

## Word Notes Sunday 18/01/15

### Prodigals – Helen Parker

**Summary** (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

#### **Key Texts: Luke 15:11-32**

The parable of the Prodigal Son is clearly a picture of Father God's love and also helps us understand how we should behave towards Him and towards others. If we look at it from the father's point of view we might be encouraged to be compassionate to those coming back and ready to welcome. The truth is sometimes we're a bit like the younger son and want to do life "my way" and sometimes a bit like the older son – "why should they be forgiven, or get good stuff when I'm always good?" Even so Jesus is not saying we should be timid and have no ambition - To want to live your life is not wrong, to flee responsibility is. Likewise it's wrong to force your kids to be Christians, to try and mould them into some unnatural image of ourselves. **It is good** to bring them up in what we believe by demonstration our faith and the reality of Jesus in our lives and to trust God for their own faith.

This story applies to more than just our children who've walked away from God, it's about anyone who is not living in the blessing of being part of the family of God. It's also about those bits of ourselves where we're hanging on to our way of thinking and not ready to accept God's way.

There are 4 stages to the younger son's story:

**Rebellion** – in which the younger son learns that you can't enjoy what money can buy when you ignore what money can't buy.

**Repentance**- when the son comes to his senses. In order to be repentant we have to realise where we are, the mistakes we've made and make a decision to turn around and walk away. NB he doesn't try to blame other people.

**Realisation** - he starts to compare himself to his Father - to the life he had with the family. The one we should compare ourselves to is God and to realise what we have in Him, not to the lives, behaviour or assets of other people.

**Restoration** - the father wants to welcome his son back and does so by clothing him covering the humiliation and shame which are the results of his rebellion. God will always welcome us back no matter how far we've stepped away or for how long, welcoming us with grace and the restoration bought for us by Jesus.

**But this is not the end of the story**, what about the older son? The younger son can be compared to Jonah when he ran away. The older son like Jonah when God saves Nineveh – he has a strop. We have to accept that God will accept others home, that He will do things His way not ours and realise that while we have all fallen short the restoration is the same for all. As we grow in knowing God's love for ourselves let's not deny it for others!!

**Application** (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

#### **About the Parable:**

To whom was Jesus speaking (check back through the chapter), do you count 2 or 3 groups?

What do we know about each of these groups?

Why does Jesus tell three stories (see verses 1-10) – what similar themes can you find and what differences? Are any directed at the particular groups of listeners?

Who are the main characters in each story?

What does each story tell you about the nature and character of God?

#### **About us:**

Which of the two groups of listeners are you? When you hear God's word but it doesn't fit with your thinking what do you do?

It's all too easy to point a finger at others who need to "get out of the pig-sty". How aware are you of your own need of God's amazing grace both in the past and now?

**Prayer** – for humility to know my own weaknesses, peace to know I'm His and grace to accept how he deals with others.

**Witness** (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Be determined to show grace to other people this week. Not just to excuse but to accept and restore.