

PRODIGAL GOD

prod•i•gal - adjective:
1. wastefully or recklessly extravagant
2. lavishly abundant

THE TALE OF TWO BROTHERS & THEIR WASTEFULLY EXTRAVAGANT FATHER

The following questions are intended to help you reflect on your reading of the book, *The Prodigal God*. They are also intended to form the basis of discussion questions for use in our Gospel Communities. The leader should select which questions are most appropriate, and take the initiative to take the group in the direction they feel the Spirit is leading them.

PRAYER

Spend some time praising God and praying for one another

CHAPTER 5: THE TRUE ELDER BROTHER

Read Luke 15:11-32

1. Where do you see the *'initiating love of God'* painted in the parable? (vv. 20-24, 28-32; cf. pp. 73-74)
 - a. Share your experience of the initiating love of God that you experienced in your conversion.

2. What do you think Keller means when he says, *'It's not the repentance that causes the father's love, but rather the reverse'*?

3. Identify (a) in your own life, and (b) in city life, where you/others have been a *'Pharisee about Pharisees'* and *'self-righteous about self-righteousness'*? (p. 74)
 - a. Who do you get most judgemental and self-righteous about?

4. *'[R]epentance must go deeper than just regret for individual sins... Remorse and regret is just a part of the self-salvation project.'* (p. 75-77) What is the difference between repentance and regret? See 2 Corinthians 7:10.

5. *'The elder brother's problem is his self-righteousness, the way he uses his moral record to put God and others in his debt to control them and get them to do what he wants.'* (p.77) How can you use your good works to control God and put him into your debt?
 - a. How might this apply to anger resulting from joblessness, rentlessness (unable to find a place to rent), sickness, death of a loved one, relationships breakdown etc.

6. What does it mean to repent not only of your sins, but also for the very roots of your righteousness, too? (p. 78)

- a. Search your heart and share those aspects of your good works that you need to repent.

Read: Luke 15:3-10

7. What are the similarities and differences between the first two stories in Luke 15, and the third? (Cf. p. 80)

Similarities	Differences

8. Why is the difference so striking? Who do you think a first century listener/reader would be expecting to go out and search for the lost son? Why?
9. When the father says to the elder brother, 'everything I have is yours,' how is this the literal truth about the elder son and Jesus? (Cf. p. 82) See Philipians 2:5-11.
10. How does Jesus use the example of the older brother to demonstrate the cost of forgiveness and atonement?
 - a. Why is *free* forgiveness *costly*? (p. 83)
11. Count the ways that Jesus a picture of the true elder brother? I.e. make a tally of everything it cost Jesus. (cf. pp. 84-85) Thanks Jesus for all this now.

12. How can the 'heart be changed from a dynamic of fear and anger to that of love, joy, and gratitude?' (p. 85) Explain how transformation can happen in your life by tracing the relationship between:

seeing Jesus beauty (doctrine) → love for Jesus (delight) → obedience (duty)

*Our pleasure and our duty,
though opposite before,
since we have seen his beauty
are joined to part no more.
-- John Newton --*