

## **QUESTIONS FOR *THE PRODIGAL GOD* BY TIM KELLER**

### **CORE VALUE: COMMUNITY OF GRACE**

**Goal:** As we seek to embody our core values as a church, this book study is designed to help us grow in our understanding of, love for, and intentionality with the gospel of grace that has made us a community that follows Jesus.

### **Week Three Questions**

*Questions will be given each week and placed online*

**All Questions are adopted or adapted from Keller's Discussion guide on his DVD series regarding the book, The Prodigal God.**

#### **Summary quotes:**

"There are two kinds of lostness. That's the reason Jesus put the elder brother in the parable. You can escape God as much through morality and religion as you can escape God through immorality and irreligion...Elder brothers obey to get things from God, and if those things aren't forthcoming, they get very angry." Tim Keller

"The first sign you have an elder-brother spirit is that when your life doesn't go as you want, you aren't just sorrowful but deeply angry and bitter." p49

For us there is a true elder brother. There is one who loved and obeyed the father completely...one who earned everything- he earned the robe, he earned the ring, he earned everything. But at the end of his life, what do we see? He doesn't get a royal robe, he got stripped. He doesn't get the fattened calf, he got vinegar....And this true elder brother comes to us and says, "I did it all for you"... In other words, salvation is absolutely free for us, but it's unbelievably costly for him." Tim Keller

Begin each week praying that God would grant us a fresh understanding of the gospel and that you and your group would be enlightened and helped by the parable. Pray the goal for your heart. May the Spirit of God strike us fresh and anew over our sin and His amazing grace and love.

1. Chp4-5 As you read what was new to you? What had an effect on you and why?
2. Chp 4- Let's compare the older and the younger brother

#### **Younger brother**

#### **Both**

#### **Elder**

#### **Brother**

Lives a self-indulgent life  
perfectionistic

Lost

Lives a

life of obedience.

Tries to get the Father's things  
by being bad

Wants control  
Wants Father's  
things more than Father

Tries to get Father's  
by begin good.

Tries to get control by control by Disobeying	Does not love the father  Wants happiness	Tries to get  obeying.
Breaks rules	Father has to go to him. Father has to invite him Into the feast.	Keeps the rules
Self-discovery	Loved by the Father	Moral conformity

3. What are some other characteristics of the elder brother?  
Leaders: angry, feels superior, an unforgiving, judgmental spirit, joyless, fear-based compliance, lack of assurance of the father's love (which usually results in an inability to deal with criticism, irresolvable guilt, and a dry prayer life) \*;  
condescending, condemning, anxious, insecure, joyless.  
\*Richard Lovelace writes, "People who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons." P54
4. If your insecurity is primarily due to lack of your belief in God's acceptance of you then let's help one another cultivate a healthy understanding of God's acceptance for us in Jesus. His acceptance wasn't cheap. It required Jesus' death but it was fully purchased for us sinners so that our acceptance is free and full based upon His intense, whole-hearted love for us.
5. How does the elder brother view...
  - a. Himself: superior to others
  - b. His brother: less than him; "ridiculous"; not worthy of mercy
  - c. His Father: good as long as he complies with the elder brother's plans; as a means to giving the elder brother what he wants.
6. How does the younger brother at the beginning of the parable view...
  - a. Himself: As the center of everything; most important;
  - b. His brother: Doesn't really care about others
  - c. His father: As a means to money, sex, etc.
7. How does the attitude of the elder brother make it harder for the younger brother to come home? How can you prevent this from happening in your own life and in your church? (see p66-67)
8. Do you tend to behave like the older or younger brother? Does looking at the past reveal a pattern of one tendency over another?
9. Chp 5- "We will never find God unless he first seeks us." (p75) How has this been true in your own experience? Where in the Bible can we see this?
10. "To truly become Christians we must also repent of the reasons we ever did anything right. Pharisees only repent of their sins [ie. their wrong actions], but Christians repent for the very roots of their righteousness, too." (p78). How is this explanation different from the way most people understand repentance? How does this change the way you repent?
11. "Forgiveness always comes at a cost." (p83) How can this truth be seen in the parable? In your own experience? What did it cost the father to bring his younger

son home? What did it cost the elder brother? What did it cost to bring us home?

### **Schedule**

<b>Date*</b>	<b>Chapters to Discuss</b>	<b>**</b>
April 7 (or Week 1)	Intro and Chapter one p. xi-16	
April 14 (or Week 2)	Chapter 2-3 p. 17-47	
April 21 (or Week 3)	Chapter 4-5 p. 48-89	
April 28 (or Week 4)	Sermon review and application Leaders to Invest- Care (aka. comm group leaders care group)	
May 5 (or Week 5)	Chapter 6-7 p. 90-133	

\*These dates apply if your group is able to start this week. Please check with your group leader since some of the groups will not start until April 14 due to the move.

\*\*The recommendation is for people to have read the chapters listed next to the date before coming to community group.