

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN MEMBERS COME PREPARED. THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN PROVIDED AS A TOOL FOR THAT.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

At the end of Luke 15, Jesus tells one of His most famous parables. It's often called *The Prodigal Son*, but it could easily be renamed *The Lost Sons and the Father Who Loved Them* or *A Tale of 3 Arms!* It is a story about 3 men and the position of their arms, and we can learn a lot from each one of them.

1. **The younger son (broken arms):** Selfish, greedy, impatient, rebel. All accurate words to describe this young man, but the most important word to describe him is broken. Often God has to let us get to the lowest place before we realize who He has created us to be, and that's exactly what happened with the younger son.
2. **The father (open arms):** The father could best be described as having open arms. He was willing to give what the younger son demanded and yet was equally willing to receive him back when the son came to his senses and repented. This father's heart – like God's – was pure.
3. **The older son (crossed arms):** It's easy to overlook the fact that Jesus was telling the story in order to help the religious leaders see that this was them. They wanted to be good and in their desire to be good, they had believed the lie that they were better than most and deserved more than most. As a result, they had a hard time receiving the lost and the broken into the kingdom of God. Their arms were most definitely crossed.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- Who was (or is) the "obedient" one in your family? The "wild" one? Which are you? How did (or do) these types get along?
- What stages does the younger son go through on his journey? What brings him to his senses? How does he approach his father?
- How does the father receive the younger son? How does the older son receive him? Discuss why you think their reactions are so different.
- What is Jesus' point with this parable? What does it teach us about sin, repentance, and God's love?
- What do you think Jesus wanted to teach the Pharisees in verses 25-31? Read Luke 15:2. In light of that verse, why do you think Jesus left the story open-ended?
- When have you been the older brother, quietly resentful of God lavishing mercy on those "less deserving"?
- Read Luke 15:31. How can remembering that we have God's presence and provision help us develop a culture of celebration?