

The Prodigal God Study Guide

The purpose of this Study Guide:

1. To provide you an aid in embracing this book, *The Prodigal God*, on a personal level.
2. To help you continue your study beyond the Sunday message in a meaningful way throughout the following week.
3. To help the study of this book to become a tool for relational growth between you and others.

It is our prayer that you allow God to accomplish all three of these goals above in your heart and life and be amazed at the transformation in the lives of those around you.

***The Prodigal God* Chapter 1: The People Around Jesus**

1. There were two kinds/groups of people around Jesus when this parable was told - describe them.

1)

2)

2. Rather than sentimentalizing this parable, what did Jesus want to show us, religious people?

3. Whose side is Jesus on?

4. When the early Christians were asked, "Where is your temple? Where do your priests labor? Where do you offer sacrifices?" How did they respond?

How is that different today?

5. In each encounter, when Jesus meets an (sexual, racial, or political) outcast and a religious person (Luke 7, John 3-4, Luke 19), who is it that connects to Jesus?

6. If our preaching and practice is not having the same effect on people that Jesus had, then...

***The Prodigal God* Chapter 2: The Two Lost Sons**

4. What is startling about the father's response to the younger son's words, "Give me my share!"?

5. What was the younger son's (return) plan? How does his father respond to that plan? Describe each of them. a) the best robe b) a ring c) shoes d) the celebration

6. What is the older brother's response to the return of his younger brother? How does the father respond to his elder son?

7. Why doesn't Jesus finish the story and tell us what else happened?

***The Prodigal God* Chapter 3: Redefining Sin**

1. Explain the two ways to find happiness. 1) Moral conformity:
- 2) Self-discovery:
2. Does everyone fall into one or the other of these happiness-finding categories? Explain.
3. Why doesn't the elder (good) brother go into his Father's feast/celebration?
4. What does each brother want?
5. How were both brother's hearts the same?
6. What is Jesus' deeper concept of sin?
7. What is Jesus' message (gospel)?

***The Prodigal God* Chapter 4: Redefining Lostness**

1. What is the younger brother's "lostness"?
2. What are the features of the older brother's lostness? Explain each.
a) anger b) self-righteousness c) judgment & inability to forgive d) slavishness e) emptiness f) lack of assurance of the father's love
3. How do these same features of lostness listed above usually affect your prayer life?
4. Why is it important to know that Jesus exposes the elder brother's lostness as being as wrong as the younger brother's?

***The Prodigal God* Chapter 5: The True Elder Brother**

1. What do we need first in order to escape our particular brand of lostness?
2. What is meant by "...our repentance must go deeper than just regret for individual sins."
3. When the "Pharisees" sin they feel terrible and repent. Why is this not enough? What is the "real" problem?
4. What is the one striking difference between the two stories of lostness (sheep & coin) in Luke 15 and the third one (the lost sons)?
5. Who should have gone out to search for the younger brother? Why?
6. Mercy and forgiveness are free (they can not be earned), but what is the true cost?

***The Prodigal God* Chapter 6: Redefining Hope**

1. How would you describe your longing for home?
2. We desperately try to re-create the home we lost when we left God's presence, but what is the outcome?
3. What are the difficulties with trying to return home? Describe them.
 - a) fear of rejection:
 - b) our brokenness:
4. How would you initially describe the home of promise - the one available now and the one forever?

***The Prodigal God* Chapter 7: The Feast of the Father**

1. The father's feast is to be experienced. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." How have you tasted of His good feast?
2. The meal is a very physical (material) experience. God called His (physical/material) creation "good". How does the Father want you to participate in the renewal of this world?
3. His meal provides the "fuel" for individual growth and development. How are you transforming?
4. What is so scary about unmerited, free grace?
5. Martin Luther said, "We are saved by faith alone, but not by faith that remains alone." What does that mean to you?
6. The Father's feast is meant to be shared communally. How are you finding this applicable in your life?