

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 16 – 20, 2023

Book of Luke • Jesus' Invitation to Hospitality

WELCOME TO THE TABLE

Epiphany Series
January 8 – February 19

MONDAY

Read **Luke 15:1-3, 11-32**

Jesus employs profound teaching in this parable as He begins, “*There was a father who had two sons*” (Luke 15:11). The younger son brazenly asked for his inheritance, received it, and promptly left for a far country, where he squandered it all on sensual and frivolous pleasure. He returned home remorsefully and, to his surprise, was received with open arms by his father. A celebration begins with feasting and joy. This reception and celebration alienated and greatly angered the elder brother. He bitterly refused to enter the festivities. The story closes with the father appealing to the first-born son to join in the welcome and forgiveness of the younger brother. We are left without the elder brother’s response.

The audience, as indicated in the opening verses of Luke 15, are the Pharisees and scribes, as well as the tax collectors and sinners with whom Jesus shared a meal and fellowship. The word *prodigal* does not mean “wayward” but, according to *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, “reckless spendthrift.” It characterizes spending until there is nothing left. This describes the younger son’s behavior, wasting his inheritance until penniless and desperate. But this also describes the father in this story. The father’s welcome to the repentant son was likewise “reckless”—he did not make his younger child pay for his sins, instead welcoming and forgiving him. This response offended the older son and probably the local community as well.

Jesus' teaching here presents a beautiful picture of God's heart, as the wayward son humbly returns to his father and discovers the full force of his love and grace. Rather than being rebuked or punished, he is forgiven, restored and celebrated! When we come to God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus with contrite hearts, God will wrap His loving arms around us and welcome us home. Is God at home in your heart?

Jesus spent time, often through a shared meal, with “*tax collectors and sinners*,” teaching them about the kingdom of God and His love and grace. Who are you spending time with who needs to experience the “prodigal” love of God through you?

QUESTIONS

Would you say you identify more with the younger or elder son?

PRAYERS

For La Casa Church Plant

Pray for the physical, spiritual, and emotional health for the church planters (Gio, Indra), their family, and the leadership team.

TUESDAY

Read **Luke 15:20-24**

“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

Why did the father of the prodigal son celebrate his homecoming? In this story, Jesus draws our attention to the GRACE of God. We know that the audience of this teaching is comprised of two groups: the tax collectors and sinners at the table and the Pharisees standing nearby. The listeners identifying with the story’s younger son—the one who sinned against his father—were those seated with Jesus. The older brother represents the prideful, entitled Pharisees also on hand. The loving father represents God Himself.

The older brother, like the Pharisees, wanted to earn what he got from his father. So, he became angry with the father for throwing a party for his undeserving, sinful brother—just as the Pharisees were angered when Jesus freely forgave and healed a sinner (Matthew 12:22-24; Mark 2:5-12). The older son never received a party because he failed to realize that the father’s love could not be earned. The father was free to celebrate the returning younger son because this son was now in a place realizing that he did not deserve favor.

Why did the father of the prodigal son celebrate his homecoming? Jesus is teaching us how to increase our JOY in the Lord. The older son, like the Pharisees, saw the party for the sinner and started complaining (Luke 15:28-30). Misery accompanies complaining in our hearts. But when a person realizes that good comes to them by grace—because everyone is like the younger son (Romans 3:23)—they are then filled with a deep gratitude toward and joy in the living God who freely gives what no one deserves (Luke 7:47).

Finally, why did the father celebrate the son's homecoming? Jesus is showing us the GOSPEL. God's desire to exalt Himself results in our salvation. The humble heart allows God to have all the honor by relying on nothing but His grace; God is praised, and the celebration begins.

QUESTIONS

Why did the father of the “prodigal son” celebrate his homecoming?

PRAYERS

For La Casa Church Plant

Pray for spiritual discernment for Gio, Indra, and the leadership team of La Casa Church. Pray that they can hear the voice of God for culturally conducive strategies to reach the Latino community.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Luke 15:20; Psalm 46**

Despite *prodigal* meaning “spendthrift” (reckless, wasteful, extravagant), the term is commonly used by believers to describe those children who have abandoned their Christian upbringing. “Sad; hopeless; ashamed; betrayed; dishonored; worthless”: these are the words that disheartened mothers may use to describe their feelings when children have left their home, church and “faith” behind to pursue “their own life.”

Perhaps your son has pursued a reckless path of autonomy that has resulted in addictions, debt, and/or joblessness. Maybe your daughter’s outward lifestyle appears stable—healthy friendships and a productive career—but she is still lost, “*separated from Christ ... without hope and without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:12). The reality is that two whom we love—our child and our Savior—are separated from each other.

If one of your children is not in an active relationship with God in Christ, consider the following:

1. **God knows and understands your distress—talk to Him.** Hosea 11:7-9 displays God’s parental feelings, sharing the love mixed with emotional distress in His own heart. God is our refuge (Psalm 62:8).
2. **Find your strength and identity in God, not in parenthood.** Proclaim Psalm 46 both in word and song. You need God’s ever-present power to handle the struggle.

- 3. Distinguish your responsibilities from the child's responsibilities.** You are responsible for your parental activity—instructing, disciplining, and modeling. We cannot control the outcomes, but we can walk faithfully ourselves. Be encouraged by Proverbs 22:6.
- 4. Pursue humble love and communicate with your children.** Humility does not mean you agree with your child's unbiblical choices. Be engaged, listening without dismissing or ridiculing. Always be gracious and kind. Never gossip about them! Embrace James 1:19 and Colossian 3:8.
- 5. Maintain healthy relationships with other family members—without showing favoritism.**
- 6. Entrust your child to God and pray.** Live out 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: *"Rejoice ... pray without ceasing, give thanks ... [for] Jesus Christ."*
- 7. Seek the counsel and support of a godly shepherd.** Find a mature believer to walk with you through such trials, as per Romans 12:15 and 1 Corinthians 12:26.

QUESTIONS

What steps should we take to reach the hurting families of "prodigal children"?

PRAYERS

For La Casa Church Plant

Pray for more people to be willing to support the work of La Casa Church, as well as ECO Church Planting.

THURSDAY

Read **Luke 7:34; 15:20-24**

“The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”
(Luke 7:34)

Jesus never forgot the reason He came. After a few years of active ministry, He could have stopped, gathered His disciples, and lived a sustainable life as a respected rabbi. But He continued to reach out to sinners—He not only caught a lot of flak for this, but it factored into His execution.

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day ridiculed Him because He spent so much time with “unclean” people, sick people, and people with questionable or disputed reputations. Associating with them, His enemies were certain, could not possibly be God’s will. If those people straightened out their lives first, doing all the right things (i.e., meticulously following the Law), maybe then they would be acceptable. Until then, however, those outside their holy huddle were dismissed as off-limits and unworthy.

How do addicts, adulterers, agnostics, homeless people, and other “outsiders” feel when they walk through the door of our church? How do they feel when they sit next to us at church or at the local Starbucks? Do we look down our noses at them, judging them as “less”? Even

those furthest from God never felt rejected by Jesus. He spent time and ate with them. They delighted in His presence, not because Jesus lowered His standard of righteousness, but because He sustained a standard of authentic love for them.

Who are the “*tax collectors and sinners*” in our neighborhoods?

Who are the outcasts at work, or school, and/or in your family? Jesus proved to be the friend of such people. The “Parable of the Prodigal Son” characterizes Jesus’ openness and care in the loving welcome of the parable’s father to his returning, remorseful son. The resultant celebration signaled forgiveness and restoration. The truth is that God’s great love reaches out and finds sinners (even me!) no matter why or how they got lost.

How will you be a friend this week to someone who needs to know the love and kindness of God?

QUESTIONS

Who are the “*tax collectors and sinners*” in our world? How do they feel around you? How do you want them to feel?

PRAYERS

For La Casa Church Plant

Pray for each person who has joined the group, for their spiritual growth and unity as they become one body.

FRIDAY

Read **Ephesian 5:15-16; Luke 15:22-24**

If Jesus were to teach the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” today, do you think He would mention the need to check people’s respective calendars to see if all parties were available to celebrate the homecoming? Each of us knows that time is a commodity that is often misused, yet we often ignore the consequences. Paul penned in Ephesian 5:15-16: *“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”*

In the first century, as in contemporary society, many people squander time in two very different ways. We usually associate the term “wasting time” with people who procrastinate and don’t do things they’re responsible for. But another, more insidious form is probably more common while less obvious: investing time and energy in the wrong pursuits. We put our time into ourselves and the goals we want to achieve. This is not sinful unto itself until we lose God’s purposes amidst selfish goals. Time and opportunities are wasted when we measure our lives by the fullness of our schedules instead of the fullness of our relationships.

In Ephesian 5:15-16, Paul reminds us that every second counts. We are in a constant struggle between good and evil. Time is a precious resource in this fight. It takes only a moment to connect with our Lord to seek His purpose and will. Far too often, though, we don’t

think of time this way. We repeat the same thing we've been doing without a moment's analysis.

The goal is not to be busy. We make the most of every opportunity when we see time as a gift from God to be used to honor Him. Start simple, knowing that making a change in goals and use of time may be difficult at first. Begin at home: spend 15-30 minutes strengthening family relationships, perhaps over breakfast or dinner, at least once a week. Get creative, knowing that working and living with kingdom purposes will positively impact those whom God loves, those He created in His image (Genesis 1:27)—everybody we see, every day.

QUESTIONS

How would it change your life to realize that every moment is a gift from God to be redeemed and used to honor Him?

PRAYERS

For La Casa Church Plant

Pray for open doors among the Latino community to proclaim the Gospel clearly and boldly both in personal evangelism and in preaching.



Glenkirk Church | 1700 Palopinto Ave, Glendora, CA 91741 | 626.914.4833
GlenkirkChurch.org |  **@GlenkirkChurch** |  **Facebook: GlenkirkChurch**