



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## WEEK 7: THE PRODIGAL SON

### Read the Text

#### Luke 15:11-32

<sup>25</sup> “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup> And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

### Main Point

The Prodigal Son is a parable that can feel very familiar. Typically, the focus is placed on the son who leaves, sins, and comes home. But there is a lot to be learned from both the father and older brother as well. It is through looking at the father in this parable that we see the truth of the Kingdom: none of us are too far gone to enter the Kingdom of God. In fact, ***God has immense joy in redeeming sinners.***

When the younger son returns, we see him struggle with shame and fear in how he will be received. To his surprise, the father welcomes him with open arms and a celebration though! On the other hand, the older brother bitterly resists this reception and complains to the father. Both sons egregiously misjudge their own father. ***One son thinks he can lose his father’s love, and the other thinks he can earn it.***

The father’s warm reception of his lost son seems too good to be true. He doesn’t receive his son with a passive-aggressive comment or a shaming

rebuke or any sort of condemnation. He receives him by throwing a party! What a beautiful picture of God's grace for us. And yet, we see both sons struggle to receive this incredible act of grace and kindness. Instead, they fall into keeping score of their own lives – whether that's the younger brother falling into shame due to his bad choices or the older brother falling into self-righteousness due to his good choices. We see the older brother keeping score of others by smugly refusing to celebrate his brother's return home. We also see the younger brother settle for being a hired hand of his father. It doesn't even occur to him to be restored as a son – he goes to his father to seek out becoming a servant! As followers of Jesus, we can easily fall into these patterns – keeping score of ourselves, keeping score of others, and settling to be hired hands – that keep us from the party of grace that God wants to throw for us. He wants so much more for us though! ***In the Kingdom of God, we are more than servants under a king, but kids under a perfect Father.***

### **Reflect Together**

1. Have you ever felt too far gone to enter the Kingdom of God? What is helpful for you in reminding yourself of truth? Is there something weighing on you right now that makes you fall into doubt or into believing that you're a hired servant?
2. One son thought he lost his father's love, and the other thought he earned it. Which son do you identify with more?
3. Three reasons were listed for why we might miss out on the party of God's grace: 1) We keep score for ourselves; 2) We keep score for others; and 3) We settle for being a hired servant. Which of these do you relate to the most?