Series Road Map: Story Teller - The Prodigal Son

Series Overview: Jesus loved using stories to teach important life lessons. He frequently told parables that would highlight spiritual truths and allow the listeners to learn lessons for themselves. In this series, we will be looking at three amazing parables and what Jesus has to teach us through them.

Week Overview: This week, we look at the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The parable beautifully highlights the reality that “God wants us”. Whether we are an “older brother” or a “younger brother” he wants us to leave our mistakes behind and join into fellowship with Him.

 Outline:

Grab the Room (Intro): The power of stories and the practice parable exercise.

Tension (what’s the struggle): God really wants me?

Text: Luke 15:1-2 ; 11-32

THP: God wants you.

Supporting Points:

* God wants the “younger brothers”
* God wants the “older brothers”

Application (call to action):

-Come home

Scripture

Personal

Illustration/Application

Script:

(Insert welcome/greeting of your choice)

I don’t know about you guys, but I absolutely LOVE a good story. Whether it’s something a friend is telling me, a story I’m reading online, a show I’m binge-watching on Netflix, or a favorite book, stories captivate me.

(insert something personal about your favorite way to experience a story) For me, I love movies. Going to the movies was one of the biggest L’s I took through this whole quarantine/COVID season. I missed it SO MUCH. The popcorn, the massive screen, getting totally sucked into the story!

No matter who you are, a great story draws you in, and I think that’s why Jesus told so many of them! He was a story teller! But have you ever wondered why He told so many stories?

Today we are kicking-off a brand new series called “Story Teller.” One of Jesus’ most common ways of teaching came in the form of a parable. A parable is “a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson”. You see, Jesus was the greatest teacher of all time, and he knew that it was OK to answer someone’s question, but it was SO MUCH BETTER to help a person learn something for themselves. Parables do that. They help us understand the truth of a life lesson by illustrating it in a meaningful way.

In this series, we will be diving into four of Jesus’ parables and finding out what we can learn from them! But before we hop into today’s parable, it’s important to understand a really important aspect of parables… CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING. The context of a parable, why it’s being told and who it is being told to, determines the meaning of the story. You see, 10 different people could listen to the same story and think it means 10 different things if they don’t know the context! Context helps us understand the meaning of a parable. Let me give you an example of why context is so important…

Or here’s another example. What if I told you I told you that “Kevin turned 18 years old today.” Without any context, you could assume that Kevin is probably a Senior in HS or freshman in college. A young guy about to enter adulthood. Well, what if I told you I was actually talking about my pet hampster, Kevin. Sounds like Kevin is going in the record books as the oldest hamster on the planet. Do you see what I mean?? That simples sentence “Keving turned 18 years old today” takes on a completely different meaning depending on the context; depending on if I’m talk about a human or my pet hampster!

Do you see why context is so important?? Without it, it’s almost impossible to know what Jesus really means when he tells his parables! So, each week, before we jump into the story, we will make sure to know the context!

This week we are jumping into one of Jesus’ most famous parables, which is commonly referred to as The Prodigal Son. But of course let’s first look at the context..

Jesus actually tells this story after telling two other stories first… like I said, He’s definitely a Story Teller. All of them were in response to a brief interaction in Luke 15:1-2. Listen to this…

Luke 15:1-2 - Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. **2**But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

### So Jesus is teaching to a crowd of tax collectors, sinners, and Pharisees/teachers of the law. Now, one thing you need to understand is that the “tax collectors and sinners” were seen as the lowest of the low. You didn’t associate with them unless you were one of them. On the other hand, the Pharisees were the most righteous and looked-up-to people of that day. But when Jesus heard what the Pharisees were muttering, clearly he thought there was an important lesson to be learned and so he jumps into stories, and his last and most extensive one is this... Lean in, and I want to challenge you to try to figure out what Jesus is talking about here…

### Luke 15:11-32 - (use screen with picture illustrations, to make this section engaging)

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-067-prodigal-son/> (potential pictures)

**11**Jesus continued: Picture 2 “There was a man who had two sons.**12**The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

Picture 3 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and Picture 4 there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14**After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, Picture 5 and he began to be in need. **15**So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. Picture 7 **16**He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

**17**“When he came to his senses, he said, Picture 8 ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18**I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19**I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’**20**So he got up and went to his father.

Picture 9 “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.

**21**Picture 10 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

**22** Picture 11 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23**Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. **24**For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

**25**Picture 12 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26**So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27**‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

**28**“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. Picture 13 So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29**But he answered his father, Picture 14 ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30**But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

**31**  Picture 15 “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. **32**But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Let’s do a quick summary of this story to make sure we are all on the same page: There are three main characters in this story… the father, the older son, and the younger son. The younger son tells his father that he wants his inheritance now (basically saying he wished his dad was dead) and then completely wasted all the money on things like drinking, gambling, prostitutes, and other completely useless and sinful things. When he comes to the end of himself he decides to go home to apologize and reconcile with his father. He is hesitant and has no idea how his dad will react. To his complete surprise, his dad runs to greet him and throws him a party. He is so happy to have his son back. Meanwhile, the older son has been working hard for his dad and is angry and jealous when his rebellious brother comes back home after wasting all of his dad’s inheritance. When you know the context, it becomes pretty obvious that the younger brother is a lot like the sinners and tax collectors that Jesus is talking to and the older brother is a lot like the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

There are so many truths we can pull from this story, but to put it simply I want each and every one of you listening to know this…

THP: God wants you.

Now let’s not let this simple statement go in one ear and out the other. GOD wants YOU. Each and every one of you. As you are sitting right there listening to these words, God wants you! The one who created and sustains all things wants you! He wants you, it’s exactly as you are right there as you’re sitting here and watching this. Whether you are more like the younger brother, or the older brother, HE WANTS YOU.

Let me ask you… (younger brother) who do you relate to more, the older brother or the younger brother? Maybe feel like the younger brother because you’re wanting to live however you want, but deep down, you know what you’re doing isn’t going to end well… or maybe it’s actually terrifying to come home to God because you’re afraid you’re going to be punished or embarrassed…

(Older brother) Or, you may be like the older brother, and while you’ve never gone off the deep end, you’re missing out on true relationship with God because you’re too busy looking at other’s sinfulness rather than your own brokenness and God’s grace on your life.

It’s going to mean letting go of something to come home… letting go of pride, fear, selfishness, bitterness, pornography, alcohol, popularity, social media, that relationsihip.

For some of you, you’ve never run to God before. Maybe you never knew he ACTUALLY wants you. Let me assure you… He does. He’ll never stop wanting you. Can I encourage you? Maybe tonight is the night when you finally say yes to him?

(Gospel presentation and prayer)