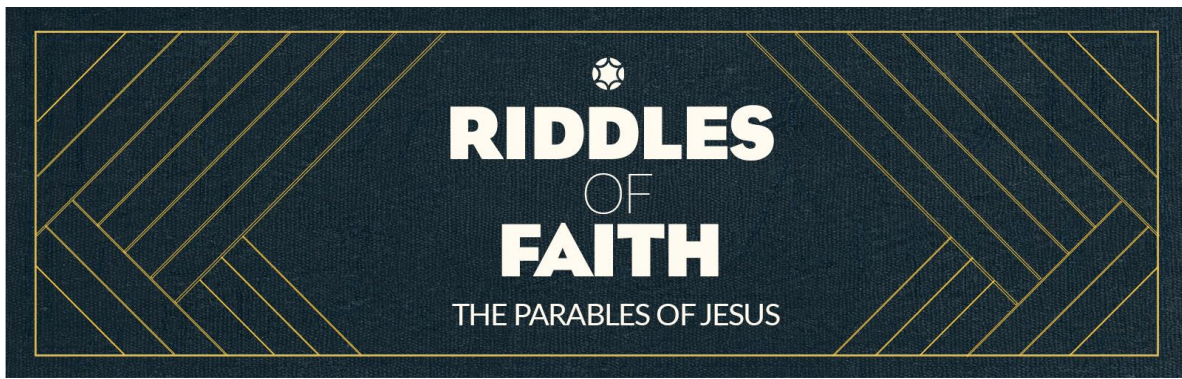




Group Guide

Week Eight // There's No Place Like Home

Scripture Focus

Luke 15:11–32

Big Idea

God's grace reaches for us whether we wander far away or remain close to him. Jesus lovingly invites us to come home to the Father, love others with the Father's love, and celebrate when they find their way home too.

Read Together

Read Luke 15:11–32 aloud. As you read, pay attention not only to the younger son, but also to the father and the older son. Notice how the father responds to each of his sons.

Setting the Scene

The story commonly called the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” is actually the third of three stories Jesus tells in Luke 15. The chapter begins with religious leaders criticizing Jesus because he welcomes sinners and eats with them. Jesus responds with stories about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and finally, a father with two sons. The younger son asks his father for his share of the inheritance and leaves home for a distant country. When his money is gone and a famine comes, he finds himself desperate, hungry, and feeding pigs. Eventually, Jesus says, “he came to his senses.”

The son knows he has broken his relationship with his father and no longer believes he deserves to be called a son. He prepares a speech, hoping his father might at least allow him to return as a hired servant, but the father has a very different homecoming planned.

Digging Deeper

While the younger son is “still a long way off,” his father sees him. Filled with compassion, the father runs to his son, embraces him, and kisses him. The son begins his confession, but the father immediately calls for the best robe, a ring, and sandals. Then he orders a celebration. The son who expected to return as a servant is welcomed home as a son.

The older son hears the celebration and becomes angry when he discovers why everyone is celebrating. Unlike his younger brother, he never left home. He has worked faithfully and obeyed his father. Yet his response reveals another kind of distance. The older brother complains that after all his years of obedience, he has never received a celebration like this. He cannot understand why his father would celebrate someone who wasted everything. The father's response is tender: “My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.” But he also explains why celebration is necessary: “This brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

Jesus leaves the story unresolved. We never learn whether the older brother enters the celebration. That unfinished ending turns the question toward Jesus' listeners and toward us. We can wander from God through obvious rebellion, but we can also remain outwardly faithful while becoming resentful, self-righteous, or unable to celebrate God's grace toward others. The Father moves toward both kinds of lostness, and He invites us to share his joy when someone else is found.

Group Discussion

Getting Started

- What stood out most to you from the sermon?
- Which person in this story have you typically focused on most? The younger son, older son, or father? Why?

Digging Into Scripture

- What surprises you about the father's response when the younger son returns? What does the older son's reaction reveal about his relationship with his father?

- Why do you think Jesus leaves the story without telling us whether the older brother joins the celebration?

Personal Reflection

- How can someone remain close to church, faith, or religious activity while becoming distant from the heart of God?
- When can it be difficult for us to celebrate God's grace in someone else's life?

Looking Forward

- Is there an area of your life where God may be inviting you to “come home” to him?
- How could you more intentionally share the Father's joy when someone who has been distant from God begins moving toward him?

Individual Application

This week, spend some time considering both brothers rather than only the one who left home. Ask yourself:

- Where might resentment, pride, or comparison be creating distance in my relationship with him?
- Do I see God's grace as something to celebrate when it is extended to someone else?
- What would “coming home” look like for me right now?

Consider memorizing:

Luke 15:24

“For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for being a Father who moves toward us with grace. Help us receive your grace without believing we have to earn it, and give us your heart for those who are finding their way home. Teach us to celebrate when the lost are found and remind us of the joy of simply being with you. In Jesus' name, amen.