



Sermon Discussion Guide for Groups

Parable of the Prodigal Son

Preached by Jon Egan

April 26, 2026

Summary

Have someone in your group read the following summary aloud.

Pastor Jon preached on the Parable of the Prodigal Son from Luke 15, emphasizing it as the story of an amazing father rather than just wayward sons. He explored how all people are hardwired with a longing for home - not just a physical place, but a spiritual reality of being settled in God's love. Using Henri Nouwen's insights and Rembrandt's famous painting, Egan challenged listeners to identify which character they relate to – the younger son who ran away, the older son who stayed but harbored resentment, or the bystanders who watch from a distance. The ultimate invitation was to become like the father - to be love incarnate for others. The sermon concluded with a powerful illustration of the pastor's own son finding strength by looking into his father's eyes, paralleling how we find strength by looking to our heavenly Father.

Key Passages

- Luke 15:11-32
- Psalm 34:8-10
- Ecclesiastes 3:11
- 1 Corinthians 4:15

Opening Prayer

Open your session in prayer, using the words below or your own

Heavenly Father, we come before You with open hearts, ready to receive what You have for us today. As we gather to study Your Word, we ask that You soften our hearts and open our minds to the truths You want to reveal. Help us to see ourselves clearly in this story and to understand Your amazing love for us. We pray that You would speak to each person here according to their need, whether they feel far from home or close but distant. Guide our conversation and help us to be honest with one another and with You. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.

Getting Going

Allow time for each member to answer the following questions before moving on.

What is one place that has always felt like home to you, and what made it feel that way?

Discussion Questions

Answer as many of these questions as time and interest allow.

1. Which character in the parable do you most identify with - the younger son, older son, or the bystanders - and why?
2. Pastor Jon mentioned that we all have a 'homing instinct' toward God. How have you experienced this longing for spiritual home in your own life?
3. The father in the story ran to both sons but approached them differently. How does this show us that God meets us where we are?
4. What does it mean to you that 'the father gets to the son before shame gets to him'? How have you experienced God's love intercepting shame in your life?
5. The older son was physically close to home but relationally distant. How can we guard against spiritual complacency or resentment in our walk with God?
6. Pastor Jon said we're called to 'become the father' - to be love for others. What would this look like practically in your relationships?
7. Henri Nouwen found healing by staring at Rembrandt's painting of this parable. What practices help you connect with God's love when you feel distant?
8. How can we as a community better welcome 'prodigals' home and celebrate their return without judgment?

Making It Personal

Take the opportunity noted below to apply this week's sermon to your everyday life.

This week, identify someone in your life who might be feeling far from home - whether spiritually, emotionally, or relationally. Take one concrete step to 'run toward them' with love, just as the father ran to his son. This could be a phone call, a meal, a note of encouragement, or simply listening without judgment. Practice being the father's love for someone else.

Key Takeaways

Commit to memory one point from the message before dismissing.

- Home is not a place but a person. Our true home is found in God the Father.
- God has hardwired us with a longing for home that can only be satisfied in relationship with Him.
- The father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son represents God's outrageous love that runs to meet us and interrupts our shame.
- We can identify as the younger son (rebellious), older son (resentful), or bystanders (aloof), but God calls us to become like the father.
- True spiritual maturity means becoming love for others - being home for those who are lost or hurting.

Closing Prayer

Have someone from your group close your time in prayer, using the words below or your own.

Father, thank You for this powerful reminder of Your amazing love for us. Thank You that no matter how far we've wandered or how long we've stood outside in resentment, You are always running toward us with open arms. Help us to truly come home to You – not just physically present but spiritually settled in Your love. Give us the courage to let go of our need to hold everything together and instead rest in Your strength. And Lord, make us like You – the kind of people who run toward others with love, who create safe spaces for the broken and lost, and who celebrate every person who comes home to You. May we be instruments of Your love in this world. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**