

**FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO GOD
COME TO THE PARTY**

The BIG Idea Team, Individual and Family Study Guide

Please take time to run through this study guide with your team, on your own, or with your family so that you can further apply and process the BIG Idea.

Big Idea:

The way we choose to live in response to God's grace defines us as Christ followers.

Key Verse:

Read John 16:19-24 (The Message)

Jesus knew they were dying to ask him what he meant, so he said, "Are you trying to figure out among yourselves what I meant when I said, 'In a day or so you're not going to see me, but then in another day or so you will see me'? Then fix this firmly in your minds: You're going to be in deep mourning while the godless world throws a party. You'll be sad, very sad, but your sadness will develop into gladness.

"When a woman gives birth, she has a hard time, there's no getting around it. But when the baby is born, there is joy in the birth. This new life in the world wipes out memory of the pain. The sadness you have right now is similar to that pain, but the coming joy is also similar. When I see you again, you'll be full of joy, and it will be a joy no one can rob from you. You'll no longer be so full of questions...Ask in my name, according to my will, and he'll most certainly give it to you. Your joy will be a river overflowing its banks!

The Scoop:

All through Scripture God talks about throwing huge parties. Sometimes they make sense, like a great wedding feast, but a lot of times they don't make sense like honoring a dishonorable son. Jesus describes God to be "the most joyous being in the universe." This isn't the description we would expect. God is stern, God is wise, God is serious, God is kind, God is loving—but a God who throws parties? This is not the God we typically describe.

Like the oldest brother in Luke's account of the Prodigal Son, if we haven't enjoyed a massive shindig thrown in our honor, we will find ourselves bearing resentment and judgment towards others who are humbly basking in the glow of "the most JOYOUS BEING in the universe!" We come to Christ out of His overwhelming grace and love; we fall before Him and humbly yet eagerly accept his free gift of salvation; but then it usually doesn't take long before we forget that we did nothing to earn his love and acceptance.

God longs for us to experience grace ourselves and for us to continue celebrating the gift we have received as we encourage others to take next steps in their relationship with Him as well.

1. How does the image of a party-throwing God challenge your concept of Him and what has contributed to that concept?
2. Describe a time when you experienced or witnessed celebrating someone turning his or her life around—finding God.
3. How can you relate to both the prodigal son and the older brother?

What's Next? (take home/further processing/application)

Ask yourself what character you are in the story of the Prodigal Son. If you need to come home, do so by being baptized and experience the party. If you are home, take time to think about those around you who have not experienced the gift of God's grace and encourage them to read the story in Luke. No matter where you are on the journey take time to pray this prayer:

*Dear God, help me understand my true self.
Help me find my way back to you.
Please meet me in this journey. Amen*