

I AM HOME

— Prodigals Welcome —

I Am Home | *House Party* | Chad Bruegman | 10.7.17
LG Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

In your opinion, who is the best band/songwriter of all time and why?

SHARE

When we hear the word 'home' what comes to mind?

For many, that word brings to mind a place of refuge or retreat—a sanctuary where we can be ourselves and leave our socks on the floor. However, for others, the very word 'home' can bring up hurt and frustration. Maybe we didn't have a good home and the things we have experienced in life have distorted everything a home should be. In this series, "I Am Home", we are going to explore what it means to come home and be home through the many facets of the story of the prodigal son.

Mark Twain, speaking of Jesus' story of the prodigal son, reflected that it was "the best story ever told." It is a powerful and intriguing story of family turmoil, heartbreak, struggle, jealousy, grace and redemption. It was the best story ever told, because God is the best story teller. It speaks to the heart of man and the struggle between our prodigal hearts and our ultimate search to find home. In God's Kingdom, home is where He is. When we start walking home, the Father doesn't stand on the porch with arms crossed, rather, the Father runs to us and meets us with a huge embrace and an even bigger party. The picture of the Father running to the prodigal son and walking him home is at the heart of Red Rocks Church.

We welcome home prodigals.

As we concluded our series, “I am Home”, we focused on the theology of celebration. We serve a God who celebrates when the lost are found. God desires to commune with us and it pains his heart when we are far from Him.

God at times, will allow us to chase after worthless things in order for us to realize they cannot save us. When this kind of distance happens, it can be blamed on our own desire to take control and become the god of our own life. As we chase meaningless things, it is God’s grace that wakes us up, allows us to come to our senses, and return to the Father. What we experience as hardship can be God’s grace in disguise.

Read Luke 15:1-14

A severe famine hit the entire country. How do you escape such a trial when no matter which way you turn there is famine? The younger son squandered all he had and then famine impacted the entire country. The timing couldn’t have been worse for the younger son, but in God’s kingdom, it couldn’t have been more perfectly timed. It was the famine that brought him to the pig sty where he could come to his senses.

The son experienced a severe famine that ultimately helped him realize his need to change direction in life. How can difficult times bring us closer to God?

When we experience “famines” in our lives, is your first response to go to God or to find your own solution?

How do we see God’s grace at work in the Scripture we just read?

G R O W

Read Luke 15:21-24

In just a few short verses, Jesus takes us through the younger brother’s experience of both famine and feast. As Christians, we hold both of these realities together knowing that times of suffering exist alongside times of celebration. We can experience the juxtaposition of standing at the graveside of a loved one and the next day welcome a new baby into our life. We hear news of mass shootings, hurricanes, and potential war... yet celebrate the news that

a friend gave their life to Jesus. It can feel tough to know when to focus on the struggle or if it is time to celebrate God's goodness despite what is happening around us.

Is it easier for you to focus on times of famine (suffering) or times of feast (celebration)?

Why?

For the older brothers among us today, celebration is often perceived as irresponsible. We've been cautioned against overindulgence for so long that we fear being viewed as "party people" who aren't serious about God. As a result, we minimize our celebrating. Other times, out of consideration for others who are suffering, we intentionally mask our own joy—when joy might be the very thing a weary soul needs.

The temptation not to celebrate isn't just a contemporary issue, it has been going on since before the days of Jesus.

Read 2 Samuel 6:16-23

What were Michal's reasons for critiquing Israel's feasting and celebration?

Why is David so resolved to "celebrate before the Lord" and how does his example challenge you?

David, the newly anointed king of Israel, instigates a crazy party in order to honor the Lord giving Israel victory over the Philistines. While this is just one example of an impromptu party thrown to celebrate the work of the Lord, we often forget that celebration itself was intentionally written into the fabric of life of ancient Israel. Their feasts and festivals were part of the natural rhythm because the Israelites needed reminding of all that God had done. Without deliberate practices to commemorate the Lord's provision and protection, Israel became problem-focused or self-focused like Michal in 2nd Samuel.

Read about one of Israel's feasts in Exodus 12:24-27

What reason does God give for instituting the feast of Passover?

What celebrations or practices do you have set up that help you remember God's provision in your life and your family's life?

MOVE

Duane A. Garrett, in Baker's *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, writes that for Israel, "the festivals were communal and commemorative as well as theological and typological." In both intent and practice, Israel's celebration bound them to God and to each other.

Celebration was a time to come together, reflect on God's faithfulness, and live out the peaceful relationship between God and Israel.

Jesus too acknowledges that parties come from a place of peace in Luke 15:27. When Luke writes the prodigal son has been restored "safe and sound," he uses the word, *hygiaino*. It communicates "good health" and is where we derive the word, hygiene. However, every use of this word in the Greek Old Testament comes from the Hebrew word *shalom*. While *shalom* indicates good health, it conveys a deeper meaning...reconciliation. *Shalom* paints the picture of total peace, genuine wellbeing, safety and wholeness. When the father throws a party in honor of the prodigal son's return, he is really celebrating *shalom*.

Is there someone with whom you need to reconcile in order to celebrate *shalom* with the Father?

If the Spirit has convicted you about your lack of celebration, what can you begin to do to start celebrating the grace of God?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to share more freely.

TO GO

Proverbs 15:17

"Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened ox where there is hatred."

Writers - Brian Zibell & Kaylee Gosselin | Editor - Matt Woodson