

the  
truth  
about  
loving

CONNECT GROUP  
DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Truth About Loving: Yourself



RENAISSANCE  
CHURCH

## Read

On Sunday Pastor Christian used the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* in Luke 15:11-32 to talk about loving ourselves.

<sup>11</sup> Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" <sup>20</sup> So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'" (Luke 15:11-32)

## **Reflect & Discuss**

1. How do you think we tend to measure our own worth or the worth of other people? Can you think of any examples?
2. Why do you think we often value ourselves and others based on how we perform? What dangers do you see in valuing people this way?
3. Can you think of a time when you felt really good about yourself? Really badly about yourself? Share with your group.
4. What do you think helps us feel like we're worthy of love and esteem?
5. Has anyone ever shown you love in an unexpected or undeserved way? Share the details. How did that make you feel?
6. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, do you connect more with the older son or the younger son? Why?
7. Pastor Christian reminded that God's love for us is seen when he offered himself for us in Christ. How do you think we can grow in our appreciation of God's love for us? What has been helpful to you?
8. What advice would you give to someone who has too low a view of themselves? Too high a view of themselves?

## **Personalize It**

Let's personalize and apply what we've been discussing.

1. Pastor Christian challenged us to identify five personal qualities God has given us; and then begin each day by thanking God for them, and ask how we might use them to serve God and others. Share one of those qualities with your group. If you've used it to serve God or others recently, share what you did and what happened.
2. In addition to those qualities, how else have you seen God show his love to you?
3. How would you like to grow in loving yourself?
4. What step(s) will you take this week to love yourself better?
5. How can we pray for you?

## Reflecting on Scripture

The most important catalyst for spiritual growth is personal engagement with Scripture. To that end, we've created a guide for *Reflecting on Scripture*. You can find a link where you can download it on the Connect Groups page on our website ([renchurch.com/connectgroups](http://renchurch.com/connectgroups)).

Here are three passages from the Bible that relate to this week's theme. Set aside some time three days this week to reflect on these passages. Ten minutes is a good place to start; but, once you get going, you'll probably want to reflect even longer than that. Make sure you consider the role *Love* plays in each of these passages.

If your group meets later in the week, try to come prepared to share something you've appreciated in one of these passages. If your group meets earlier in the week, you can share a reflection the following week.

### Mark 12:28-34

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup> you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." <sup>32</sup> Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; <sup>33</sup> and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

### **1 John 4:7-16**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

### **Romans 5:6-11**

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. <sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup> But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.