

Grow in Groups

Who We Are: August 23, 2026

I. Opening Prayer

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help your group learn and hear what He would teach and encourage

II. Weekly Sermon Discussion (20-40 minutes)

- Read the scriptures, and discuss what stood out to you.
- Engage with one another by reflecting and sharing what our Church is learning together.
- Example insights and questions are provided to help generate discussion if needed.

Focus your conversation on the scripture and how it applies to you. Be careful of straying off the topic, and if you do, encourage one another to ask "How does this scripture apply to this?".

Prodigal Son: The Journey from Individual Isolation to a Community Group

Read: Luke 15:11-32

Returning to the Father was not the end of restoration for the Prodigal, it was the beginning. God's healing process brought the Prodigal into the house with the family. To be a Disciple, you must be in Discipleship, and that means relationship! Note the stages of the Prodigal's journey:

- Came to his senses and began the journey home
- Confessing his sin to his Father
- Being embraced in his Father's compassion and grace
- Being clothed with righteousness to cover his shame (the robe)
- Accepting his position of ministry in his father's business (the ring)
- Being identified as a son and not a slave (the sandals)
- Entering into the house with family for a celebration (the Group)

Amazingly, you can be forgiven, clothed in righteousness, and given a ministry calling, yet still be standing outside. To be fully restored, the son had to be willing to step into the house filled with noise, music and food, where everyone knows his mess, and embrace the Group!

- Why is isolation the natural gravity of shame and struggle? When you are going through a hard time, do you tend to pull away from people or draw closer to them?
- Why is it dangerous to think that "just returning to God privately" is the final step of spiritual recovery? What is missing if we only have a vertical relationship with God but no horizontal relationships with others?
- How is it possible to be serving in ministry, or know you are a child of God, yet still live in deep personal isolation? Have you ever served in a church while feeling completely disconnected from the people around you?
- Why does true discipleship require us to step into a "room with others"? What does a small group provide for our spiritual growth that private prayer and Sunday morning services cannot?

- How does being transparent in a small group actually help "cover our shame" rather than expose it?
- What fears or insecurities keep people standing on the "front porch" of the church, refusing to join a Group?
- How does the Elder Brother show us the danger of choosing "isolated religious work" over "relational fellowship"?
- How can we make sure our Group isn't just "Bible study", but authentic relationship? How can we help one another be free of shame?

III. Share & Prayer (20-40 minutes)

Time to 'take off the mask'! Jesus doesn't want us to be hypocrites who wear masks.

- A personal life update, your current spiritual condition. Use emotional language to be real!
- Challenges or victories that you are experiencing
- What's really going on in your life? How are you doing? How can your group pray for you?
- Are there applications from the Discussion that you need prayer support?
- How can your Group support you this week?

When sharing prayer requests, include your personal prayer needs. Example – rather than simply sharing "Please pray for my friend's cancer journey", include personal prayer: "Please pray as I'm struggling with my friend's cancer journey, and I need guidance on how to encourage her in this season".

Have someone, or everyone, close your time out in prayer for one another.

Family Discipleship

God Heals Us in His House

"Imagine you went away on a long trip, got completely covered in mud, and finally walked all the way back home. Your parents run out, hug you, put clean clothes on you, and invite you into the house. But instead of coming inside to eat dinner with the family, you decide to just sit alone on the dark front porch all night. Does that make any sense?"

"That's exactly what happens when we follow Jesus but don't commit to being close friends with other Christians! Today we are looking at the end of the story of the Prodigal Son."

Read Luke 15:11-24

When the messy son came home, the dad gave him amazing gifts. He got a clean **robe** to cover his dirty clothes, **shoes** to show he was a son, and a **ring** to show he was trusted to help with the family business.

But the story didn't end on the driveway! The father didn't say, "Okay, you have your new clothes and your job, now go sit in your room by yourself." No! The father led him inside the house into a massive party packed with people, music, and food.

True discipleship is relational. God doesn't just save us to keep us isolated. He wants us to walk into "the room" with other believers—like our family, our church, and small groups—where we can grow, share our lives, and protect each other from getting lonely or lost again.

Acting out the Lesson

What you need:

- A jacket or sweater (The Robe)
 - A play ring, a rubber band, or a watch (The Ring)
 - A pair of shoes (The Shoes)
 - A blanket or a circle made of tape/string on the floor (The House)
1. Choose one person to be the "Prodigal" and have them stand far away across the room.
 2. Have the rest of the family stand together inside the blanket/tape circle (The House). They should be laughing, talking, and pretending to have a fun party.
 3. The Prodigal must take a step forward and receive the **Robe** (put on the jacket), another step to get the **Shoes**, and another step to get the **Ring**.
 4. **The Pause:** Have the Prodigal stop right outside the circle. Ask them: "You have the clothes, the shoes, and the ring. Are you fully part of the family celebration yet?"
 5. **The Invitation:** Have the family open up the circle, grab the Prodigal's hand, pull them into the blanket/tape area, and give them a big group hug and cheer.

- When the Prodigal was standing outside the circle with his new clothes on, how do you think he felt watching everyone else have fun?
- Why do you think it might have been a little scary for the son to walk into a crowded room where everyone knew he had messed up?
- How does being part of a church group or a family devotion like this help us when we are having a bad day?

Close in Prayer

"Father, thank You that You don't just forgive our sins and leave us on the front porch. Thank You for bringing us into Your house and giving us a spiritual family. Help us to value our relationships with other Christians and give us the courage to always step into the room together. In Jesus name, Amen."