

## The Prodigal Son

### *Luke 15:11–32*

? When have you heard the term “prodigal son” used? Have you known any “prodigals” that would fit that description? What did they do to earn that?

? Alternative icebreaker question: What is your place in your family birth order? Do you feel like you fit the stereotypical role from that description?

Our main cast includes the (younger) prodigal son, the older son, and the father. Pick a character and put yourself in their place as you read this parable. What would that character think and feel during their experiences in the parable?

#### **Luke 15:11–32 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

<sup>28</sup> “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

<sup>31</sup> “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

? Have you ever been impatient for something good to happen? What did you do to pursue it?

? What was the younger son impatient to receive? Why was asking his father for his inheritance like that so shocking and distressing?

? How did his decision to take his inheritance early and leave turn out for the younger son? How do you feel about that outcome?

? We’ve all needed forgiveness for our actions in the past. What do you think is the most difficult part of asking forgiveness? What is the most difficult part of giving forgiveness?

? What was the younger son’s motivation in returning to seek forgiveness?

? Did the younger son's motivation affect his father's response to him?

? What does the older brother's response show about his heart?

? What does the older son say to his father about why he won't go into the party in verses 29 and 30?  
How do you think the older brother is feeling?

? What does the father say to the older son in verses 31 and 32? How do you think he feels about his two sons in this moment?

? How is this parable encouraging to us?

? How is this parable a picture of the Kingdom of God?

? Do you relate more to the younger or older brother's response and attitude?

? Neither the younger son nor the older son had the right attitude in this parable. The father was the one who sought and led to reconciliation and full forgiveness. How can we seek to have an attitude like the father's, who is loving in the same way that God freely offers us love?

## For Discussion and Accountability

? Is there an area in your life where you could have a response like the father's where you currently have the response or attitude of one of the brothers?

? Is there someone God is asking you to forgive?

? When you experience resentment or bitterness or anger, what are ways you extend genuine forgiveness and grace despite how you feel?