

DIGGING DEEPER



Love Calls Us Home:

25 Oct 2026

The Father's Heart in the Parable of the Prodigal Son

What happens when we find ourselves far from where we know we should be? The Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 pulls back the curtain on one of the most profound questions we face in our spiritual lives. This timeless story follows a young man who demands his inheritance early, walks away from everything that gave his life meaning, and ends up utterly broken in a distant land. But the real heart of the parable is not the son's failure. It is the father's response. When the son finally turns around and begins the long walk home, he is met not with a lecture or a probationary period, but with a father who runs toward him. That single image reshapes everything we think we know about how God responds to our wandering. The spiritual insight here is striking: the distance we feel from God is never the final word. Repentance is not about cleaning ourselves up before we come back. It is simply about turning around. And when we do, we discover that grace has already been moving toward us.

1.

Pastor Jeremiah describes the 'distant land' not just as a physical place but as a condition of the heart -- in what ways might someone appear fully present in church life while still living far from God in their inner world?

2.

The prodigal son rehearsed a speech prepared to negotiate his way back as a servant rather than a son -- in what ways do we approach God with a servant's bargain rather than a child's trust, and what does that reveal about our understanding of grace?

3.

Pastor Jeremiah draws a sharp distinction between remorse and repentance, saying remorse regrets the pain while repentance changes direction -- can you identify a time in your own life when you confused the two, and what finally moved you from one to the other?

4.

The father in the parable runs toward the son while he is still a long way off, closing the distance before any confession is complete -- how does this image challenge or reshape the way you picture God's posture toward people who have wandered?

5.

Pastor Jeremiah warns against becoming so familiar with the church that we lose the Father's heart for people who are not yet in the room -- what practical habits or attitudes might cause a long-time churchgoer to lose that outward-facing compassion?

6.

Shame tells us that because we did something wrong we are beyond restoration, while guilt can lead us toward confession and change -- how have you seen shame function as a barrier between people and God, and what truths from Scripture speak most powerfully against it?

7.

Pastor Jeremiah observes that the father's restoration of the son -- robe, ring, sandals, and feast -- was public and celebratory rather than quiet and conditional -- what would it look like for a local church to make that kind of visible, joyful welcome a defining characteristic of its culture?

8.

Romans 5:8 is cited to show that God acted in love while humanity was still in sin, not after it had cleaned itself up -- how does the timing of God's grace through Christ reframe the way we think about who deserves an invitation to come home?

9.

Pastor Jeremiah distinguishes between serving God as a response to grace versus serving God as a payment to earn it -- how can a person examine their own motivations to discern which foundation is driving their spiritual life?

10.

The parable includes an older son whose story the sermon only briefly touches -- in what ways might people who have never strayed far from the church still need to wrestle with the Father's heart, and what might keep them from fully entering the celebration when the lost are found?

Remember...

"Shame tells you to stay away, but Love gives you a reason to come home."