
WORKBOOK

Restarting My Faith

For anyone who once walked with God and walked away. You don't fix yourself first. You come home, obey the next thing, and let the Holy Spirit do the changing.

Print it, write in it, and take it to the group.

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The far country

REMEMBER

You can start from where you actually are.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, SLOWLY

Luke 15:13–16

Not long after, the younger son gathered all he had and journeyed to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in reckless living. After he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He desired to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one provided him with anything.

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Jesus told this story to people who were complaining that He “welcomes sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). Keep that in mind: the whole story is His answer to that complaint.

If you are holding this book, some part of the story on this page is probably familiar. Not the details, maybe, but the distance. You used to be near. Now you’re not.

Many roads lead into the far country

The son in the story left on purpose. Not everyone does.

Drift. Nobody decided anything. A busy season, a move, a new job, and one day you noticed you hadn’t prayed in two years.

Sin, and the hiding that follows it. You went back to something you had left, promised God it was the last time, and hid. The hiding became the distance.

Disappointment with God. You prayed, and heaven was silent. The silence started to feel like an answer.

Hurt from church, or from Christians. You were judged, used, or harmed by people who spoke for God. What was done to you was wrong, and it is not how Jesus treats people.



Watch this chapter

NOTES

Most roads are a mix. You don't have to sort yours out perfectly. You only have to be honest about it.

Start from where you are

The first thing this book asks of you is small. Tell God where you actually are. Not the cleaned-up version, and not the speech you'd give after a few good months. *I haven't talked to You in years. I'm angry at You. I'm still doing the thing. I want to come back and I don't know how.*

That is not a failure to pray properly. It is the most honest prayer there is, and every road home starts with it.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Drift, sin and hiding, disappointment with God, hurt from church or Christians. Which roads brought you here? Say it in your own words.

2. When did you first notice you were far off? What was going on in your life around that time?

3. Write to God where you actually are right now. Not where you should be by now. Don't tidy it up.

4. "I will tell God honestly where I am on ____, and I will tell ____ that I've started."

NOTES

Coming to yourself

REMEMBER

He didn't clean up. He got up.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, SLOWLY

Luke 15:17–20a

When he realised his situation, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am perishing with hunger! I will arise and go to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be called your son any longer; treat me as one of your hired servants.' So he arose and went to his father.

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Read it a second time and look for what is missing: everything he did not do before he stood up.

The son is sitting in a pig field, hungry enough to envy the animals. Then something happens inside him. *He realised his situation.* He woke up, saw where he was, and remembered where home was.

Look at what he did not do

He didn't get a better job first. He didn't save enough to pay some of it back. He didn't wash, find new clothes, or wait until he *felt* like a son again. He was still hungry, still dirty, still the one who had wasted everything.

He got up and went.

That is the most important thing in this book, so say it slowly: **you do not fix yourself before you come back.**

Self-repair is what already failed

Most people who want to come back have a plan that sounds responsible. *First I'll stop doing the thing. I'll get it together for a few months. Then I'll go back, and it'll be real this time.*



Watch this chapter

NOTES

Be honest about how that plan has gone before. For most of us it is exactly the plan that failed, and every failure pushed the return further off.

Coming home isn't the reward for having changed. **Coming home is where the changing starts.**

One step toward a person

I will arise and go to my father. Not a feeling and not a program. A step toward a person. Pray one honest prayer today instead of someday. Open a Bible and read one short story. Tell one believer, *I want to come back and I don't know how.* Any one of these is a step. None of them is a cleanup.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What have you been waiting to fix, finish, or feel before coming back to God?

2. Think of the last time you tried to get your life in order first and then come back. What happened?

3. What is the smallest real step toward the Father that you would actually take this week?

4. "I will ____ on ____, and I will tell ____ that I did it."

No longer worthy

REMEMBER

The Father never let him finish the speech.

THE SPEECH, REHEARSED AND INTERRUPTED

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, so that He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

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| 1. Rehearsed
— verse 19 | I am not worthy to be called your son any longer; treat me as one of your hired servants. |
| 2. Said —
verse 21 | The son addressed him, 'Father, I have done wrong against heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be called your son any longer.' |
| 3. Interrupted
— verse 22 | But the father told his servants, 'Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him; place a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.' |

On the road home, the son rehearsed a speech. You may have written your own version of it.

The first half is simply true: *I have sinned*. The second half is where the shame lives: *I've lost the right to be a son. Take me back as an employee. Let me earn my keep*.

Two weights

Many returners carry not one fall but a pattern. *I promised God I was done with it. I went back. I promised again. I went back again*. That leaves two weights.

Shame: "I've let God down." He must be tired of you by now.

Hypocrisy: "Who am I to come back?" You said you followed Jesus. Maybe you told other people to, while the thing was still going on.



Watch this chapter

NOTES

He never finished

Put verse 19 beside verse 21. When the son actually gives the speech, he gets out the first two lines, and the father interrupts. **The line about hired servants never gets said.** The father is calling for the robe.

That is the answer to shame. Not an argument that you didn't really let Him down. A Father who interrupts the speech.

Three things this is not

It is not pretending the sin wasn't sin; the son says it, and so will you. It is not earning your way back; that is exactly what the father refuses. And it is not self-improvement. **You confess. He forgives, and He purifies.**

Hiding is the hypocrisy

A hypocrite pretends. That was the hiding. A person who walks in and says *I did this, I kept doing it, and I'm here* is pretending nothing. Coming back honestly is the opposite of hypocrisy.

If it is a pattern, the righteous "fall seven times, they rise again" (Proverbs 24:16, OTB). And "confess your sins to one another... that you may be healed" (James 5:16, OTB): to God, and to one trusted believer.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Write the speech you have been rehearsing for God. Every line of it, including the terms you would ask Him to take you back on.

2. Now read Luke 15:20–24. Cross out every line of your speech that the Father never let the son say. What is left?

3. Which do you carry more: “I’ve let God down,” or “Who am I to come back?” Where did it start?

4. “I will confess to God, and to ____, by ____.”

NOTES

The Father ran to receive you

Luke 15:11-24

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. What does this passage show me about God?

What does the father do the moment he sees his son far off?

What does his running toward the son show you about God?

2. What does it show me about people — and about myself?

How does the son see himself as he returns, and how does the father treat him?

3. What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)

4. Who will I tell?

Who do you know who feels too far gone to come home?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

★ Pray

Father, thank you for running to meet me when I came home.

Help me believe I am truly received, and not on trial.



This study online

The Father running

REMEMBER

He was watching the road.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, ONE PHRASE AT A TIME

Luke 15:20

So he arose and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.

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Jesus told this story because religious people were complaining, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). The father in the story is His answer to what God is like.

Most people coming back to God carry a picture of Him, and it shapes how they approach Him. For many returners it looks like this: a disappointed parent, arms folded, standing in a doorway, waiting for the explanation.

Jesus paints a different picture, on purpose.

One phrase at a time

"While he was still a long way off." The son hasn't arrived. He hasn't said anything.

"His father saw him." You don't spot someone a long way off by accident. He was watching the road.

"Filled with compassion." Not irritation. Not *finally*.

"He ran." A grown man, the head of a household, did not run. It was undignified. He ran anyway, and closed the distance himself.

"Embraced him, and kissed him." Before a word of the speech. Before any promise to do better. The welcome came first.



Watch this chapter

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Jesus telling you what God is like

Remember who was listening: people complaining that Jesus welcomed sinners. This story is His answer. *This is what God is like toward the one coming home.*

So the question is not whether the folded arms *feel* true. It is whether that is the picture Jesus gave. It isn't.

Why the picture matters

If God is waiting with folded arms, prayer becomes a performance: the right words, sorry enough, serious enough. Because you can never be sure it was enough, you pray less, until you stop.

If God is the Father who ran, prayer is just talking to Him. Honestly, briefly, often. Start with the word *Father*, and tell Him what's true.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Describe the picture of God you have carried while you were away. Where is He standing? What is His face doing?

2. Read Luke 15:20 again. List everything the father does before the son says a word.

3. Put your picture beside the father in verse 20. What, if anything, would change about how you talk to God?

4. "I will pray to God as Father every day, starting ____, and I will tell ____ what I noticed."

A son, not a servant

REMEMBER

Sons don't earn the house. They live in it.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, SLOWLY

Luke 15:22–24

But the father told his servants, 'Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him; place a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and slaughter it. Let us eat and celebrate. For this son of mine was as if dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

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1. The robe Covering and honor. Nobody in the village sees the rags.
2. The ring Belonging and authority. Not what you give a hired hand.
3. The sandals Servants went barefoot. Sons wore shoes.

The son came home hoping to be hired. The father had other plans, and every gift says the same thing: *not a servant; a son*. And note the word *quickly*. There is no probation.

So who does the changing?

Every returner eventually asks it. *He's welcomed me. But I'm still me, with the same habits and the same weakness. How do I actually change?*

This is where most of us reach, again, for self-repair: *now I'd better really try*. Scripture's answer is that the changing is God's work, done by His Spirit, from the inside.

I will grant you a renewed heart and instill a fresh spirit within you; I will take away your unyielding heart and provide you with a responsive heart. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My decrees and be careful to observe My laws. — Ezekiel 36:26–27 (OTB)

Count who does the verbs. Even the wanting is His: "it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to act" (Philippians 2:13, OTB).



Watch this chapter

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The Spirit tells you whose you are

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you received a spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by which we cry out, "Abba, Father." — Romans 8:15 (OTB)

The hired-servant life is fear: always wondering if you've done enough. The Spirit is the robe and the ring on the inside, telling you that you are His child.

Your part: keep in step

The fruit — love, joy, peace, patience, self-control — is "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22, OTB). You can't produce it by gritting your teeth. Your part is to "keep in step with the Spirit" (5:25): do the next thing He says, and watch what He grows.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What does your own hired-servant plan look like? The ways you have tried, or planned, to earn your place back.

2. Read Ezekiel 36:26–27 in this chapter. Who does each verb? What does that leave for you?

3. Read a short passage of Jesus' teaching, such as Luke 6:27–36. What is one thing He is telling you to do?

4. "I will obey Jesus by ____ on ____, and I will tell ____."

NOTES

The elder brother

REMEMBER

The party doesn't wait on the elder brother.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, SLOWLY

Luke 15:28–30

The older brother was upset and would not go in. So his father went out and entreated him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been serving you and have never disobeyed your commands, yet you never gave me even a young goat to celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours returns, who has squandered your property with prostitutes, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

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Jesus didn't end the story at the party. There was another son, and for someone coming home there are two elder brothers in this passage.

The ones you'll meet

Not everyone will celebrate your return. Some will remember what you did. Some will keep score, or treat you as if you're on probation. Notice how the elder brother talks: *this son of yours*. Not *my brother*.

If you've been dreading that, you're not imagining it. But notice two things. **The father went out to him too** — you don't have to hate the elder brothers you meet. And **the party didn't wait for his approval**. Other people's coldness does not undo your welcome. Your welcome is the Father's decision, not theirs.

The one inside you

Some people left *because of* elder-brother religion: rules without joy, duty without love. If that's what drove you out, Jesus saw it too, and He isn't asking you to come back to that. He's asking you to come back to the Father.



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And some of us carry the elder brother toward the people who hurt us. We keep our own score. That's understandable, and it's a heavy thing to carry into a house of celebration.

Father first, then family

Nobody is meant to walk this alone (Hebrews 10:24–25). But the order matters. The father ran to the son before the son ever saw his brother. Start with one believer who walks with you. Finding a spiritual family will come, in time and with wisdom — and nobody should rush you back into the room where the harm happened.

Jesus says to pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:28). Praying for someone is not trusting them again, or pretending it was fine. It is bringing their name to the Father and letting Him carry the score.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Whose reaction to your coming back are you dreading? What do you expect them to say or do?

2. Where, if anywhere, do you hear the elder brother in yourself — toward the church, or toward someone who hurt you?

3. Who is one believer you could meet with regularly on this road? What would make it hard to ask them?

4. "I will meet with ____ on ____, and I will pray for ____ by name."

Living in the Father's house

REMEMBER

Come back the same way, every time.

A DAILY LIFE ANYONE CAN KEEP

Luke 15:31–32

‘Son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. But it was necessary to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was as if he was dead but now he is alive again; he was lost and is found.’

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|-----------|---|
| 1. Eat | Read a short passage. Read it again. Retell it in your own words, without looking. |
| 2. Digest | What does this teach me about God? About people, and about me? What will I obey? Who will I tell? |
| 3. Grow | The growth God gives, not a step you perform (1 Corinthians 3:6–7). |

You are always with me. The goal of coming home isn't a single emotional moment on the road. It is living in the house, day after day, with the Father.

A rhythm for a bad week

Most people who drift didn't lose faith in a day. They lost the daily rhythm first. So the way back includes one, simple enough to keep on a bad week. It is the same way this whole library reads the Bible, and it rests on one picture: food.

Eat it. A short passage. Read it, read it again, then retell it without looking. The retelling is how you know you've taken it in.

Digest it. The four questions, ending in an *I will...* with a day on it, and someone to tell.

Grow. This part isn't something you do. "It was God who caused the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6, OTB). You eat and digest. The Spirit does the growing, and over months you'll notice changes you didn't produce.



Watch this chapter

NOTES

Start with Luke 15 itself, now that you know it's about you, or read Luke a story at a time.

When you fall again

You will. Settle now, while you're thinking clearly, what you'll do.

Come back the same way you came the first time. Honestly. Quickly. To a Father who is watching the road. Don't hide for a month trying to feel sorry enough. Don't write a new hired-servant speech. Confess what's true, tell the person you've chosen, and get back to the next thing He's told you to do.

Tell someone

It was necessary to celebrate. Somewhere near you is someone else in the far country. Your honest story of the road home may be the first thing that tells them the Father is watching for them too.

The next class is **Walking with Jesus**.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Cover the passage and retell Luke 15:31–32 in your own words.

2. What does this passage teach you about God? About people, and about you?

3. Write down what you will do, step by step, the next time you fall.

4. "I will start reading every ____ at ____, and the person I'll call when I fall is ____."

NOTES



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