



Gary Inrig – The Parables (Understanding what Jesus Meant)

Read the Chapter In Advance Of the Weekly Study. Make a Mental Note or Jot Down Something That Struck You – “Strange, New or Different”.

Week 1 – Read The Preface and Chapter One: “Knowing the Father's Heart”

Overview: This week explores the parable of the prodigal son from **Luke 15**, with a focus on understanding the character of God as a loving Father.

SOME KEY POINTS:

- What we think about God is the most important thing about us.
- God's heart hurts for the lost and rejoices when they are found.
- The Father's love is characterized by grace, not merit.
- Sometimes our "righteousness" can blind us to God's heart.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The Chapter begins with A.W. Tozer's quote: *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*

A. What Comes into Your Mind When You think about God?

(Helpful Prompt) God Is ... ?

B. Is That True For You? *(Is this also the most important thing about you?)* How or why?

C. How Does Your View Of God Impact Your Daily Life?

2. In the parable, Jesus shocked the religious leaders by welcoming "tax collectors and sinners." - Are there people or groups that we, as Christians, might be reluctant to welcome? Why? _____



3. The younger son's request for his inheritance was deeply disrespectful in that culture. Can you think of ways we might show similar disrespect to God in our own lives? _____

4. The father in the parable runs to meet his son, which was undignified for an older man in that culture. What does this tell us about God's love for us?

5. How does the father's response to the prodigal son differ from what the son expected? What does this reveal about God's grace?

6. The older brother's anger reveals his true relationship with his father. In what ways might we sometimes act like the older brother in our faith?

7. How does this parable challenge our understanding of fairness, justice, and grace? _____



Things to Think On-

1. **Reflect on your own view of God.** Write down three characteristics of God that you struggle to embrace or understand. Then three you'd like to reflect more of.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. **Pray about this week.**

A. Identify someone in your life who might be seen as an "outsider".

How can you show them God's welcoming love this week?

B. Consider if there are areas in your life where you're trying to earn God's favor rather than accepting His grace. How can you shift your perspective?

C. If you identify more with the older brother, think about ways you can cultivate a more celebratory or welcoming attitude towards those who are far-off from God but drawing near.

D. As a group, brainstorm ways your church could be more welcoming to "prodigals" returning to faith.

Suggested Closing Prayer:

Father, thank you for your relentless love and extravagant grace. Help us to understand your heart more deeply and to extend the same love and grace to others that you have shown to us. Transform our hearts to be more like yours. Amen.