



TIMOTHY
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

9th – 12th Grade Bible Summer Reading Assignment

Book: The Prodigal God

By: Tim Keller

Penguin Books, ©2011

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Prodigal-God-Recovering-Heart-Christian/dp/1594484023>

Assignment: Your assignment is to read the book, *The Prodigal God*. In this book, Tim Keller uses Jesus' familiar parable of the prodigal son to reveal the central message of Jesus: the Gospel of grace, hope and salvation.

While you are required to read the whole book, for your summer assignment you will need to answer the questions from the first five chapters of the book. We will be delving deeper into the book during discipleship groups in the upcoming year.

To encourage you to be reading the book and in God's Word throughout the summer, questions from the first two chapters will be due in TEAMS on July 31 and questions from chapters 3-5 will be due in TEAMS on August 31. Questions should be answered thoroughly on your own using complete sentences indicative of a high school level in depth of thought and engagement with the text. Answers to all questions should be typed.

THE PRODIGAL GOD

BY TIM KELLER

Start out by reading **Luke 15:11-32** out loud before starting the book (you could also listen to it on the YouVersion bible app)

Chapter 1

- 1) What are some of your thoughts about this first chapter in Prodigal God?
- 2) How did Tim Keller's explanation of the historical context help us to see Jesus' purpose for telling the parable? On pg. 10 the author says, "The targets of this story are not "wayward sinners" but religious people who do everything the Bible requires. Jesus is talking with not so much with immoral outsiders as with moral insiders."
- 3) In the context, who were the moral insiders? Why was their morality or religious attitude a hindrance to accepting Jesus' teaching in the gospels? How is our own morality or religious attitude sometimes a hindrance in fully trusting Jesus on a daily basis?
- 4) Tim Keller states that we may not have a lot of "younger brothers" like the one described in the parable of the Prodigal son in our churches because churches are fuller of elder brothers than we'd like to think. In your experience, do you think this is true? Has there been any hint of an elder brother attitude at any time in your own Christian life?

Suggested Prayer: Pray and ask God to continue to open your eyes to see the truth of this parable and what it means to you over the next few weeks.



Chapter 2

- 1) How did we like this 2nd chapter?
- 2) Do you remember what the younger son's request (for his share of the estate) communicated to his Father? (A: It was as if he was saying he wished he were dead).
- 3) What do we learn about the character of the Father in the parable based on his response to the younger son's request? What is the picture of the Father when he sees his son returning after he squandered his inheritance? How does that mirror the heart of God the Father when a sinner comes to Him?
- 4) Speculate as to what the younger son might have been thinking when the Father poured his love on him? How would he have felt in that moment?
- 5) If you have trusted Christ as a teen, what did it mean to you when you realized that God's love and acceptance is a free gift?
- 6) What was the response of the elder brother when he learned of the dinner party thrown for his brother? Why would he have reacted like that? How was the Father's response unreasonable once again?
- 7) What has God been teaching you through this parable and Tim Keller's explanation of it?

Chapter 3

- 1) What are the two ways to finding happiness in this life that Tim Keller says are illustrated in this parable? On (pg. 29) Describe some of the characteristics of each pathway to happiness?
- 2) Many religious people at times end up throwing in the towel and pursue a life of selfishness (i.e.: a pastor who runs away with his secretary) while others who have lived the younger brother lifestyle for years will turn to religious morality in order to make up for their immorality. Why is neither one of these paths the way to true fulfillment? Which of the two is more subtly dangerous? Why?
- 3) According to Keller both sons were alienated from the Father and the Father extended grace and acceptance to both of them. How did the Father do that for the younger brother? How about the elder brother? So, at the end of the parable, who is reconciled to the Father and who is still separated from Him?
- 4) What does the author mean when he said that this parable gives us a deeper understanding of sin as being more than just failure to keep God's laws? (pg. 43 middle paragraph answers this briefly)
- 5) Tim Keller says: There are two ways to be your own savior and Lord, one is by breaking all the moral laws and setting your own course and the other is by keeping all the moral laws and being very, very good. How does the message of the Gospel differ from both of these approaches? (pg. 45)
- 6) Why do we need to remind ourselves of this message every day?

Chapter 4

- 1) How are you enjoying the book so far? Could you summarize the chapter in a couple sentences?
- 2) What is "elder-brother lostness"? What are the signs listed throughout the chapter?
- 3) It is possible for a true believer to have some of the characteristics of elder-brother lostness at times. What are the most common ones in your own experience in Church?
- 4) Ultimately elder brothers live good lives out of fear not out of joy and love. What parts of the Christian life can be done or motivated out of fear and habit rather than joy and love? (Answer: things like obedience, giving, coming to church, reading our bible, prayer, etc.)
- 5) Read John 15:11 out loud to yourself. How do Jesus' words in John 15:11 contradicts the elder-brother's attitude and his going through the motions in obeying Christ's commands?
- 6) What kind of prayer life did Tim Keller say is characteristic of an elder brother? Why is this?
- 7) Next chapter we will begin to see the remedy for an elder-brother attitude but in the meantime, how might we pray for and encourage someone who struggles with an elder-brother attitude?



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Chapter 5

- 1) Both younger and elder brothers need God's intentional love like the Father demonstrates in the parable. Let's start by listing some things we are thankful for when it comes to God's intentional love towards us.
- 2) On pages 76-77 What does Tim Keller mean about a deeper repentance? What else might a person repent for outside of the bad things they do? (For ex; We also must repent for having the wrong motivations behind why we do the right things. Is it to be seen? Is it to be liked? Is it to make others feel less than? Is it to show how good we are? In a way it's our attempt to be our own Savior and Lord. The Pharisee's motivation for being "good" people was a self-salvation project).
- 3) Since there are similar morals between monotheistic religions, what then is the main distinctive of Christianity? How would you communicate that to a person of another faith?
- 4) Who does Keller say is our "true elder brother"? How is this so? How does this inspire a deep and permanent trust in our true elder brother?
- 5) Keller says, "To the degree we see the beauty (worth, value, love, etc.) of our true elder brother we will be free from the fear and neediness that creates either younger brothers or elder brothers." Discuss some practical implications of this statement.