



DiscoverChurch
LIFE GROUPS

April 2018 Curriculum

Suggested Structure of the Meeting:

Gathering and Fellowship

Gather and enjoy a meal or snack as you get ready for the Bible Study.

Opening

Ice Breaker question

Bible Study

Praise and Worship

Scripture Reading: There is always a specific Bible text for each study.

Notes: Each study includes background material to help you better understand the text.

Open-ended subjective questions: Questions for which there is no wrong answer. Instead, these questions will hopefully help each participant to think about their life in light of God's love and our calling.

Prayer

Specific prayers related to the study

Additional material

Additional material: songs for worship and videos that can help expand your study.

Believe, Belong, Bless

In this quarter we continue to highlight questions that focus on one of three areas of a balanced Christian life – There pointed out by one of the three words.

Parables: Stories with a Punch

The Patient Parent

Luke 15:11-31

Ice Breaker: Share something about the family you grew up in?

Read: Luke 15:1-8

The parable of “The Patient Parent” more often known as the “Prodigal Son” is one of the most beloved parables told by Jesus. Many books have been written on this single parable as well as many classical paintings. More recently there are numerous YouTube videos that reenact the story with a modern twist. The parable is only found in the Gospel of Luke. The traditional title is focused on the younger son. The main focus, however, should be on the father and his response to both of his sons. The core of that response springs out of a heart of grace, mercy and love. It is a parable that describes the heart of our God.

Even more so than today, asking for your inheritance in ancient Palestine basically says to your parents, “I wish you were dead.” It would have been within the father’s right not only to disown him but to completely ostracize him from family life as well as village life. While the original audience would have been displeased at the younger son’s behavior, they would not be surprised. At the same time they would have been shocked at the father’s response to the return of the younger son. They would have resonated with the older son’s objection to his father’s radical acceptance of his younger brother.

Notes:

- There are two other Parables in the 15th chapter of the Gospel Luke: The Parable of “The Lost Sheep and “The Lost Coin.”
- Jesus tells these three parables to respond to the statement, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
- Each of the three parables in Luke 15 ends with a party celebrating what has been found.
- The phrase that ends the first two parables can also be applied to the parable of ‘Patient Parent’, “Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”
- In ancient Palestinian culture, which was based on honor/shame, a father who is patriarch of his family would never run to a son.
- In ancient Palestinian culture it was the older son’s responsibility to go and

bring the younger son back to his father.

- The younger son was experiencing shame when he said, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” Shame is different than guilt. Guilt comes from acts that you have done. Shame is about who you are. Shame is when you feel that there is no way you can truly be loved because of who you are, not simply what you have done. This makes the Father’s response all the more powerful.
- Jesus only says that the younger son squandered his money on “reckless living.” It is the older brother who accuses his younger brother of spending his money on prostitutes.

Questions:

1. In this story who is offered ‘grace’?
2. After reading the parable and understanding that the younger son was not just experiencing guilt for what he had done wrong but shame for who he was, define the word ‘grace’?
3. How do you experience God’s grace? **Believe**
4. Honestly, for you, are there certain persons or groups of people that at times you don’t think deserve grace?
5. How can you pray for yourself and for those people or groups of people? **Bless**

Prayer:

Pray for people who experience shame and think that there is no way God could love them. Pray for our church that we might be a place of grace? Pray for the victims of child abuse of any kind. Pray for addicts. Pray for Minnesota Adult Teen Challenge, one of ministries we support, and their ministry to substance abuse addicts. Personal prayer requests.

Additional Resources

- This excellent YouTube is an explanation Rembrandt’s painting “The Return of Prodigal Son” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9hW6LtmwVs>
- This is a YouTube of the Skit Guys version of the Prodigal Son” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyVIF24u5dY>
- For Worship This YouTube “Still Calls Me Son” by John Waller <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdNOzPNT9pA>