# **Journey: The Prodigal Son**

**ACT 1: The Relationship With Father**

**Bible Reading 1:** *There was a man who had two sons.* (Luke 15:11)

**Candle Lighting:** A symbol of relationship, love and warmth

**ACT 2: The Journey Away From Father**

**Bible Reading 2:** *The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had and set off for a distant country.* (Luke 15:11-13)

**Meditation:** I want to invite you to use your God-given creative mind as we explore the parable of the Prodigal Son. Imagine that you are the son. You may want to close your eyes, to help your imagining. You approach your living father and you ask for your inheritance. Can you see the blood drain from his face? How does it make you feel? To ask your father for inheritance while he is alive is like saying that you are sick of your family and you wish he was dead. Your father is shocked, because there is no law or custom in your culture that entitles a son to a share of the estate while the father is still alive. An inheritance sale takes place. The village negotiators call you despicable and childish and they have a ceremony called *ketsatsah*, the "cutting off." Your relatives put corn and nuts in a jar and they break the jar in front of the whole village and announce that you have been cut off from your inheritance. Only restoration of the land can undo the *ketsatsah*, your "cutting off." And so you lose your inheritance and are cut off from the village forever. You leave, cut off from your family, from your village. Do you have mixed feelings as you pack your bags? Have you made the right decision?

**Snuff Out the Candle:** With a glass jar

**Reflect:** What are the things that snuff out God’s presence in your life?

**Remove Shoes:** From a Son to a Prodigal

**Art Stations:** Write or draw things that lead you away from Father

**Reflect:** Spend time looking at the artwork

**Bible Reading 3:** *In the distant country he squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.* (Luke 15:14-16)

**Meditation:** Close your eyes and imagine yourself in the distant land where you spend you money on parties, friends and stuff that you father would not exactly be proud of. Before long there is a severe famine in the land. How do you feel when your money runs out and your friends desert you? There is no media to tell caring countries about the famine. No World Vision to feed the hungry. In time of famine, a person turns to their family. But you have no family. You are a stranger in a strange land. You become hungry. You could return home. Home, to shame before your father, to the shame of having to be fed by your brother, to the shame of *ketsatsah*, of being "cut off" from village. Are you willing to endure all that? Instead you do the unthinkable. You sell yourself to a pig breeder. It gets worse. Pigs eat pods. Hungry, you gaze at the pods, wishing you were a pig, wishing you could eat. You, a Jew, wanting to live like a pig – how low you have fallen! This is rock bottom!!! How do you feel?

**Bible Reading 4:** *When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.* (Luke 15:17-20)

**Lectio Divina:** Start with prayer to expect God’s presence and direction

(1) Lectio – read the passage a few times

(2) Meditatio – reflect on a key phrase that stands out to you

(3) Oratio – ask God to help you understand what he is saying to you

(4) Contemplatio – dwell in the silence with God – enjoy his company

**Pig Food**: Search through compost to find a wrapped sweet. As you do so imagine how the son felt sitting among the pigs.

**Prayer:** Pray the Prodigal’s Prayer: “*Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son”*

**Meditation:** Finally you have come to your senses. You cannot live like this any longer. You have an idea. You could return to your village. You could try to run past the village, try to out-sprint the gauntlet of the *ketsatsah*. You could negotiate with your father. You could ask to be a hired hand. Not a son, not a slave, but a hired hand. A hired hand does not live at home, does not join the family and gets paid for their work. And so you decide to take the long road home. Imagine how you feel as you walk the many, many miles. How many times do you want to turn around and just stay lost? What if your Father does not accept you? What will you do?

**Cleansing:** Look at your hands and the dirt that has attached. What are the things you wish to leave behind you this morning? As you wash your hands in the water ask God to cleanse and renew you as you begin your journey back to Him.

***Explain the labyrinth walk –*** *start your journey as soon as your hands are washed!***ACT 3: The Journey Back To Father**

**Pen Labyrinth:** A labyrinth is a walking meditation. It is not like a maze with a choice of turns – it has one path. Walking a labyrinth is a chance to pause, slow down, pray and encounter Father God. As you journey to the centre of the labyrinth, think of things that draw you closer to Father God.

**Brainstorm:** Write or draw things that lead you closer to Father God.

**Bible Reading 5:** *But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.‘ But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.* (Luke 15:20-24)

**Meditation:** Close your eyes and remember the day that you set out on your journey back home. You think you will reach your former home by afternoon but around lunch time you see a man running towards you. Jewish men never run in public, so you wonder what could be the cause. As you get closer, you can almost make out his face – could it be your father? You don’t have to wonder for long as he throws his arms around you and hugs and kisses you. "My son! My son!" he says with tears streaming down his face. How do you feel to be back in the arms of someone who loves you so unconditionally? Despite all you have done he embraces you!

**ACT 4: The Reunion With Father**

**Image:** Reunion with Father

**Meditation:** You feel so safe to be in your father’s arms again. Suddenly you remember your prepared speech and you began to say, "Father, I have sinned against you." But your father is not listening. He is too busy telling his servants to bring you sandals, a robe, and a ring. "Quickly! Quickly!" he keeps saying. It was as if you can’t be reinstated into your family and to your village quickly enough. You are given ***shoes*** – this means that you father will not let you be a servant – servants walk barefooted while sons wear shoes! A fine ***robe*** is placed on you to show that you are a full member of the household. And your father gives you the family ***ring*** – do you realize the significance of this? After you wasted half of his life savings, he is entrusting you with the ring that he uses in business transactions? Then you smell the roast beef, and suddenly you are the honored guest at your father's feast. You feel so small, yet so honored; so ashamed, but so happy to be with your father again; so unworthy, but so unconditionally loved.

**Receiving from Father:** Shoes; Robe; Ring

**Symbolic Act:** Put your shoes back on

**Meditation:** Imagine now that your father is God. You have sinned against him, you don't deserve all the gifts God gives you, and yet God loves you unconditionally. You could never be bad enough to make God stop loving you. You could never be good enough to deserve his lavish attention. Spend a few minutes talking to God. Ask for forgiveness, thank him for all the gifts you have, and enjoy hearing over and over again about his love for you. Just enjoy knowing that God is crazy about you. You are really a "spoiled" child of God.

**Relight the Candle**

**Celebration Feast:** The Lord’s Supper (Bread and Juice)

**Prayer:** "Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that while we were still far you met us and brought us home."

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, the story of the lost son reminds us of you. You go out of your way to lavish gifts on us, your children. We are so grateful for your forgiveness, your compassion, and your love. Help us extend your forgiveness to our enemies, your love to our families, and your compassion to the needy.

# **The Prodigal Son Journey Outline**

**ACT 1: The Relationship With Father**

**Bible Reading 1:** (Luke 15:11)

**Candle Lighting:**

**ACT 2: The Journey from Father**

**Bible Reading 2:** (Luke 15:11-13)

**Meditation:** *ketsatsah – pack your bags and leave*

**Snuff Out the Candle:** With a glass jar

**Reflect:** What are the things that snuff out God’s presence in your life?

**Remove Shoes:** From a Son to a Prodigal

**Art Stations:** Write or draw things that lead you away from Father

**Bible Reading 3:** (Luke 15:14-16)

**Meditation:** in the distant land - feeding pigs

**Bible Reading 4:** (Luke 15:17-20)

**Lectio Divina:** Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio, Contemplatio

**Pig Food**: compost - sweets.

**Prayer:** Pray the Prodigal’s Prayer

**Meditation:** Decide to return to Father

**Cleansing:** Wash your hands

**ACT 3: The Journey Back To Father**

**Pen Labyrinth:** Think of things that draw you closer to Father God.

**Brainstorm:** Write or draw things that lead you closer to Father God.

**Bible Reading 5:** (Luke 15:20-24)

**Meditation:** Accepted by father

**ACT 4: The Reunion with Father**

**Image:** Reunion with Father

**Meditation:** Shoes, Robe, Ring

**Receiving from Father:** Shoes; Robe; Ring

**Symbolic Act:** Put your shoes back on

**Meditation:** a "spoiled" child of God

**Relight the Candle**

**Celebration Feast:** The Lord’s Supper

**Prayer:** "Father… while we were still far you met us and brought us home."

**Closing Prayer:**

**Prodigal Son Guided Meditation**

*Imagine the younger brother, the prodigal son, speaking to you.*

I did the unthinkable. I wished my father was dead-at least, I asked for my share of the inheritance, an action tantamount to desiring my father's death. Actually I never thought my father would agree, but he did! I couldn't wait to get as far away from home as I could, and the sooner the better, so a few days later I left.

To make a long, miserable story short, let's just say I squandered everything. Desperate, I did another unthinkable thing: I got a job caring for pigs. Me! A Jewish boy who would never think of getting near a pig! If anyone had seen me, they would have known I was lost. I was without religion, without heritage, without home.

Coming to my senses, I thought, "Maybe just maybe my father would take me back as a servant." Again I was doing the unthinkable-going home where I would most certainly be rejected. I had my apology ready and I rehearsed it many times over the miles.

One morning I thought that I would reach my former home by afternoon. In late morning, however, I saw a man running toward me. Jewish men never run in public, so I really wondered what could be the cause. As I got closer, the man looked like my father.

Could it really be him? I didn't have long to wonder because the man hesitated just long enough to get a good look at my face, then threw his arms around me and repeatedly hugged and kissed me. "My son! My son!" he repeated, tears streaming down his face.

I could not have been more surprised had my father swung me around in the air, the way he did when I was a small child. And that's just the way I felt-like a small child safe again in his father's arms. Suddenly I remembered my prepared speech and began, "Father, I have sinned against you." My father really wasn't listening, though. He was too busy telling his servants, who had come panting along behind him, to bring me sandles, a robe, and ring. "Quickly! Quickly!" he kept saying. It was as if I couldn't be reinstated into my family and my village soon enough.

Imagine! I was given shoes, meaning my father was not going to let me be a servant. A robe was thrown over my shoulders to indicate I was a member of the propertied household. And was my father delirious with his delight in seeing me? He couldn't be giving me the family signet ring, could he? After all, I had squandered half his money. Why would he entrust me with his ring that he used in business transactions? How could he trust that I wouldn't squander whatever money the family had?

I smelled roasting beef, and before I knew what was happening I was the honored guest at my father's feast. I felt so small, yet so honored; so ashamed, but so happy to be with my father again; so unworthy, but so unconditionally loved.

Imagine yourself in my place, and imagine your father being God. You've sinned against God, you don't deserve all the gifts God gives you, and yet God continually loves you unconditionally. You could never be bad enough to make God stop loving you. You could never be good enough to deserve God's lavish attention.

Talk to God the way I talked to my father. Ask for forgiveness, thank God for all the gifts you have, and enjoy hearing over and over again about God's love for you. Let yourself bask in the knowledge that God is crazy about you. You are really a "spoiled" child of God. Spend a few minutes silently reflecting on God's unconditional love and undivided attention. Imagine that you are a "spoiled" child of God.

**The Prodigal Son Bible Readings**

**Bible Reading 1:** *There was a man who had two sons.* (Luke 15:11)

**Bible Reading 2:** *The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had and set off for a distant country.* (Luke 15:11-13)

**Bible Reading 3:** *In the distant country he squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.* (Luke 15:14-16)

**Bible Reading 4:** *When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.* (Luke 15:17-20)

**Bible Reading 5:** *But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.‘ But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.* (Luke 15:20-24)