

THE HARDEST PART

# An All Too Familiar Story



## GROWTH GUIDE MARCH 30, 2025

*The Fourth Sunday in Lent  
Scripture: Luke 15:1-3; 11-32*

### AUTHOR

Luke, a Gentile, Greek, doctor, close friend and companion of the Apostle Paul. Luke was a historian, put great emphasis on dates and details, and connected Jesus to events and people in history. Luke's purpose was to present an accurate account of the life of Jesus. He stressed Jesus' relationships with people, gave a prominent place to women and showed Jesus' concern for women. Luke wrote his gospel around A.D. 60, from Rome or possibly from Caesarea, and it is the most comprehensive of the gospels.

### CONTEXT

Jesus continues teaching to the large crowds that were following him. He sometimes used parables which were simple stories that illustrated a moral or spiritual lesson. Tax collectors and other notorious sinners would often come and listen to Jesus teach. The Pharisees and teachers of the religious law complained that Jesus was associating with sinful people and even had the audacity to eat with them. Jesus didn't worry so much about his reputation or the accusations of the Pharisees. He was more interested in offering salvation to sinners and telling them of God's love.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 15:1-3. Have you had an opportunity to share the love of Jesus with those who might be frowned upon by our culture? If so, did you have any concerns for your reputation or what people might think of you?

2. Read Luke 15: 11-32. This may be a familiar story to many, known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. How do you understand the meaning of the word, prodigal?
3. What do you think prompted Jesus to tell this story?
4. What was unusual about the second son's request of his father and how would it have been viewed? Read Deuteronomy 21:17. How were inheritances divided among 2 sons?
5. Read Leviticus 11:2-8 and Deuteronomy 14:8. What do these verses indicate about pigs? What does the younger son's job say about him? What caused the younger son to return home?
6. How do you think the father in the story felt when his son left home? What would you expect his reaction to be when his son returned home? Did his reaction surprise you?
7. How does the father's love for his younger son remind you of God's love for those who have been rebellious and "return home"?
8. How does the older son react to the younger son's return home? And to his father's reaction? Can you sympathize with the older son?
9. Does it bother you that the younger son's behavior seems to be rewarded by the father? Or does it feel more like grace?
10. Who do you identify with most in the story?
11. What does this story teach you about grace and God's love?

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