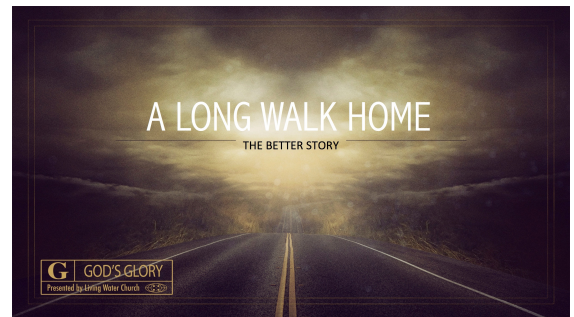




Diving Deeper: A Gather Group discussion guide
or personal devotional guide



A Long Walk Home

Introduction: What do you do when you find yourself in a place where you never dreamed you would end up? Jesus shares a parable that leads a young man to rock bottom through the choices he made. The story is about a walk home that must have seemed extremely long. A walk of shame, regret, and failure. It was a walk that made him wonder if he would even be accepted back in his father's house. It was a long walk home.

Text: Luke 15:11-32

Discussion:

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever made choices that led you to a place that you deeply regretted? How did you get back to the place of life and not death?
2. Out of the three characters in this story, who do you most relate to? Discuss/Write
3. What was the attitude of the younger brother? How do you see people living like the younger brother today?
4. What happened when all the money ran out? What does this tell you about life and friendships?
5. What was the turning point for the younger brother?
6. What does it mean to repent?
7. How do we know that the younger brother repented?
8. How did the father respond to the younger son? What does this say about the father's love?
9. How did the older brother respond to his brother's return? Why do you think we were unwilling to celebrate? Who does the younger brother represent in the story?
10. How did the father respond to the older son? What does this say about the father's love?
11. Does knowing that God will forgive us excuse "wild and reckless" living? What are the dangers in thinking that it doesn't matter how we live that we can always come back home?
12. What are the dangerous consequences of sin?
13. Why should we embrace those who repent of their sin?
14. Why did the younger brother have such a hard time receiving his brother back and what is the danger of his attitude?
15. What do you do when you find yourself "slopping the hogs?"

Think About it:

God the Father loves His children. He loves us even when we go to a distant country. The fact that God loves us, should not encourage us to leave "the house," but to enjoy the father's house. There is more fun, safety, and life in the father's house! The temptation is to see the luster of the world and think that there is more "out there" than in the house. Don't be deceived by the world's charms . . . stay in the father's house and celebrate those who return and those who stay with you!

Moving Forward:

If you are in a "distant country" and slopping the hogs—repent and take the long walk home. Repent and turn to Jesus and confess and forsake your sin. Receive the grace and forgiveness of our Father! Stay in the Father's house and celebrate the life that He offers. Take advantage of all the blessings that he has and don't go without because you never asked. Ask God for all the promises in his word!