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Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Icebreaker: Share a time when you just wanted to be left alone to live your life.
- Focus: Understanding that God’s love may not be what we want, but after we have had our way, God is there, ready to take us back into his arms of love.
- Pray: Dear Jesus, we are so thankful that you came to show us your enormous love that is ours without any conditions. Let us run into your arms of love and surrender to the only relationship that will ever satisfy us. Amen.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.



Sermon Discussion Guide

The Annoying Love of God

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“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.” Luke 15:22-24 (NLT)

The Bible can be summed up as the story of God wanting a relationship with man and man not wanting a relationship with God. Even in Genesis 3:8-9 God is looking for Adam and Eve, but they are hiding from him. We hide from God because we want to live our lives apart from him. Yet God relentlessly pursues us, even sending Jesus to show us the depth of his love and to remind us that no matter where we are, God is there, even when we don’t feel him near us. Let’s talk it over.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. Genesis 3:8 (NLT)

1. What characteristics does someone who is hiding from God possess? As a group, discuss ways to overcome some of these self-centered tendencies. Then, ask each person to share the circumstances when they feel the **most open** to being with God.

“The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.” Luke 15:12 (NLT)

2. Why would a son break a loving relationship with his father?
3. God never gives up. He desires a relationship with us, so why do we resist his loving offer?
4. What might someone be struggling with when they wanted God to leave them alone?

His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ Luke 15:21 (NLT)

5. What are some of the behaviors people engage in or attitudes they indulge that tend to devalue themselves (for example, anger, bitterness, resentment, abuse of their bodies in some way, etc.)? How does Jesus extend grace, love and truth as this father did for his son?

Diving Deeper (optional)

1. In Luke 15:12-13 the younger son is impatient to leave his father’s house and live on his own. He wants to experience life without the watchful eye of his father. What kind of problems have you created for yourself that could have been avoided if you had lived in a way that a good father would approve?
2. In what ways are you giving undue weight or importance to money, possessions, or success in your current season of life? How is this distancing your relationship with God? What invitation from God do you sense as you reflect on your answers?

REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.