



Home is Better | Ronnie Johnson | 5.12.19
Weekly Study

START

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

What was the worst job you ever had? What has been your favorite job so far?

SHARE

What was the best part of your week and the most difficult part of your week and why?

Our church exists to make heaven more crowded by welcoming home prodigals! But since it is so easy to forget the “why,” we want to constantly remind each other what we are striving for. That is why we launched into this current series called “Welcome Home” to remind us of why we do what we do.

Our hope is that Red Rocks be a place where everyone feels like they are a part of the family. No matter who you are, where you are from, where you’ve been, or what you’ve done, we want you to feel at home. No church does this perfectly, and we know we still have a long way to go, but we are committed to working toward this goal together. This week, we continue in the series by talking about a story Jesus told a very diverse group of people! But before we read the story, let’s get things started by answering this question.

The church is a body of believers, meaning it is a family of imperfect Christ-followers. Have you ever struggled with the idea that you belong in the family?

Luke 15:11-32

We've been reading this story repeatedly for the last few weeks. Did anything new stick out to you this time around?

Scripture is always ready to teach to us. When we read the Bible, it speaks to us in our current season and situation. The writer of Hebrews says it this way, "Scripture is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). This verse is a wonderful invitation to take our time when reading Scripture. If these verses are doing surgery on our souls, then quality is way more important than quantity.

That's why we are reading and re-reading the Story of the Prodigal Son. The truth is, you could read this story every day for the next 30 days, and it would speak to you in a new way each time (in fact, that would be a fantastic exercise for your group to do together).

This week Ronnie talked about how God is not threatened by our wandering. In the story, "The younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living" (Luke 15:13). We all have our own version of this "distant country" in our own lives.

Before we talk about the Father's response, let's first answer this question:

Do you ever find yourself longing for or moving toward the "distant country" like the younger Son does in this story? What is your "distant country"?

We've all experienced leaving like the younger Son in our own way. In the moment, whatever temptation is facing us, often looks way more appealing than living life the way God designed it. But the truth is, although sin may be appealing for a short amount of time, it is a terrible trade. The "distant country" we are running off to pales in comparison compared to the life God has for us. This week Ronnie defined sin as "trading in things of value for things of lesser value." Following Jesus does not mean saying no to all the things you really want to do, it means discovering a far more beautiful way to live. And while sin eventually leads to death, living life the way God designed it leads to abundant life (John 10:10)!

C.S. Lewis says it best. So, let's take some time to think about and talk about this quote.

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

What do you think Lewis is trying to communicate in this quote?

What are the "mud pies" you tend to gravitate toward?

What do you think Lewis means by the "infinite joy" being offered to us? How can you experience that joy this week?

M O V E

This is story of the prodigal, the Father son relationship, represents Jesus and us. Jesus is waiting for us all to "come home." He knows, He is better. What He offers lasts and never runs dry. The invitation is to "come home" and stay home,

Do you believe that Jesus is better?

I know it's the "right" thing to believe and say in church, we know the story, we've watched videos of profound life change on baptism weekends. We know it's true for "them," but do we believe it's true for us, here and now, today? The world tells a different story, gives us a different invitation, weaves a different narrative. Achieve, accumulate, experience... wanderlust begins to set in, the better, the more is out there somewhere, and I must go in search for it. The great allure of transcendence must be consumed if we are to experience wholeness and being alive.

The truth is simply, we know there is more. We know there is better. We were created from more, and for more.

Is Jesus better than my pain, my hurt, my disappointment, my mistakes, my failure? Is He better and more than the abandonment, the betrayal, and the loss?

Do you believe a comeback is possible for you?

Like the prodigal, I wonder if Peter, after his greatest failures, disappointments, and betrayal thought a “come back” was possible. As Ronnie said, “eating the pigs food was grace.” Do you believe that out of His goodness, just as the Father He allows us to go search for the better all the while knowing He is the better and we will return and “come home?”

Read Luke 22:54-62

But see, this is Jesus’ MO. As we read, throughout Scripture we see that every story written is a “come back” story. Look at Peter’s life. He lived life with Jesus for nearly 3 years. In the coming and going, Peter heard all the teachings, saw the miracles take place, experienced grace like never before and at the very end, right before Jesus was crucified, Peter denied Jesus. Yet the story doesn’t end there! And neither does ours.

Peter returned back to Jesus and he was used to begin the movement of the early church. Because of God’s deep love and affection for us and the grace He has over us, God wants to use each of us to “Make Heaven More Crowded.” He rolls the red carpet out and has a place for us at His table. He is waiting for us to come back home.

What is your “come back” story? Take some time within your group and share.

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying for each other. If you are in a co-ed group, it can be helpful to break up into two groups in order to share more easily about your prayer request.

T O G O

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10

