

# PRODIGAL GOD

## FIND FREEDOM FROM RESENTMENT

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### GROUP ICE BREAKER

What qualities would you say make up a great parent?

### REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

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

- 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.

### MESSAGE SUMMARY

This week we looked at the older brother and God's love for those who wrestle with resentment. We talked about three marks of the older brother syndrome.

The first is *Chronic Resentment*. This kind of anger is not explosive, it's often not even revealed. It's the kind of anger that paralyzes and chokes what once may have been a generous heart. The truth is, in your heart, you are enjoying the resentment. The question for you is will you let go of resentment, and if you can't, will you ask God for the grace to begin to forgive?

The next mark is a spirit of *Chronic Complaining*. The older brother understands conformity, he knows about following orders, but he knows nothing of the obedience that comes from a loving heart. Instead of rejoicing at God's goodness to another, he compares it to his situation. The question today is, will you learn to rejoice with those who rejoice?

The third characteristic is *A Spirit of Judgmentalism*. There's something inside of us that wants to judge those who are not like us. In the older brother syndrome, you project the worst onto people. You enjoy being the judge and the jury. The question for you is, will you resign today as judge of the universe? Will you accept your position as another prodigal son or daughter who needs to come home?

God longs for a church where prodigal sons can come in, and the people inside the church embrace them.

## ***DISCUSSION QUESTIONS***

1. There are two sons in the story, one who has a difficult time receiving forgiveness and one who has a hard time extending forgiveness. Which one do you relate to the most and why?
2. Read Luke 15:11-32. How would you feel as the older brother coming home to this party?
3. Read Ephesians 4:31-32. Share an experience of resentment in your life. What was the cause and have you overcome it? How do these verses apply?
4. Compare bitterness and gratitude. How does each show up in life and what is the impact?
5. Why is forgiveness often so difficult? What has been your greatest challenge in extending forgiveness?
6. The story ends with the older brother's resentment towards the younger brother. What does an "older brother syndrome" look like among Christians and in the church? How can we guard against it?
7. What is one thing you can do this week that would reflect the heart of the father in this story?

## ***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 let go of resentment and start to forgive.
- I will make a call/meet with someone to extend forgiveness.
- I will learn to rejoice with people who rejoice.
- I will confess the judgmental spirit in my heart toward others.
- I will reflect the heart of the father in this story.

## ***SCRIPTURE REFERENCES***

- Luke 15:1-2
- Luke 15:25-32
- Luke 15:5-7
- Luke 15:9-10

## ***SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES***

- [The Prodigal God](#) by Tim Keller
- [Home Tonight: Further Reflections on the Parable of the Prodigal Son](#) by Henri Nouwen
- [The Scandal of Forgiveness: Grace Put to the Test](#) by Philip Yancy
- 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](http://blueoakchurch.org/resources/care/counseling).

## ***PRAYER REQUESTS***

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

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