



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 1

June 19th & 20th, 2010

Small Group Warm-Up

In the story of the prodigal son, the younger son took the inheritance and went to a “far away place” or a “distant country.” What is the furthest (in physical distance) you have ever been from your home?

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being the perfect Father, full of grace, and mercy. Thank you for not rejecting us when we are at our worst, but for sending Jesus to take on our sin so we can be restored to relationship with you.

Discussion Questions

Read Luke 15:11-32

As Pastor Mike taught this weekend, this story is calling all of us to intimacy with God. Luke 15:1-2 begins by identifying two groups of listeners:

1. Tax collectors (who were known for extorting money from their own countrymen) and sinners.
2. The Pharisees (members of an elite group of religious Jews).

The first group is represented in the story as the prodigal son, the second group as the elder son.

As you think about this story, do you identify more with the prodigal son or with the elder son? Why?

What kind of emotions do you think you would be feeling if your younger son demanded his inheritance and then left the family? Has your family ever experienced something this painful? If so, how did you deal with it?

Pastor Mike reminded us that God has not given us resources, gifts and talents so that we can simply indulge ourselves. He wants us to invest what he has given us in walking out his plan for our lives. Mike said, “*Fulfillment is a by-product of walking in the will of God.*” God’s plan for each of us is as unique as our thumbprint. What kinds of things bring you a feeling of fulfillment? This question can help you discover God’s unique design for your life!

This weekend we learned about the cultural practice of *kezazah*, where a community symbolized a breaking of relationship with someone who had brought shame on the community by the smashing of a clay vessel. This is what the younger son expected when he returned to his hometown. What did he experience instead? Share an example of when you have experienced grace from a family member or friend.

After losing all his money, the younger son knew he had failed miserably. As he sat in the mess he had created, he experienced *metanoia*—a change of mind. What do you think changed in his view of his father? What do you think changed in his view of himself?

Instead of continuing to run away, he decided to humble himself and return. He knew he couldn’t fix his mess on his own. He needed help to rebuild his life. At EastLake Church, we believe God has designed us to thrive in community. In a healthy community we can both receive help and extend help to others.

Is there a mess you are facing right now that we can pray with you about? Take time to pray for the specific needs that are shared in your group.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, thank you for taking our sin and shame upon yourself on the cross, so that we could be restored to relationship with Father God.