial allure of temptation, but he never thinks about the consequences." Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. What do these verses tell us about temptation?
4. How have you responded to the pain of bad decisions in your past? Share an example with the group.
5. Have you ever hesitated to "return home" because of a decision you've made? What was the reason for your hesitation? How did it work out?
6. Henri Nouwen once suggested that accepting love and forgiveness is often much harder than giving love and forgiveness. Have you experienced this to be true for you? If so, why?
7. Pastor and author Tim Keller felt he had discovered the 'secret heart of Christianity' in this story. What, for you, is at the heart of Christianity?

NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

Use these as a guide to take your next step and commit to what you learned this week:

- I will think through the consequences if I give in to temptation.
- I will be honest, stop rationalizing my actions and face the truth.
- I will quit running away, trying to escape from the pain.
- I will courageously face the pain in my life today.
- I will come home to the father and experience life as his beloved child.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Luke 15:11-24

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- If you need help navigating through challenges or pain in your life, we have a network of referrals and outside resources for individuals, couples, and families to local licensed Christian counselors. You can [submit a request here](#) or at blueoakchurch.org/resources/care/counseling.
- [The Prodigal God](#) by Tim Keller (available on Amazon)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Take time to share how you can be praying for each other over the next week:

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