

NETFLIXMAS

PART FOUR: ELF

In the movie *Elf*, Buddy is a 6 foot, 3 inch elf who lives up in the North Pole. All is good, until Buddy finally figures out what everyone else knows—he isn't an elf, but he's a human. So Buddy goes on a magical journey through New York City to find and meet his Dad.

Today, we will learn that all of us have a Father who loves us just as we are. That you and I don't have to search high and low to find him—He came to us.

BIG IDEA: Our relationship with our Father God is never broken beyond repair.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe your relationship with your father.
2. How would you compare your relationship with your father to your relationship to God?
3. Have you ever experienced unconditional love? Please describe.
4. *Read Luke 15:11-24.* Read the entire story and focus on the father's thoughts and actions to get a picture of God's character.

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. 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. "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. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."' "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. 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.' "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. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 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 15:11-24

5. The father gives away his inheritance, giving his son the option to make his own mistakes. How do you see similar attributes in God, especially focusing on the way he created us?
6. Is it hard for you to understand that no matter your mistakes in life God will not change His opinion of you? Why is this difficult?
7. Chris said that in traditional Middle Eastern countries men typically did not run, EVER! Has God ever "run" to you before? Maybe you have thought, "God, I cannot believe you are extending this grace to me?" or maybe, "Why would you do such a mighty act with such a insignificant person?"
8. Talk about a time when God came running toward you as the father did.
9. Have you ever watched or experienced the type of party that this dad threw for his son?



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FURTHER STUDY

1. What does the Father do before he sees his son returning? What do we learn about our Heavenly Father from this?
2. What does the Father do first when he sees his son? Why is this so wonderful?
3. Based on these verses, how is the Heavenly Father's love different from what we would expect from our earthly fathers?
4. How does the father deal with the sins of each of his sons differently? How is it the same?
5. What do we learn about God's grace from the father in this story?
6. How does God's grace deal with sin?
7. In what ways is God's grace a "free" gift? In what ways is it not "free"?
8. *Read John 14:23 and Revelation 3:20.* In these passages how does Jesus communicate his invitation to a relationship with Jesus and the Father? What would it look like to have Jesus make his home in your heart? (John 14:23 and Revelation 3:20).
9. Tell about a time when you have experienced forgiveness. Was it given freely?
10. How can you "come home" to God?
11. Is there something in your life right now for which you need to ask forgiveness? If so, pray to your Heavenly Father.

MOVING FORWARD

Consider this as you go this week: In Luke 15 the Pharisees commented about Jesus, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." and his response is, "Indeed, I do eat with sinners. But it is much worse than you imagine! I not only eat with them, I run down the road, shower them with kisses, and drag them in that I might eat with them." **This is the God you serve, and this God is unlike any other god.**

CHANGING YOUR MIND

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. Luke 15:20

