

This is the second message and study on a series aimed at helping us to live by faith instead of fear, in peace instead of anxiety. Jerrod is speaking on Sunday from the story of the prodigal son. Last week we focused on a call to prayer from Philipians. This passage will focus on the character of God and how we can respond to God in faith instead of fear and anxiety.

Many of questions are aimed at feelings and personal responses. So, my suggestions are fewer in quantity.

Grace to you, Steve

FATHER FEELINGS

Fathers often evoke a lot of feelings in their children. What did you feel around your father? (Probably different at different times.)

I think responses will be quite varied.

For myself, I often felt that my father was distant, disconnected, etc. However, as I got into my teen and young adult years, I mostly felt disapproval and anger from my father. The result was fear and anxiety that led to more distance.

A FAMOUS STORY

We are going to read together a beloved story, often called 'the prodigal son.' Perhaps this story is really about the father. As you read it, you might consider these three questions:

- What was the prodigal son feeling at different times?
- What do we learn about the character and ways of the father?
- Have you ever felt some of what the prodigal son might have felt?

Read "Luke" 15:11-32 and consider these questions:

Seeking worldly pleasures, independence, out of supervision, etc.

What did the son feel when he ran out of funds?

Fear, panic, depressed, shame, guilt, etc.

What is the big surprise in this story? How do you feel when you read this surprise?

That his father welcomed him back with joy.

Why such a big celebration? What does this reveal about how received his son? How do you celebrate when someone comes to repentance and faith?

The father welcomed him back as a son, not a slave or servant.

What did the older son feel and why? Have you ever felt this way?

He felt like he deserved better, that the father wasn't fair or just, that he hadn't received his share, etc.

What are your impressions of the father? The sons?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

Our “Courageous” series includes a look at ‘fear and anxiety’ in our lives. Why might the prodigal son have had thoughts that led to these feelings and emotions? Have you ever felt fear or anxiety for similar reasons?

Opinion question, Sharing

Do you sometimes beat yourself up when you don’t feel that you have lived up to God’s standards? Have you ever felt that you have gone sideways too many times for God to love you?

Sharing

A common response to sin and failure is to try to ‘work harder’ so God would be pleased. Have you tried this? How did it work out?

Sharing

How would you describe the father in this story (who represents God the Father)? What do you think God wants us to know and experience and why?

Sharing

How are fear and faith connected? What inspires faith in God? What triggers anxiety?

Sharing

APPLY IT THIS WEEK

When you think about God, what comes to mind? Do you see him like the father in this story? How much do you understand about the character of God? Years back, Moses wanted to know more about God and He shared who He is. Read Exodus 34:6-7. What do you learn about God? Is this how you see Him? For this week, walk through your days picturing God like the father in our story and consider how this affects your relationship with Him.