

Open Arms

Luke 15:11-24

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him” - Luke 15:20

Main Point: God reminds us thru this story that no matter how far gone we might seem, we're never too far from God's open arms.

Introduction: Use the following questions to introduce the topic of discussion -

What's the latest picture you put up on Instagram or Facebook? Can you bring it up and share it with the group?

Why do you think pictures mean so much to us?

Why do you think Jesus used these word pictures in His teaching?

We live in the age of the snapshot—we're always taking photos, not just of significant moments, but of everyday things, too. Jesus loved pictures—specifically, word pictures. We call these word pictures parables. A parable is a simple story that answers a difficult question. And in the parable of the prodigal son, we have a really difficult question being asked: How does God really look at the lost?

The first step in the son's redemption story was **DEFIANCE**. Read together in **LUKE 15:11-13**.

This parable begins with a son who is from a good family, a good home—it seems like he's had every opportunity in life, hasn't he? But there's something very wrong. **What is this son really saying to his father?**

Imagine you were the father in this story: how would you feel if your son tells you, “I want my share of the inheritance?”

A father in that culture would have slapped his son across the face, kicked him out of the house and called the entire community together to tell them, “This man is no longer my son; he is no longer welcome in my home or in this community.”

What does the father in the parable do instead?

What does this teach us about God the Father?

The second step in the story to redemption is **DESPERATION**. Read together in **LUKE 15:14-20**.

The boy has gone from the penthouse to the pigpen—he squandered his inheritance, every penny. He's learning the hard way that the world will take everything you have and give you nothing that you need. **Why is it important for us to understand this?**

Can you think of a time in your life when this truth about the world really hit home for you?

This boy had lost everything except one thing: the love of his father. And so he realizes, "I have to go home." He knows the door will be open. **What is different about the younger son now? Is he coming back only because he's broke?**

The final step in the story of redemption is **DELIVERANCE**. Read together **LUKE 15:20-24**.

What does the father do when he sees his son coming? Why does this matter?

In ancient Hebrew culture, it was considered completely undignified for men to run anywhere. They wore long-flowing robes, and to run anywhere they'd have to hike up their robes, showing their undergarments. But the father doesn't care about being dignified—his love for his son is stronger than any concern about propriety.

Look at verse 20. What are we seeing here in the father's response to his son?

Have you ever had a moment when you felt like this younger son? Overwhelmed by the grace, love, and forgiveness that someone else showed to you?

In this verse, we see the beauty of a father's love and the power of a father's grace and the joy of a son's return. This is how God the Father treats everyone who decides to come home. When the lost are found, God rejoices and celebrates.

Pray:

As you close your time together ask that God would reveal to you where you need deliverance in life. Stop trying to hide your defiance and desperation, and come back to Him. Where might you need to offer forgiveness and grace to someone in your life this week? Pray for strength and humility to be as undignified as the father in our parable today and run to those who need grace.

Connect:

Listen to the song "One Step Away" by Casting Crowns and know YOU are only ONE STEP AWAY!