

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Luke 15:11-32

#### Lost & Found - The Elder Brother

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#### About this Week's Message:

This parable isn't just about one lost son. It's about two—and a Father who loves both. One son goes off the rails in rebellion. The other stays home, checks every box, and still misses the heart of the Father. Both are lost. And both need the grace of a Father who runs to the reckless and pleads with the self-righteous.

Jesus told this story not just to comfort prodigals but to confront elder brothers. It's a radical redefinition of sin, salvation, and what it means to come home.

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#### Goals of This Week's Discussion:

- Understand how both rebellion **and** self-righteousness can distance us from God.
  - Reflect on the heart of the Father and the true cost of grace.
  - Respond to Jesus as the **true elder brother** we all need.
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#### Connections with the 7 Marks of a Jesus Follower:

- **Stand in Awe** - God's grace isn't earned—it's given. And it's extravagant.
  - **Share Your Story** – Your brokenness, not your performance, may be what draws others to Jesus.
  - **Live Free** - Let go of both your sin and your self-sufficiency.
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#### Suggested Starter Questions:

- Which of the two sons do you relate to more—at this point in your life?
  - How have you seen the gospel redefine what it means to be “good”?
  - What's one part of this story that hit you differently this time?
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## Read Luke 15:11-24 - The Younger Son

### The Parable of the Prodigal Son

<sup>11</sup> And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to<sup>[a]</sup> one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ <sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants,<sup>[c]</sup> ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

### Discussion:

- What stands out about the father’s response to the younger son’s return?
- What does this tell us about how God sees those who repent?
- The son comes with a plan to work his way back. Why does the father shut that down?
- What do the robe, ring, sandals, and feast symbolize?

### Key Insight:

The younger son wasn’t restored because he came home with a speech. He was restored because the Father ran to him. That’s grace.

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## Read Luke 15:25-30 - The Older Son

<sup>25</sup> “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

- Why do you think the older son is so angry?
- What does the older son’s response reveal about his relationship with the father?
- What’s the difference between “working for” God’s love and “living from” it?
- How do we see elder brother tendencies show up in our lives?

**Key Insight:**

The older son obeyed all the rules—but still missed the heart of the Father. Morality without relationship can be just as lost as rebellion.

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**Read Luke 15:31-32 - The Father’s Appeal**

<sup>31</sup> And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

- What is the father offering to the older son in this moment?
- How does this challenge our assumptions about who is “in” and who is “out” with God?
- Why does the story end without telling us if the older son goes in?

**Key Insight:**

Jesus leaves the ending open because He’s looking at a crowd of elder brothers and asking, “Will you come in?”

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### Signs of an Elder Brother's Heart:

- **Anger** - when others receive grace you don't think they deserve.
  - **Joyless obedience** - doing the right thing out of duty, not delight.
  - **Judgmental spirit** - toward those whose sins are more visible.
  - **Lack of assurance** - you're never sure if you've done enough.
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### Applying the Text:

- Where have you tried to control God—through rebellion or religion?
  - How do you respond when grace is given to someone you don't think “earned” it?
  - What part of you needs to repent—not just of bad behavior, but of trying to be your own savior?
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### Practical Challenge:

#### **Be honest with God this week.**

Whether you're running away or trying to earn your place - bring it to the Father. He already knows. And He's running toward you with open arms.

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### Pray:

- Thank God that He comes after both younger and older brothers.
  - Confess where you've tried to earn His love or compare yourself to others.
  - Ask Jesus to show you again that He is the **true elder brother**—who gave everything to bring you home.
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