



Return To The Father's Heart
Sermon Small Group Questions
Speaker: Pastor Joseph Zwanziger

USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group, you may choose one of the following options:
 1. one section of questions
 2. one or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.

INTRODUCTION

We all long to have the pride of a father or mother cheering us along as we travel through the days of our lives. What if we had a proud father watching us and his love toward us, his enjoying who we are, was not determined by our performance? Today we will look at the reality that we are the apple of our heavenly Father's eye and it is not due to our ability to please Him.

MESSAGE

Return To The Fathers Heart

Knowing that someone is proud of you, not based on performance but because of who you are, changes everything. You will want to perform even better when you know you are the apple of someone's eye, not to receive more accolades, but as a gift to the one who is proud of you.

[Jeremiah 1:5]

"Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you."

God was proud of his creation before you were even able to blow your own nose. It is natural to fall into a performance mentality, but God's love and pride toward us is not determined by our performance.

Let's look at the story of The Prodigal Son and see how our heavenly Father is proud of us.

[Luke 15:11-19]

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. ¹² The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³ "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵ He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."

The son in this story is hoping his father will receive him back as a lowly servant but he is afraid that his performance will disqualify him.

So many times we assume that God will treat us as our earthly father does. Whether you had a great father or an absent father, our heavenly Father is way more qualified to receive us as we are with love and acceptance.

[Luke 15:20-24]

"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹ His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

22 "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

The Father restored Sonship instead of requiring performance.

HeThe Father's kiss = Acceptance

His robe = Restored Nobility

His ring = Restored Inheritance

His shoes = Restored Sonship

His fattened calf = Restored Dignity

God's Heart toward you...

[Zephaniah 3:17]

*The Lord your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing*

- He is NEAR you, not far away.
- He will SAVE you, not let you work it out.
- He REJOICES over you and is GLAD when He thinks of you.
- He QUIETS your groveling, begging, performance mentality with His LOVE.
- He REJOICES over you with SINGING.

As a father, I don't know how it works exactly, but my love and pride in my sons OVERWHELMS any frustration.

When we mess up, fail, don't "perform" well, we think we deserve what the Prodigal Son thought he deserved. In reality, God's love "Sees us while we are still a long way off"

Church, God is proud of you... In spite of all your shortcomings, weaknesses, and track record good or bad HE LOVES YOU, and HE'S SO PROUD OF YOU!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Share a moment when you were told, "I am proud of you" who was it and what had you done?**
- 2. How does having someone present and proud of you change the way you live?**
- 3. Why is it so hard to believe that God is proud of you?**
- 4. What characteristics of your earthly father have you superimposed onto your heavenly Father?**
- 5. What does operating in a spirit of "sonship" or "daughterhood" look like compared to a performance mentality?**
- 6. What evidence do you have that proves you are a child of God?**
- 7. What are the words to Gods song over you? Come on spend sometime and give this some thought, close your eyes and listen to Him. What are the words, of a proud Father, over you? (Hint: it has nothing to do with your performance)**