

FOLLOW-THROUGH

Small Group Discussion around the Sunday Message
Luke 15:11-32, The Parable of the Prodigal Son
October 1, 2006

Introduction

1. Read Luke 15:1-2, 11-32.
2. The Bible is straightforward in presenting dysfunctional families. Name some other dysfunctional families in the Bible. What was dysfunction about the family in this story?
3. American novelist, Thomas Wolfe, wrote a novel titled, *You Can't Go Home Again*. What do you think he meant by that?
4. Why is it important, in your opinion, to read vss. 1-2 along with the parable itself? How do these verses add to your understanding of the parable?



Getting Inside the Parable

1. Why do you think the younger son left his home and family?
2. What was the father feeling toward his younger son when the son left home? While he was gone? When he returned?
3. Are you sympathetic with the older son – or not – for his lack of joy at his brother's return? Explain.

Digging Deeper

1. The younger son struggled with his sin and guilt as he approached the father. The older son struggled with his hard work and achievement and the father's apparent lack of appreciation. Which son are you more like, as you approach God?
2. Consider again vss. 1-2. In what way is the older son in Jesus' story a reflection of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law?
3. Paraphrase (put in your own words) the message you think Jesus wanted the Pharisees and the teachers of the law to take from His story.
4. Read Romans 5:6-8. What does "while we were yet sinners" in vs. 8 mean to you? Relate these words to Jesus' parable.
5. Where is grace written all over this parable? Find evidence of each of these truths about God's grace in the story:
 - Grace allows freedom.
 - Grace is willing to be humiliated for love's sake.
 - Grace takes initiative.
 - Grace gives undeserved gifts.
 - Grace is extravagant.
6. What aspects of the Christian life are like a party, banquet, or feast?
7. In what way is being a believer like being home?
8. The word, prodigal, means extravagant or even wasteful. How might the father and the one son both be considered prodigal?
9. How do you think the story ends? Does the older brother go in and celebrate. One theologian has suggested that the story ends by the older brother going in and killing his father. Why would that ending make sense, knowing what you do about Jesus' story?
10. Take a moment to write down a single truth that you'll take home from Jesus' story. Share your truth with your group.
11. Close with prayer, focusing on each of the truths shared in the group.