

# SAMPLE



Thank you for downloading the FREE SAMPLE of **DNowStudies** 4-session Bible Study, *Prodigal*

*Prodigal* is an amazing resource for your DNow or Retreat weekend. By leading your student through this study, you'll not only challenge them to live out their faith in a powerful way, you'll equip them to do it long after your event is over.

Before jumping into this sample, make sure you check out all the amazing features that **DNowStudies** puts at your fingertips. There really is nothing else like it anywhere...

#### **What You'll Find In This Sample**

- >>A Sample of a Small Group Lesson Plan
- >>A Sample of the Student Book
- >>A short version of the *Prodigal* Overviews

Of course each of these components, and dozens more, are available to your teachers through their Online Lesson Manager. But this PDF will simply give you an idea of the main content of *Prodigal*.

If you have questions, email us at [dnow@leadertreks.com](mailto:dnow@leadertreks.com).  
Or, give us a call at 1-877-502-0699

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Did you know that Small Group Content is just one of the many components you have access to with the purchase of a **DNow** study?

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- Large Group Videos
- Large Group Motion Background/Loop
- Large Group PowerPoint Slides
- Promotional Tools: Web Banner/Poster Files
- Promotional Tools: Promo Video
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## ***Prodigal: Welcome Home***

It hurts to be lost.

A few wrong turns on a road trip and suddenly you have no idea where you are or how to get back on track. Or maybe as a toddler you lost sight of your mom and didn't know who to turn to for help. You didn't get lost on purpose, you thought you were going in the right direction. But you've ended up confused, wondering where you are and how you got there. How are you going to find your way home?

Lost. We've all been there. And we'll probably be there again.

Jesus was pointing to that truth when he told the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). When he compared the brothers in this story, Jesus showed us that there are two kinds of lost people: those who know they are lost and those who don't.

The younger brother—the Runaway—is obviously lost. His character shows us what happens when we rebel against God and try to live on our own without him. Runaways view God as a rule-maker who tries to control their lives.

The older brother—the Hard-Heart—seems fine, but he's just as lost. His character shows us what happens when we prioritize our ability to keep God's rules over the closeness of our relationship with him. Hard-Hearts think that their good behavior has earned God's approval and blessings.

In these two examples, Jesus shows us how our hearts can be lost and wandering from him. Thankfully, he also gave us a way to come back home; not through rule-following or self-righteousness, but by receiving our Father's unconditional love.

That's what this DNow event is all about: examining our hearts, discovering God's fatherly love for us, and letting him teach us how to repent and enjoy a relationship with him. **Prodigal...it's time to come home.**

### **Small Group Outlines**

#### **Small Group Session 1**

- **Session Title:** The Runaway
- **Main Scripture Passages:** John 8:34, Galatians 5:13, Luke 15:18
- **Session Overview:** The goal of this session is to help students compare themselves to the younger son. There are bound to be students thinking, "but the money, parties, and life that the younger son went after...that's what I want." After seeing how those desires destroyed the younger son's life, students will see how God is so much more than the stern rule-maker they may be making him out to be.

### **Small Group Outlines**

#### **Small Group Session 2**

- **Session Title:** The Father
- **Main Scripture Passages:** Joshua 24:15, Luke 15:4–7, Matthew 7:11
- **Session Overview:** The goal of this session is to give students a clear look at God’s character and heart for his children as displayed by the father in the parable. When we experience God’s forgiveness and his love, we begin to see him as he truly is: a heavenly Father that rejoices when his children come back to him. Students will examine how they view God and be challenged to change how they relate to him on a daily basis.

### **Small Group Outlines**

#### **Small Group Session 3**

- **Session Title:** The Hard-Heart
- **Main Scripture Passages:** John 1:12, Romans 3:23–24, Isaiah 64:8
- **Session Overview:** The goal of this session is for students to see how they might have the same heart issues as the older son. It’s easy to distill a life of faith down to a list of rules. But, as students will see, merely following a list of rules can create a prideful and hard heart. Students will be challenged to examine their hearts: do they think they can earn God’s love? Do they think that they are “better” than the rebels they know? After examining their hearts and the way they see God, they’ll hear the truth that they can’t earn God’s love, but that also means they can’t do anything to lose it.

### **Small Group Outlines**

#### **Small Group Session 4**

- **Session Title:** How to Come Home
- **Main Scripture Passages:** Luke 15:8–10, 2 Chronicles 7:9–10, Ephesians 2:13–14
- **Session Overview:** The goal of this session is to emphasize that, in one way or another, we all need to come home. Whether a student is living in rebellion or self-righteousness, they should clearly hear that they have an invitation to come home, that God has made a way for them to come home. Students will hear that the road home starts with God’s love for us, requires us to repent, and is paved by Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Not only are we invited to come home to God, but he gives us a key role in inviting others home as well.

### **Large Group Outlines**

Large Group Session 1: Luke 15:11–20

Large Group Session 2: Luke 15:20–32

Large Group Session 3: Luke 15:25–30

Large Group Session 4: 2 Corinthians 5:14–15

### **Student Book Devotional Outlines**

Devotional 1: Isaiah 55:1–9

Devotional 2: Psalm 103:1–13

Devotional 3: Proverbs 4:20–23

Devotional 4: 2 Corinthians 5:1–8





## 01. THE RUNAWAY

### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

#### GOAL:

The goal of this lesson is twofold:

1. *This small group lesson is designed to help you and your students understand the heart behind our tendency to rebel against God.* Students will explore their ideas about “the good life” and whether faith helps or holds them back from it. By comparing what Scripture says about sin and freedom, they’ll discover how sin leads to a lack of freedom.
2. *It is also designed to make it easy for you to facilitate* and teach students how we tend to run from God and that he welcomes us home with the gracious love of a father. That is why the Small Group Leader Guide is packed with easy-to-use instructions, timeframes, and questions that promote thinking and draw out real responses.

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- A copy of the Small Group Leader Guide for you and any other facilitators.
- A Student Book for each participant.
- Be sure to check out the Live It Out section ahead of time to prepare. You’ll need:
  - *large pieces of paper or cardboard (enough for each student to have one, or one big one for the group to work on together)*
  - *old magazines, scissors, glue or tape*

#### TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Don’t forget to take a minute and watch the teacher prep video found in your DNow Studies account. It’s a short video that will take you through some of the need-to-knows before you dive into this lesson with students.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED: Small Group Leader Guide or Student Book

This table outlines the parts of each lesson and provides an approximate timeframe that you can adapt to meet the needs of your group.

Lesson Elements (and brief description)	Included in Small Group Leader Guide	Included in Student Book	Approximate Timeframe
<b>LARGE GROUP TALK REVIEW W/OPENING QUESTIONS</b> Recap the teaching. Get discussion going by sharing answers from the end of the Large Group Talk.		✓	3-5 minutes
<b>A SECOND LOOK</b> A look at how both rebellion and rule-following keep us far from God in current, everyday life—followed by discussion questions.	✓	✓	10-15 minutes
<b>A LITTLE DEEPER</b> Dig into Bible passages that were not in the Large Group Talk. See what else Scripture says about this topic.	✓	✓ (w/discussion questions)	15-20 minutes
<b>LIVE IT OUT</b> An experiential activity to help students reinforce and internalize the lesson—followed by discussion questions.	✓		10-15 minutes
<b>APPLY IT</b> A practical application for students to do this week.	✓	✓	2-3 minutes
<b>STUDENT DEVOTIONAL</b> A short devotional for students to do on their own.		✓	

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## SMALL GROUP SESSION ONE: The Runaway

### THE FIRST MEETING

*Since this is the first small group meeting for this event, take the time to lay the foundation for the whole event.*

- *If your students don't know each other, cover introductions and consider an icebreaker (see [leadertreks.org/freebies](http://leadertreks.org/freebies) for several icebreaker and team-building activities).*
- *Make sure to cover the schedule and ground rules for the event, especially if you are staying at a host home.*
- *Tell students why you are here. You are probably sacrificing some time and comfort to be a small group leader and, chances are, it's worth it! Let students know why you care so much about them and why you want to invest in them to help them grow. Tell students why you think they're great and why it's worth it for you to be a small group leader this weekend!*

### LARGE GROUP TALK REVIEW

Take a minute to review what students just learned in the Large Group Talk. Have them pull out their notes, and ask them to share what their answers were for the two questions found on **page 4** of the Student Book. Consider having students share their answers with a partner, and then ask for two or three volunteers who might want to share with the whole group.

### A SECOND LOOK

*Read this story together and answer the following questions, found on **page 6** of the Student Book.*

#### CASE STUDY:

Maria's favorite band was finally coming to town—the show was just an hour away from where she lived. All her school friends were going, and she wanted more than anything else in the world to go too. She'd been saving her money for months to be able to afford the ticket. But there was just one problem: it was a school night and her parents said she couldn't go. Maria didn't want to let her parents down, but they were overreacting. And deep down, she just wanted to have an adventure!

Maria decided she didn't care what her parents said; she was going. She secretly bought a ticket online. When her friends came to pick her up, she ran for the door, hoping to sneak out. But her mom was waiting.

"Maria, I thought we talked about this. Your dad and I gave you a curfew for a reason," she said. Maria had expected her mom to be mad, but instead she sounded sad.

"I don't care what you think. You just never want me to have any fun," Maria yelled back as she slammed the door behind her and ran out to the car. She felt invigorated—after all, weren't teenagers supposed to rebel? She was finally doing exactly what she wanted without worrying about anyone else, and it felt like freedom.

But the night didn't go as planned. When they got to the show, Maria discovered she'd been scammed—her ticket was a fake! Her friends' tickets worked, so they left her behind. "Text us if you get in," they called back as they hurried inside. Alone in the parking lot with no car and almost no money, Maria realized she really only had one option: she was going to have to call her mom and beg her to come pick her up.

**Discuss:**

- What about Maria's story did you most relate to?
- If you were Maria, what would be the hardest part about calling your mom?
- Where do you get your ideas about what "the good life" is? What are the different versions you see? How do you decide which one is worth pursuing?
- Have you ever felt like your faith was holding you back from something you wanted to do? Did you do that thing anyway? Why or why not?

**Leader's Note:** Make sure to affirm any doubts or struggles students express and thank them for sharing and being so vulnerable. The idea of this exercise isn't to say "the right thing" but to explore the real ways that sin touches all our lives. Make sure to say a positive or encouraging comment after students share, for example, "Thanks for saying that," "Good insight," "I think we've all felt that way," or "I've never thought of it like that." If you let silence take over after a student shares, it can change the tempo of the discussion and prevent students from sharing any more. Stay upbeat, nod at them, and smile. It can change the whole atmosphere of each small group time.

## A LITTLE DEEPER

In this section, you'll take a look at several Bible passages about sin and freedom. As students share, remember to listen deeply. Don't be afraid to ask second-level questions.

Read each Bible passage and answer the questions found in the Student Book on pages 7 and 8:

**JOHN 8:34**

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."

**Background Note:** In this passage, Jesus is defending and explaining himself to the Pharisees and other Jews. Before Jesus came, Jewish faith was very focused on following the rules and atoning for sins with sacrifice and ritual; Jesus came to change all that.

Discussion questions found on page 7 of the Student Book.

**GALATIANS 5:13**

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

**Background Note:** A major theme of the New Testament is freedom vs. the law. This verse is part of a chapter that really lays out what freedom in Christ means.

Discussion questions found on page 7 of the Student Book.

**LUKE 15:18**

I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you."

**Background Note:** This verse expresses the spirit of humility with which we must turn to God. It represents the moment the prodigal son's heart turns back toward his father; he realizes he has no hope but his father's mercy.

Discussion questions found on page 8 of the Student Book.

## LIVE IT OUT: The Good Life

**What you'll need:** large pieces of paper or cardboard (enough for each student to have a piece or one big piece for the group to work on together), old magazines (make sure they are relatively current and have a lot of ads/pictures in them), scissors, and glue or tape.

**Say Something Like:** *Everywhere we look, we are bombarded with messages of what “the good life” looks like. The goal is to convince us to go after the things the world says will give us freedom, at any cost, so, we’re going to look at exactly what kinds of messages we’re receiving.*

### Instructions:

You'll have ten minutes to go through these magazines and find examples of images that advertisers are using to sell a version of “the good life.” Cut out and paste them onto your piece of cardboard. Try to find at least three or four of them. Then we'll come back together and share what we found.

### Debrief:

- Where in the magazine did you find most of these images?
- What do you think was the intent of these images? What type of life were they trying to sell?
- Did these images make you want to pursue this kind of life?
- What influences your choices about how you live your life today?

## APPLY IT

This week, dig deeper into discovering what or who is influencing your choices. Each time you see an enticing version of “the good life” on social media or TV, ask yourself whether pursuing that kind of life will lead toward or away from God.

Be specific:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

**Leader's Note:** *Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, “I'm going to trust God more.” The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, “Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust.” Challenge your students to answer the questions under the “Be Specific” section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner.*

## WHAT'S NEXT?

**Schedule:** Let students know what's happening next in the schedule and what they need to do or bring with them.

**Student Devotional:** The Student Book contains a short devotional for students to do on their own. Remember to point this out to students and let them know if and when this fits into the schedule of the weekend. The devotional that corresponds with this lesson is found on **page 37**.



# PRODIGAL

welcome home

THIS BOOK  
BELONGS TO:

*Prodigal: Welcome Home*

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ISBN: 978-1-939031-39-6

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Published by LeaderTreks  
25W560 Geneva Road, Suite 30  
Carol Stream, IL 60188  
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877-502-0699

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# WELCOME TO PRODIGAL

*"There are two types of people in this world: those who know they're lost and those who don't."*

That sounds deep, but have you ever thought of yourself as lost? Sure, there are good days and bad days, and everyone messes up every once in a while, but "lost" can sound a bit harsh.

It turns out, this is exactly what Jesus wanted to tell us through the story of The Prodigal Son. Before a mixed crowd of infamous sinners and super-religious people, Jesus used the example of two brothers—the Runaway and the Hard-Heart—to show that there's more than one way to be lost. The same is true for us. Thankfully, Jesus also shows us the one way to come back home.

## HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW AS YOU GO THROUGH THIS STUDY:

### GOD WANTS TO CONNECT WITH YOU.

In fact, he's looking forward to it. But how ready are you to connect with him? As you go in and out of the sessions and devotional times, make sure you are willing to listen to him and learn from him. He promises that he will come near to you if you come near to him (James 4:8). Try it!

### WHAT YOU PUT INTO THIS STUDY IS WHAT YOU'LL GET OUT OF IT.

There are people all around you who have spent a lot of time praying for you and getting ready to invest in you. You'll probably meet some new people, hear some new speakers, and get a chance to spend some quality time with God and with friends. Take advantage of it! Ask hard questions. Commit to being authentic and honest. God wants to use this time and these people in your life.



# SESSION ONE INTRO

## THE RUNAWAY

No matter what your home is like, there are probably a few household rules that really grind your gears. Either they don't make sense, they get in the way of your life, or they just seem pointless. These are the rules that make you feel controlled, claustrophobic. They make you roll your eyes, shuffle your feet, and hold a grudge against any authority figure that gets in your way.

Sometimes, we think of God this way. When we think of God as just a rule-maker, we start to avoid him. We wonder if life really is better when we follow his rules. We roll our eyes when another Bible study tells us how to live. We sit through another retreat that asks us to commit to even more rules. If we're honest, it seems like our friends outside of church have the "good life" and we're the crazy ones.

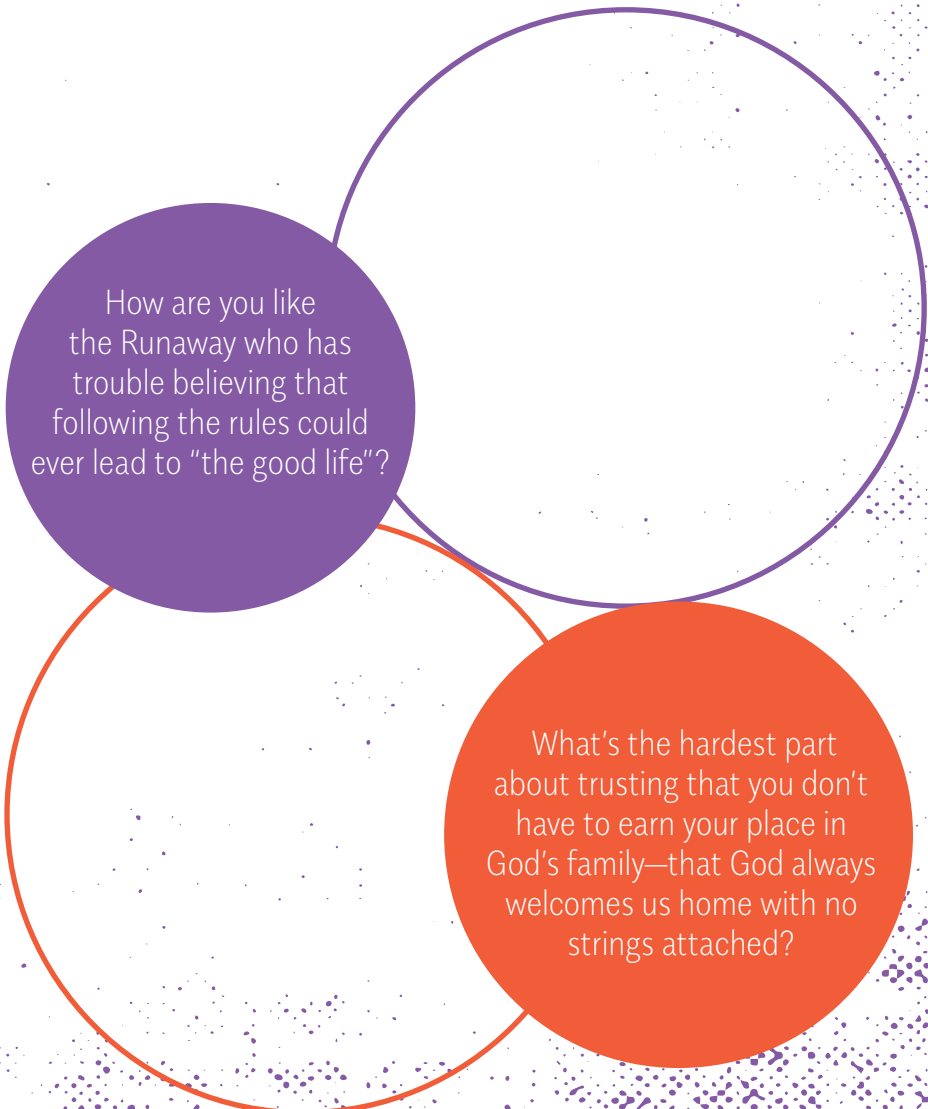
Thankfully, God is much more than a rule-maker; he's our Father. It took a rock-bottom moment, a bowl of pig-slop, and a long walk home before the Runaway found that out. What can you learn from his story?

# SESSION 1 LARGE GROUP NOTES

## THE RUNAWAY

These two pages are designed so you can take note of anything that stands out to you and that you think is worth remembering during the large group talk. This talk will set the stage for the rest of the session.

Consider writing down main points, quotes, Bible verses, and any questions that pop into your head.



How are you like  
the Runaway who has  
trouble believing that  
following the rules could  
ever lead to “the good life”?

What's the hardest part  
about trusting that you don't  
have to earn your place in  
God's family—that God always  
welcomes us home with no  
strings attached?



# SESSION 1 SMALL GROUP THE RUNAWAY

## A 2ND LOOK

Maria's favorite band was finally coming to town—the show was just an hour away from where she lived. All her school friends were going, and she wanted more than anything else in the world to go too. She'd been saving her money for months to be able to afford the ticket. But there was just one problem: it was a school night and her parents said she couldn't go. Maria didn't want to let her parents down, but they were overreacting. And deep down, she just wanted to have an adventure!

Maria decided she didn't care what her parents said; she was going. She secretly bought a ticket online. When her friends came to pick her up, she ran for the door, hoping to sneak out. But her mom was waiting.

"Maria, I thought we talked about this. Your dad and I gave you a curfew for a reason," she said. Maria had expected her mom to be mad, but instead she sounded sad.

"I don't care what you think. You just never want me to have any fun," Maria yelled back as she slammed the door behind her and ran out to the car. She felt invigorated—after all, weren't teenagers supposed to rebel? She was finally doing exactly what she wanted without worrying about anyone else, and it felt like freedom.

But the night didn't go as planned. When they got to the show, Maria discovered she'd been scammed—her ticket was a fake! Her friends' tickets worked, so they left her behind. "Text us if you get in," they called back as they hurried inside. Alone in the parking lot with no car and almost no money, Maria realized she really only had one option: she was going to have to call her mom and beg her to come pick her up.



WHAT ABOUT MARIA'S STORY DID YOU MOST RELATE TO?

IF YOU WERE MARIA, WHAT WOULD BE THE HARDEST PART ABOUT CALLING YOUR MOM?

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS ABOUT WHAT "THE GOOD LIFE" IS? WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT VERSIONS YOU SEE? HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHICH ONE IS WORTH PURSUING?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOUR FAITH WAS HOLDING YOU BACK FROM SOMETHING YOU WANTED TO DO? DID YOU DO THAT THING ANYWAY? WHY OR WHY NOT?



# SESSION 1 SMALL GROUP

# THE RUNAWAY

## A LITTLE DEEPER

**JOHN 8:34: "JESUS REPLIED, 'VERY TRULY I TELL YOU, EVERYONE WHO SINS IS A SLAVE TO SIN.'"**

What does it mean to be a "slave to sin"? How have you seen this in your own life?

Does this verse make you feel more hopeful or hopeless? Why?

**GALATIANS 5:13: "FOR YOU WERE CALLED TO FREEDOM, BROTHERS. ONLY DO NOT USE YOUR FREEDOM AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FLESH, BUT THROUGH LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER."**

What does the word "freedom" mean to you?

Does the way this verse defines freedom sound like freedom to you? Why or why not?

What would it look like in your life to use your freedom to "serve one another humbly in love"?



**LUKE 15:18: "I WILL ARISE AND GO TO MY FATHER, AND I WILL SAY TO HIM, 'FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN AND BEFORE YOU.'"**

Have you ever reached a rock bottom moment in your life where you realized you needed to confess your sins to God like this?

Why do you think it sometimes takes hitting rock bottom to see our sins clearly?

What could we do in our daily lives to avoid hitting rock bottom?

## **APPLY IT**

This week, dig deeper into discovering what or who is influencing your choices. Each time you see an enticing version of "the good life" on social media or TV, ask yourself whether pursuing that kind of life will lead toward or away from God.

**BE SPECIFIC:**

**WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?**

**WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO DO IT?**

**IS THERE SOMEONE WHO CAN KEEP YOU ACCOUNTABLE?**



NOTES:

