

SEASONS OF THE SOUL | Summer—Restoration | Week 4 | Jan 25 & 26

Luke 15

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

Context: We are looking at one of Jesus' most famous stories. The scriptural context begins with the Pharisees and scribes grumbling about the friends of Jesus. Jesus responds by telling three stories. They all share the theme of "lost and returned".

- What do you think of in your life when you consider "lost" or "missing"?
- Journal or share what you long for in this case?

Motivation: Read the passage Luke 15:1-32. It is easy to bring to memory the Father, the younger son, and if pressed the older son. But what of the listeners? Imagine yourself as a Pharisee.

- What do you hear in these stories?
- Jesus is a master communicator. What is His intent for the Pharisees? What does He want them to question about themselves? What does Jesus want them to realize about God?

Rejoice: Read vs. 7 and vs. 10. Jesus is describing the response to finding and being found.

- Describe what you imagine the Pharisees are hearing?
- What is the opposite of being found?

Climbing out of the Pit: Read vs. 16-19. Last week we learned that the son **realized** and took the step of **repair** that begins the process of **restoration**. He decided, "I will arise and go to my father." Put yourself in the place of the younger son:

- Journal or share what you long for in this case?
- What emotion flavors your story? Shame? Pride? Regret? Indignation?

Coming Home: If you've ever been away from home (long trip, college, job transition) you know the significance that coming home can have on us. It can be a place of familiarity and acceptance, a place of love and joy.

- As the younger brother what do you think he expected when he got home?
- What would be going through your mind if you were him?
- What would the Pharisees have expected for him on his return?

The Father Rejoices: In the symbolism of the culture that Jesus is addressing the Father has been dishonored, the son has violated the family's name and respectability and the Jewish custom would proscribe stoning him to death on his return. Read vs. 19-24, the Father's response.

- How would you respond to the father's response if you were a Pharisee listening?
- Compare the Father's response with the first two parables (vs. 7 & 10). Compare the emotions you imagine.
- How has Jesus built a progression into these three stories? What is He showing us?

The Final Lesson: Read vs 25-32. The Pharisees' hearts, darkened with rules and condemnation, are now challenged with yet another character and exchange in the story. This time it does not end with rejoicing.

- Do you struggle with the same ideas as the older brother? Do you find yourself comparing the ledger for yourself vs others?
- What changes does it take to allow you to rejoice in God's grace? Change in Perspective? Realization of Gratitude?
- Take a moment right now and pray for someone who needs God's love and grace, someone who needs to come home. Who can you extend this same scandalous season of restoration to in the same with the father does in the story?

Practice of the Week: Continue to reflect on this transformative story through some devotional reading. One of our favorites is from Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts, questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you or your small group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these study guides in your lives.

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