



## Discussion Guide

Date: 5/31/2026

Sermon Title: What is grace?

Scripture: Luke 15:11-24

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

### OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, you are the Father who runs toward us with compassion, mercy, and grace. Open our hearts and minds as we gather today. Help us to hear Your Word in fresh ways and to recognize Your grace at work in our lives before we even know Your name. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, teach us to trust in Your love, receive Your forgiveness, and extend grace to others. Form us more fully into the people You are calling us to be. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

### OPENING QUESTIONS: (Choose one to start with)

1. What artist or songs would be part of your greatest hit album? Why are you choosing them?
2. What's a favorite song, memory, or story that never gets old for you, even when you experience it again? What makes it special?

### WORSHIP SERIES THEME:

We all have favorite scriptures for a reason. These passages comfort us, challenge us, and stay with us through different seasons of life. But what happens when we slow down and revisit these "greatest hits" through a deeper lens? This week we explore one of the most beloved parables in scripture: the story often called "The Prodigal Son." Yet at its heart, this may really be the story of a gracious Father whose love never gives up.

Through this passage we also explore the Wesleyan understanding of grace:

- **Prevenient Grace** – God loving and pursuing us before we even recognize it.
- **Justifying Grace** – God forgiving and restoring us through Christ.
- **Sanctifying Grace** – God continuing to transform us into people shaped by love.

**DIGGING INTO THE SCRIPTURE:** Read the following passages and use the questions for conversation or reflection.

### Read Luke 15:11-24

1. What details stand out to you most in this story?
2. What emotions do you notice in the younger son?
3. What emotions do you notice in the father?

4. Why do you think Jesus told this parable?
5. What surprises you about the father's response?

*Exploring grace in this passage:*

1. The son rehearses a speech before returning home. What does he expect from his father?
2. Why is it significant that the father runs toward the son?
3. What does the robe, ring, and sandals symbolize?
4. How does this story challenge common ideas about forgiveness and worthiness?
5. Where do you see prevenient grace in this passage?
6. Where do you see justifying grace?
7. Where do you see sanctifying grace beginning?

*Reflecting on the scripture:*

1. Which character do you most relate to right now: the younger son, the father, or even the older brother later in the chapter?
2. Have you ever struggled to believe God's grace could truly apply to you?
3. Is there an area of your life where you are still trying to "earn" God's love?
4. What does it mean to you that the father saw the son "while he was still far off"?
5. How has God pursued you even before you recognized it?
6. What practices help you remain open to God's transforming grace?

**GOING DEEPER:**

Read Luke 15:1–2 Before Jesus tells this parable, the religious leaders are criticizing Him for welcoming sinners.

1. How does this context shape the meaning of the story?
2. Who are the "outsiders" or people we struggle to welcome today?
3. How can the church embody the gracious welcome of the father?

**WESLEYAN REFLECTION:**

John Wesley often emphasized that grace is not simply pardon, but transformation. He wrote. "Grace is God's presence and power working within us."

1. How is grace more than forgiveness?
2. How does grace continue shaping us after salvation?

**SERMON QUESTIONS:**

1. The lost son parable is familiar structure of a story to the Jewish people, however why do you think Jesus chose to flip the traditional theme of the favored younger son, instead making him the one who lived in shame?
2. Pastor Julia points out that the younger son was working with what was consider an unclean animal when he was nudged to return to his father. When in your life have you hit the lowest of lows to only be reminded you are loved and to return?
3. In the sermon Pastor Julia mentions that apologizing to family can be harder than apologizing to strangers. Why do you think vulnerability with those closest to us is often the most difficult?



4. We are reminded of the beautiful story of love of the father running towards the son and restoring him into the family. What does it cost us emotionally and spiritually to hope for reconciliation in broken relationships, and is that cost worth paying?
5. The father had been preparing and watching - he had "fatted the calf" in anticipation. How does this image of God actively preparing for relationship with us challenge or comfort you?

#### **SERMON REFLECTION:**

1. How does understanding ourselves as the prodigal child affect the way we view others who seem far from God or from us?
2. In what ways does God's love being preparatory rather than merely reactive transform how we approach prayer, relationships, and our spiritual lives?
3. What practical steps can we take this week to prepare for reconciliation with someone, even without guarantee that they will respond?

#### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Loving God, thank You for Your grace that reaches toward us long before we deserve it or even recognize it. Thank You for running toward us with compassion, mercy, and love. Help us to trust that we are Your beloved children and not defined by our failures or shame. Continue transforming our hearts through Your sanctifying grace so that we may reflect Christ to the world around us. Teach us to welcome others with the same compassion You have shown us. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

#### **WAYS TO RESPOND:**

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

1. Receive God's Love: Spend time in prayer reflecting on God's anticipatory love for you. Journal about ways God has prepared for you throughout your life. Thank God for specific moments of prevenient grace you've experienced.
2. Practice Holy Imagination: Identify one relationship that feels distant or broken. Spend time imagining what reconciliation could look like (without expectation or pressure). Pray for that person every day this week. Consider one small step you could take toward healing (a text, a card, a prayer, forgiveness)
3. Be the Welcoming Father: Think of someone who might feel far from God or community. Prepare something that shows anticipatory love (an invitation, a meal, a listening ear). Make space in your life to welcome them without judgment.

#### **Guided Meditation:**

- Close your eyes and imagine yourself as the prodigal son walking the road home. What are you feeling? What are you rehearsing to say?
- Now see the father running toward you while you're still far off. Feel his embrace. Hear him call for celebration. Sit with this image of how God sees you and welcomes you. What does your heart need to hear from God today?