



A Better Picture | Shawn Johnson | 5.19.19

Weekly Study

START

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

What is your favorite summer song?

SHARE

What was the most impactful conversation you had this week? Who was it with and what was so inspiring about it?

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.

GROW

Read Acts 9:1-19

The Story of The Prodigal Son is a microcosm of the entire Bible! It is a condensed version of the entire narrative of Scripture. From Genesis to Revelation, The Father goes to great lengths to be with His children!

Paul's conversion story is an excellent example of this love. In the story, you just read, Paul (Saul) is on the road to Damascus to kill some more Christians. How about that for an introduction to one of the most influential humans who has ever lived. Before he was following Jesus, Paul hated the church. The Jesus movement threatened his work, so he went to great lengths to stomp it out.

But God loves us too much to leave us where we are. He makes a dramatic entrance into Paul's life, and Paul is never the same.

Paul was not too far gone to be saved. And since that is true, it means none of our friends or family members are either. That can be easy to forget. If you are anything like me, you tend to be quick to lose hope that God would ever actually be able to reach some of those people in your life.

But that is a lie that needs to be called out. It's just not true. Every baptism weekend at Red Rocks, we hear story after story of men and women who got saved despite not wanting anything to do with God. No one is too far gone. This week, let's get back to praying for those we'd never expect to commit to following Jesus.

What does the story of Paul's conversion teach us about God?

How should that influence how we live each week and how we view people far from God?

M O V E

Read Luke 15:11-32

What are some similarities you see between Acts 9 and Luke 15?

Now that we've read this story several times, you've probably noticed the sharp contrast between where the younger son was on his own and where he was immediately upon coming home. On his own, he "longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating" (Luke 15:16). But once he was home, they killed the fattened calf and had a feast for him (Luke 15:23). When he was on his own, no one paid attention to him or lifted a finger to help him.

But when he got home, they threw him a party and celebrated him! On his own, he had to feed the pigs to get by. At home, he was given rings, robes, and sandals.

We could go on and on. The pattern is not difficult to see, but it is incredibly important to talk about and meditate on. It's so easy to feel like running off to the distant country (whatever that looks like for you) is going to bring us the joy and purpose we desire. But nothing could be further from the truth! The only way to find true abundant life is to be rooted and grounded in what the love of God!

- Don't trade in a feast for a pigsty.
- Don't substitute a party with people who care for loneliness.
- Don't settle for being a hired hand when you have an invitation to be part of the family.

When we live our lives the way God designed them, we begin stepping into the full life He created us for.

What is one big thing you have had to quit or walk away from to follow Jesus?

Following Christ isn't a one-time decision, it is daily that we make the decision to follow, sacrifice, love and endure. What would be one thing this week that you need to relinquish control or something that you need to give to God in order to follow him?

Speaking of stepping into a new phase of life, some of you might be stepping into the baptism waters soon. If so, what contributed most to your decision and how can the group be praying for you?

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.

Some of us might have friends, family, co-workers or neighbors that are far from Jesus, if you're comfortable, let's say their first names and lift them up before God and use to ask God to use us anyway we can be used.

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

Writers - Ryan Wekenman | Editors - Michele Williams & Brian Zibell