

18 SUMMERS

Leader Conversation Guide – 18 Summers: Prodigals

Main Idea

Parenting doesn't come with guarantees—and sometimes, no matter how faithfully we raise our children, they still choose their own path, even if it leads far from home. In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus offers a powerful picture of both human wandering and divine love. Prodigals often walk a road marked by self-centeredness, rebellion, and painful consequences—but that road doesn't have to be the end of the story. As parents, we may not be able to control outcomes, but we can control our response. Through prayer, patience, and unconditional love, we reflect the heart of our Heavenly Father—one who waits with open arms, ready to restore. As we begin this conversation, let's lean into God's wisdom and grace, believing He's still at work in every prodigal's story.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

LUKE 15:20

Make It Practical

Prodigals follow a path of self-centeredness and rebellion.

- They often reject wisdom, seek instant gratification, and end up in places of brokenness.
- Luke 15:11–16; Proverbs 15:5; James 3:16

Parents must release control of outcomes but remain faithful in their role.

- We can guide and pray, but ultimately, children choose their direction.
- Proverbs 22:6; Romans 3:10–12; Luke 15:15–17

God calls us to respond with prayer, patience, and unconditional love.

- Like the father in the parable, we wait with compassion and never stop believing for restoration.
- Luke 15:20; Colossians 1:9–10; Galatians 6:9; Isaiah 30:18

Talk About It

- The sermon emphasized that “parents can control the inputs, but children control the outcome.” How does this truth impact the way we parent, especially when we see our children making poor choices? How can we trust God with the outcomes?
- One of the soul-searching questions raised was, “Are you feeding something that will never feed you?” How might this apply not just to prodigals, but to us as parents or individuals? Are there areas in your life where you’re investing energy in things that leave you empty?
- The father in Luke 15 showed unwavering prayer, unending patience, and unconditional love. Which of these do you find most challenging to embody? What might it look like to practically live that out with a prodigal in your life—or in your own spiritual walk?

**The path of the prodigal always ends in a pig pen—
but the story doesn’t have to end there.**

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for being a God of compassion, patience, and unfailing love. We lift up every prodigal—whether in our families or in our own hearts—and ask for Your grace to meet them where they are. Give us strength to pray without ceasing, to love without condition, and to wait with hope. Help us trust You with what we can’t control, and to reflect Your heart in every season. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Next Steps:

1. Commit to consistent prayer for the prodigals in your life.

Set aside time daily to lift them up by name, asking God to work in their hearts and guide their steps. (Colossians 1:9–10)

2. Release what you can’t control and trust God with the outcome.

Surrender the pressure to fix or force change, and instead walk in peace, knowing that God loves your prodigal more than you do. (Proverbs 22:6; Isaiah 30:18)

3. Choose to show compassion over criticism.

Whether your prodigal is near or far, let your words, actions, and attitudes reflect the love and patience of the Father. (Luke 15:20; Galatians 6:9)