

Study Guide: The prodigal son

Scripture: **Luke 15.11-32**

Introduction: What is a Bible passage that has changed your life? This is a familiar story, try to imagine hearing it told by Jesus for the first time in the middle of a mixed crowd of 'sinners' and Pharisees (ch.15.1-2) – how do you and the crowd respond? As Christians we try not to be sinners or self-righteous, how aware are you of that tension in daily life?

Distant Countries & Rule-Breaking (The Younger Brother)

- The sermon mentioned that a "distant country" isn't always physical—it can be emotional or spiritual. What does a "distant country" look like in our lives? Is this just individual or could it apply to a church, or even a society?
- The younger son essentially said, *"I want what you can give me, but I don't want you."* In what subtle ways can we accidentally fall into that same attitude?

Moments of Truth & Grace

- The younger son had his "moment of truth" in the pigsty when he *came to his senses*. Have you ever had an "aha!" moment where clarity suddenly struck and changed how you saw God or yourself?
- He planned a speech to negotiate his way back as a servant, but the Father ran to embrace him before he finished. Why do we often try to "work off" our guilt instead of just receiving grace?

Resentment & Rule-Keeping (The Older Brother)

- The sermon highlighted that we can be far from God through wild living or through self-righteous rule-keeping. Why is the "older brother" mindset sometimes harder for us to recognize in ourselves?
- How can we guard our hearts against feeling bitter or resentful when God shows lavish grace to people who "don't deserve it"?

The Father's Heart

- The Father leaves the party to plead with the older brother, just as he ran to meet the younger one. What does this tell us about God's character? (Psalm 103)
- The sermon ended by asking where we find ourselves today: *In a distant country? In a famine? On the road home? Or standing outside the party?* If you're comfortable sharing, where do you feel closest to right now?