



PRODIGAL

welcome home

THIS BOOK
BELONGS TO:

Prodigal: Welcome Home

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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:

