



October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015

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## Turning To God's Love

### 1. Reject the FALSE NARRATIVE:

GOD LOVES US ONLY WHEN WE ARE GOOD.

*"None is righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> no one understands; no one seeks for God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." – Romans 3:10-12 (ESV)*

### 2. Embrace the JESUS NARRATIVE:

GOD LOVES US, PERIOD.

*As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. <sup>10</sup> Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. <sup>11</sup> But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?" <sup>12</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." <sup>13</sup> Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners." - Matthew 9:9-13 (NLT)*

*For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. - John 3:16-17 (NLT)*

# The Prodigal God

**Luke 15:11-32**

PRODIGAL: WASTEFULLY EXTRAVAGANT; ON A LAVISH SCALE

## A GOD WHOSE LOVE

### 1. ...LETS US WASTE HIS INHERITANCE

*A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. <sup>13</sup> A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. – Luke 15:11-13 (NLT)*

### 2. ...LOOKS FOR OUR RETURN

*So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' – Luke 15:20-21 (NLT)*

### 3. ...RESTORES US TO HIS HEART

*But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. <sup>23</sup> And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began. – Luke 15:22-24 (NLT)*

### 4. SMITES OUR SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, <sup>26</sup> and he asked one of the servants what was going on. – Luke 15:25-26 NLT*

*Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. <sup>2</sup> This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them! <sup>3</sup> So Jesus told them this story – Luke 15:1-3 NLT*

*We can understand someone dying for a person worth dying for, and we can understand how someone good and noble could inspire us to selfless sacrifice. But God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him. – Romans 5:7-8 (MSG)*

## I Will Turn To God by...

- Memorizing **Romans 5:8**
- Refusing to measure my worth by my own righteousness.
- Embracing his unconditional love for me.
- Surrendering my life, for the first time, to Christ as my Savior.

## WALK THE TALK A Growth Group Guide

1. Have any of you ever experienced or known someone who has experienced rejection from a local church? How did that make you feel?
2. Has the performance-based false narrative even been part of your own way of thinking in your relationship with God? Do you sometimes feel that God's love is tied to your behavior?
3. Do you ever think that people would gossip about who you hang out with? Why did Jesus hang out with questionable people? What was his objective and why does that matter?
4. Have you ever been in a position to love someone who rejected you? Or have you ever been loved by someone you have hurt? Describe.
5. From *The Good and Beautiful God*: "Our self-righteousness does not turn God from us, but us from God. It is not my sin that moves me away from God, it is my refusal of grace, both for myself and for others" (p. 102). What is your reaction to this statement? How can we recognize self-righteousness in our lives?

A Group *Lectio Divina* using this passage: ***Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners. (Matthew 9:12-13)***

- The first time the Scripture is read, let the Word soak into your mind. Allow a few minutes of silence.
- The second time the Scripture is read, note any word that God seems to be emphasizing. After the second reading, anyone in the group can share the word or phrase that spoke to them, but they should not elaborate.
- Read the passage a third time. This time, allow God to reveal to you the significance of this word. Spend three to five minutes in silence, conversing with God. After the silence, anyone who is willing can share what they felt God spoke to them through the passage.

# SOUL TRAINING – LECTIO DIVINA

## A Personal Transformation Exercise

### The Principle:

Lectio Divina is a latin term that, literally translated, means “divine reading.” It is a method of reading the Bible that involves listening with the heart. It’s an ancient practice that goes all the way back to the Hebrew tradition of reading select passages of the Bible with specific pauses and concentration on certain words.

In Lectio Divina, we turn to a passage of the Bible, usually a short one, and read it over and over, very slowly, reflecting on each word and phrase while paying attention to the impact of each of the words on our hearts. In this way, we are praying the scriptures, and letting the Bible *read us*. This exercise will take time, rushing through it will not achieve the results that are intended.

### The Plan: How Do You Do *Lectio Divina*?

1. Select a passage. For this week, use 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.
2. Spend a minute or two relaxing and breathing deeply.
3. *First Reading*: Read the passage through one time, slowly. Pause between each phrase/clause.
4. *Second Reading*: Read the text slowly once again, pausing between phrases. This time, pause longer and see if any words or phrases catch your attention or stand out. Note these as you go.
5. *Third Reading*: Reread the passage up to the word or phrase that stood out to you. When you reach that word or phrase, stop and repeat it a few times.
6. *Pondering*: Reflect for a while on the phrase that stood out to you. Repeat it a few more times. Let the words interact with your thoughts, your memories, and any other Bible passages that come to mind. Begin to wonder, “What does God want to tell me specifically?”
7. *Prayer*: Turn that last question into a prayer, asking God what He wants to tell you in this passage. Take time to listen quietly and write down what God might be saying.
8. *Rest*: Be still and silent for a while. Enjoy being in the presence of God. In this step, you move from doing to being. Just *be* for a while.
9. *Response*: Ask yourself and God, “What am I being called to do as a result of the word I have been given?” Whatever that is, write it down, and do it!