

# The Father, Evangelism and Missions

By John Massey

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, three participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read the comments related to Luke 15:11–12 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: In Jesus' parable, who does the son represent, and who asked for his father's inheritance?

### Assignment Two

Turn to the comments related to Luke 15:13–16 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How does the son represent the universal condition of all people born since Adam, except Christ?

### Assignment Three

Turn to the comments related to Luke 15:17–24 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What does the earthly father in this parable teach us about the heavenly Father?

### Scripture to Memorize

*Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.* Luke 15:7

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that the heart of the heavenly Father is to seek and to save those who are lost.

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## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

Suppose you have a friend who is living an immoral life filled with drinking, drugs and sex outside of marriage. You have shared your faith with him, prayed for him, and invited him to church many times. How long do you persist in your efforts before giving up altogether?

### The Father, Evangelism, and Missions

Read Luke 15:1–2, 11–24 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

The heart of the Father is to seek and to save the lost. His love led to the sending of His Son to die and rise again for sinners. In this parable of the prodigal son, Jesus reveals the true heart of His Father as one who loves sinners and receives all who come to Him in faith. God calls on His disciples to reflect this same heart and to be His instruments to go into all the world and call sinners back to a relationship with a loving God.

**Verse 12. give me the share.** This society placed great emphasis on honor and shame. The son did a disgraceful thing by disrespectfully asking for his share of the inheritance while his father was still alive. **Property.** This word also means “life.” The son was asking for his share of everything his father had worked for and accumulated. The elder son had priority in the share of the inheritance, but the younger son still asked for his share of the inheritance before the death of the father.

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: In Jesus’ parable, who does the son represent, and who asked for his father’s inheritance?

### Discussion Question

What does the son’s request reflect about his character?

### On Your Own

Reflect on how the character of the son reflects the character of all who are living or have lived without God? Was there a time in your life when you could have identified with the son?

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 13. took a journey.** The son wasted no time. Not many days after receiving his share of the inheritance, he left home for a place far away. While there he squandered everything he had on partying and having a good time. **squandered.** This word means “to scatter.” He was “making it rain” on his fair-weather friends. **property.** This word means “being,” suggesting he squandered his very being, including all of his wealth.

**Verse 14. severe famine.** In a providential turn of events, a famine occurred in the land where he was living. He was now homeless and penniless. **in need.** The word means that he was lacking in the basic necessities of life. A citizen of that country hired him to feed his swine. As the Jews considered pigs to be unclean, this would have been a disgraceful thing and evidence of how far he had fallen. He was so hungry that he would have eaten what the pigs were eating.

## Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to this question: How does the son represent the universal condition of all people born since Adam, except Christ?

### Discussion Question

Discuss the following statement: Sin takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you want to pay.

### On Your Own

Think of friends or family members who are far from God and pray that God will bring them to their senses. Pray that they will run to Father God and to salvation.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 17. came to himself.** After living so far from God and reaping the consequences of his own actions, the son came to his senses. Sin had affected his thinking and deceived him. But now we see the work of God in his life. He immediately remembered his father. He determined to return to his father, make a confession of his sin and then hire himself out to his father.

**Verse 19. hired servants.** The phrase means “hired labor.” Even though he was a son, he desired to be as the hired help. True repentance had come to his heart. He rehearsed the speech he was going to give to his father.

**Verse 20. he arose and came.** The son began the long journey home. The father, surely daily scanning the horizon for his son, saw him at a great distance. Jesus placed the emphasis on the father’s response: he **saw him, felt compassion for him, ran to him, embraced him, and kissed him.** The father’s response was generous and extravagant!

**Verse 21. the son said to him.** The son attempted to deliver his speech. He acknowledged that his sin was first against God and then against his father. The true nature of sin is always against God first and must be confessed as such before forgiveness is granted. The son must have looked wretched, but the father was not put off by his appearance or smell.

**Verses 22–23.** The father commanded his servants to put a **robe** on his son, a **ring** on his finger, and **sandals** on his feet. Jesus presented us with a picture of complete restoration. The father prepared a feast and celebrated the return of the son.

**Verse 24. for this son was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.** This phrase is the key to understanding the heart of the heavenly Father, as the prodigal’s father announced the cause of the celebration. Jesus’ parable captures the nature of our sinful condition. We are dead and lost. Only through the love of the Father and the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit can anyone experience the restoration of relationship with God.

## Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to this question: What does the earthly father in this parable teach us about the heavenly Father?

### Discussion Question

How does Luke 24:17–24 help us understand how God works providentially to bring sinners to Himself?

### **On Your Own**

Reflect on how God brought you to saving faith in Jesus Christ and thank Him for it. In the space below, write a brief prayer that expresses your gratitude.

### **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

### **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

### **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

### **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

### **Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## At Home: Nail It Down

God the Father desires all men to be saved (see 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). He not only desires for us to be saved, but He also has made the way for us to be saved through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Father sent the Son to die and rise again for sinners. He also sends the Holy Spirit to bring sinners home.

The story of the prodigal son is the story of us all.

- We have all strayed like sheep from God's fold (see Isaiah 53:6).
- We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (see Romans 3:23).
- Adam and Eve rebelled against God, and likewise we all have rebelled against Him.
- We were all dead in sins (see Ephesians 2:1) and in need of new life (see Ephesians 2:4–7).
- As followers of Christ, we can say that we once were lost but now we are found.

God the Father planned our salvation, sent the Son to secure it, and sends the Holy Spirit to apply it to the lives of those who hear, confess, repent, and believe in Jesus. He works in the lives of sinners to bring them to faith in Him, often letting them hit rock bottom before He draws them.

He has commissioned the church to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to all people and to be as intent as He is on seeking and saving the lost. The heart of the Father for sinners should also be our heart and driving motive for winning the world to Jesus Christ.

### Follow up Question

*What does this parable tell us about the heavenly Father's heart for sinners?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.