



GUIDED BIBLE STUDY

Knowing the Father's Heart

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Highlighted Scripture

- **Luke 15:11-32 (World English Bible (WEB))**

"But it was appropriate to celebrate and be glad, for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found."

In Jesus' parable, the older brother stayed near his father yet struggled to share his joy when the lost son returned. The story invites us not only to remain close to God outwardly, but also to let his mercy reshape how we see people, forgiveness, and restoration.

- **Ephesians 5:1-2 (World English Bible (WEB))**

"Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children. Walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us."

Paul grounds imitation in identity: believers walk in love as God's beloved children, not to earn his love. Christ's self-giving love becomes the pattern for a life increasingly shaped by the Father's character.

Discussion Questions

- Where are you most tempted to know facts about God without letting his heart change your response to people?
- What does the older brother's reaction reveal about the difference between outward faithfulness and sharing the father's mercy?
- How have prayer, Scripture, worship, or service been shaping your patience, forgiveness, and willingness to surrender?
- Is there someone whose return, growth, or restoration is difficult for you to celebrate? What might God be inviting you to release?
- What would it look like this week to walk in love from the security of already being God's beloved child?

Reflection Challenge

For the next seven days, move beyond asking only what God wants you to know. In one ordinary moment each day, ask what he is revealing about his heart and choose one response that reflects it.

Ask yourself:

- What quality of God's heart-mercy, patience, forgiveness, generosity, or love-do I most need to receive today?
- Where is my response more like the older brother than the welcoming father?
- What am I still trying to control instead of surrendering to God?
- Is my growing biblical knowledge producing greater love for God and people?

Try this:

- After reading Scripture, write one sentence beginning, 'This shows me that God's heart is...'
- Pray honestly with God during an ordinary part of your day, not only when something is wrong.
- Choose one concrete act of mercy or forgiveness toward someone you find difficult.
- Celebrate one sign of God's grace in another person's life without comparing it to your own story.

Remember

- Being around the things of God is not the same as sharing the heart of God.
- We imitate God as beloved children, not to earn his love.
- Knowing the Father should steadily reshape how we show mercy, forgive, and see people.
- Prayer is an ongoing relationship, not only an emergency call.
- Grace is meant to be received and allowed to change how we live.
- Ask not only, 'What do you want me to know?' but also, 'What are you showing me about your heart?'

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for loving us and calling us your children. Help us not to settle for knowing facts about you while missing your heart. Let your mercy shape our mercy, your forgiveness shape our forgiveness, and the love of Christ guide the way we see and serve others. Show us where comparison, resentment, or control is keeping us outside the celebration of your grace. Teach us to walk in love, to surrender what we cannot control, and to become more like you in the ordinary moments of this week.

In Jesus' name, Amen.