

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRODIGAL GOD BY TIM KELLER
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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.

Summary

Chapter 6- "We were created to live in the Garden of God. That was the world we were built for, a place in which there was no parting from love, no decay or disease" (p. 95). "There we were to adore and serve His (God's) infinite majesty, and to know, enjoy, and reflect His infinite beauty. That was our original home, the true country we were made for. However...we chafed under His (God's) authority. We wanted to live without God's interference, and so we turned away, and became alienated from Him, and lost our home for the same reason the younger brother lost his. The result was exile" (p. 96). We long to re-create that perfect home, but cannot because of the sin inside us and the fallen nature of the world we live in. Jesus "came to bring the human race home... He came and experienced the exile that we deserved. He was expelled from the presence of the Father, He was thrust into the darkness, the uttermost despair of spiritual alienation-- in our place. He took upon Himself the full curse of human rebellion, cosmic homelessness, so that we could be welcomed into our true home" (p. 101-102).

Chapter 7- Because of Jesus' saving work on our behalf, there are four ways identified in the book for our lives to correspond to the Gospel. The first is that salvation should be experiential for us in that it is not merely an intellectual reality, but affects the heart such that we can "taste" and "see" the beauty of the Savior. The second is that salvation is material in that God loves this physical world He created and sent Jesus both to save lost souls and bring restoration to this broken world itself. We are to be about the spiritual and physical renewal of the brokenness in this world. We must watch our hearts though, because "younger brothers are too selfish and elder brothers are too self-righteous to care for the poor" (p. 112). Third, salvation is individual in the sense that we must regularly digest and be nourished in the Gospel, so as not to allow our hearts to default to "religion". Fourth, salvation is communal in that "there is no way you will be able to grow spiritually apart from a deep involvement in a community of other believers" (p. 125).

Week 6 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.

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.) If you had an opportunity to read Chapters six and seven of The Prodigal God book, what was new to you or had an effect on you? Did you read anything that raised questions in your mind?

2.) What positive images come to mind when you hear the word 'home'?

3.) How is our longing for home explained by the biblical narrative of Creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

Creation: In the garden we had a perfect relationship expressed in our perfect dependence upon God for all things. This was home. Man was living in God's place, under his rule and man was God's. It was perfect it was bliss.

Fall: A catastrophe occurred in the garden. God desired that we love and worship him by responding to his rule with an obedient heart. Man instead became a rebel and abandoned God's plan & rule and decided to go their own way. The ramification is what we feel everyday. The separation, temptation, and the unbelief creeping in. Alienation. We lost our home with God because we bucked His good, ruling authority.

Redemption: Foxes have holes and birds have nests but the son of man has no place to lay his head. Jesus became the exiled one, the alienated one, the one who had no home.

Restoration: God in his return will restore all things. Perfect relationship will again exist between man, woman creation and God.

4.) [Jesus'] love can become more real to you than the love of anyone else. It can delight, galvanize, and console you. (p108) How has Jesus' love delighted, galvanized or consoled you or someone that you know?

5.) The ultimate purpose of [Jesus' life and death] is not only individual salvation and pardon for sins but also the renewal of this world, the end of disease, poverty, injustice, violence, suffering and death. (p.110)

In what ways can you be a part of God's plan to renew all of creation? Understanding that the renewal of all things will only happen when Jesus returns how will we be a part of reflecting Jesus' mission in bringing about the renewal of all things as we wait for his return?

6.) Do you agree with Martin Luther that religion is the default mode of the human heart? In what ways can religion be an obstacle for us as we seek to obey Christ?

7.) There is no way you will be able to grow spiritually apart from a deep involvement in a community of other believers. (p125) Why is this true?

8.) Behavioral compliance to rules without heart change will be superficial and fleeting. How have you found this to be true in your own experience? How then is this real, lasting change possible?

9.) The book mentions four things we need in order to have a foretaste of future salvation now-prayer, service to others, changes in our inner nature through the gospel, and healed relationships that Christ can give.

a. Which of these do you hunger for the most and why?

10.) In ancient times a feast had more dimensions to it than merely eating. It was a time to sing, dance, reunite, with long-lost friends, renew relationships, celebrate community, and so on. What joys do you most anticipate at the feast of the Father?

11.) Are you motivated to live an obedient, sacrificial life more by fear, or awed grateful love for the Savior? (See page 120)

Schedule

Date* Chapters to Discuss **

April 7 (or Week 1)

April 14 (or Week 2)

April 21 (or Week 3)

April 28 (or Week 4)

May 5 (or Week 5)

Intro and Chapter one p. xi-16

Chapter 2-3 p. 17-47

Chapter 4-5 p. 48-89

Sermon review and application Leaders to Invest-Care (aka. comm group leaders care group)

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.