

LIFE GROUP GUIDE: PRONE TO WANDER

SEPTEMBER 24-30, 2017

PREPARE:

Before your group arrives, make sure you take a few minutes to review the Life Group video and the Life Group Guide.

- It will help you be prepared for Life Group conversations ahead of time. It's best to not read the questions, but have a general flow prepared ahead of time.
- Take 5 minutes to pray beforehand for God's presence and guidance.
- Test your video display option to make sure it is working before your Life Group members arrive.

WELCOME:

Take a few minutes to welcome Life Group members.

- You are likely to have some new faces, so be sure everyone is introduced to everyone.
- If you have parents whose kids have started the new school year, provide a few minutes to share how they and their children are adjusting to the Fall schedule.

VIDEO:

Watch the video together.

SCRIPTURE:

Parable of the Lost Son - Luke 15:11-32 (NLT)

11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons.

12 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.

13 "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. **14** About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. **15** He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. **16** 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.

17 "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! **18** I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, **19** and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

20 "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. **21** 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.[a]'

22 "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. **23** And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, **24** 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.

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, **26** and he asked one of the servants what was

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SEPTEMBER 24-30, 2017

going on. **27** 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

28 "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, **29** but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. **30** Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

31 "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. **32** We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

REFLECTION TIME:

Invite everyone to take 5 minutes to reflect and re-read passage. Ask them either your main question you'd like everyone to think about for the night (that you'd like them to focus in on) or something like "What connections or observations do you make about this passage?"

QUESTIONS/OBSERVATIONS:

QUESTION:

Jonathan shared in the video that he believes people wander because of taking their eyes off of Jesus or because of not wanting to wait on God's timing/promises, or because we get frustrated with our life. What causes you, or people you observe in your life, to wander from God?

Possible Follow Up: Why is it so hard to stay focused on keeping Jesus at the center of our lives?

Possible Follow Up Observation: Sometimes distraction can cause us to wander. Whether TV, social media - or even good things like work - can cause us to wander from what God has called us to for that time. This doesn't mean there's not a time to relax, but we should be intentional about our time and not just let our phone's notifications drive our priorities on our time.

QUESTIONS/OBSERVATIONS ON THE PASSAGE:

(Purpose: Help your group understand the point of the passage. Pick your favorites.)

OBSERVATION:

It is not just the lost son who wanders in this story, but also the son who stays home. The older brother loses sight of the point, just like the younger son did earlier. For those of us who have been in religious environments a lot of our lives, we can also be wandering.

- What stages does the older brother go through in processing what the younger brother has done?

LIFE GROUP GUIDE: PRONE TO WANDER

SEPTEMBER 24-30, 2017

- Do you think the father understood what was likely to happen when he gave the younger son his inheritance? Why do you think he did it?
- Why do you think the Father responds the way he does - and how do you think you would respond if you were the Father?
- Whom does the Father represent in the story and who do the two sons represent?
- What happens because the older brother is resentful?

QUESTION:

Who do you most identify with in this story?

Do you see aspects of yourself in either of the sons? Or both?

QUESTION:

Is anyone too far gone for God? What is hardest for you when seeing someone you love far from God?