



Date: 23rd & 30th March 2025

Theme: **Coming Home**
(The Prodigal Son)

Bible Reading: **Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32**

by Deacon Georgina Brooks

Series editor: Andy Murphy

Copyright © 2025 East Mercia Methodist Circuit

(with permission granted for free use in churches and fellowship groups)

PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please make yourself familiar with all the material and Bible passages, and hold in prayer the members of your group before the session. As we get closer to Easter, please ensure everyone knows when the group will be meeting around the holidays.

It might be helpful if you could print off one or two larger copies of Rembrandt's painting 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' (below). This will be used in the 'Activity' part of the session.

You will also need *Singing the Faith* hymnbooks or copies of the hymn, and music if appropriate.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

In preparation for the session please spend some time thinking about a time when you have finally arrived home. Perhaps you had been away on holiday, at university, or in hospital, before finally coming home.

Can you recall how it felt to be coming home? What words would you use to describe finally getting home? What were you most looking forward to as you arrived home?

If you have time, read Jesus' parable of 'The Prodigal Son' (or Lost Son) from **Luke 15**, and think about all of the emotions and feelings of the different characters involved.

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

Father God,
your word gives life and hope.
Your word is a light for our path as we journey deeper into our relationship with you.
Enable us by the power of your Holy Spirit to discover and rediscover insights
of what it means to continue to follow you.
As we gather together,
may we be active in our listening to you and to one another.
Bless this time, we pray. **Amen.**

FINDING OUR ROOTS

Using the individual preparation work, consider the feeling around "coming home". Either as a whole group, or in smaller groups of two or three, discuss with each other:

Can you recall a time when you were away for a long period? What was it like to come home?

What makes home different to another place? What do you miss when you're away?

When you think of God, what does it mean to you to 'come home'?

Where is 'home' for you in a spiritual sense?

READING THE SCRIPTURES - with background information

Read together the Bible passage: [Luke 15:1-32](#)

The famous parable of 'The Prodigal Son' (as it is often called) appears only in Luke's Gospel, and comes just after Jesus has shared two other parables both of which are around the theme of **lost and found**: 'The Lost Sheep' (verses 3-7) and 'The Lost Coin' (verses 8-10). Therefore, this much longer parable can be seen as expanding on the two earlier parables. It begins with the phrase "There was a man who had two sons", and this sets the scene to understanding how their relationship plays out. The father responded graciously to the younger son by giving him his inheritance whilst he was still alive; the younger son was therefore thought of as treating the father as though he was already dead; and the older son responded with bitterness at the father's generosity and mercy, and hardness of heart towards the brother. As we look closely at the parable of the Prodigal Son and each character in it, we can begin to identify with some of the different human responses to God's love and invitation.

DIGGING DEEPER

What is it that makes Jesus tell these stories in the first place? What is he therefore trying to illustrate?

What do you think the younger son was trying to achieve by leaving home in the first place?

Why do you think he turned back home?

What do you think is meant by the phrase "he came to his senses" (or "came to himself")? (verse 17)

Have you ever had a similar sudden realisation in your life and changed direction? How did this happen?

How would you describe the reaction of the elder son? Why might this be?

Can you identify with any of the characters in the story? (Have you been, or do you know, a 'Father', a 'Prodigal', or an 'Older Brother'?)

What has your response been to seeing grace in action (for yourself, or for someone else)?

Does this story remind you of other passages in the Bible about turning back to God?

ACTIVITY

Either in the group, or at home afterwards, spend some time looking at Rembrandt's painting '**The Return of the Prodigal Son**' (painted around 1661-69):

What do you notice in the picture?

Is there anything you wonder about the picture?

*Where are **you** in the picture?*

Is there something God is saying to you about where you are on your faith journey?



PRAYING TOGETHER

In a time of prayer together, bring to God the needs of your group, community or church. Pray especially for any who need to find a way home right now, and for parents who are worried about their children or grandchildren. Pray too for those who find it difficult to see grace extended to the 'undeserving'.

You might like to sing together '**All I Once Held Dear**' by Graham Kendrick. (*Singing the Faith* 489).

Conclude by saying **The Lord's Prayer** together.



Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn – *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (c.1668)

In terms of copyright, this picture is in the public domain.

The original painting is in oil on canvas, situated at the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.