

The Running God

Discussion Notes

The question 'where are you God?' is common, both for Christians but also people who don't belong to a church - if there is a God, where is he? The story of the prodigal son shows us that when we ask that question, God replies: 'where are *you*?' The reality is that many of us feel distant from God because we are lost.

Philip described it like this: "You can be lost even when you know exactly where you are."

- What does that statement mean?
- Do you have examples where you've felt distant from God, but actually you were lost?
- What does being lost *actually* look

Spend some time reading Luke 15:11-32. This is a story that many of us will have heard lots of times, so ask the question: what stands out to you when reading the passage that you haven't noticed before?

The son is eventually found when the father sees him from a long way off, is filled with compassion and runs to meet his son. What the Father does next tells us 3 things about his character and what it means to be 'found'.

1) The Father Reconciles - Luke 15:21

The Father's response is immediate reconciliation - there is no need to pay back debts, to earn the Father's forgiveness. The Bible tells us that in Jesus we are *already* reconciled to the Father.

- What does reconciliation mean to you?
- Are we aware of how we have been reconciled to the Father? Do we take it for granted or not really live it out?
- What role can we play in helping our friends and families find reconciliation with God?

2) The Father Restores - Luke 15:22

We find mercy in reconciliation, meaning we *don't get what we deserve* for our actions and we are let off the hook. When we are restored we received grace, meaning we *get what we don't deserve*. The son receives the finest cloak and a ring on his finger.

- Have you noticed this difference between mercy and grace before?
- How do we need restoring? What areas of our life are in need of grace?
- How can we help the Father in his work of restoring the world?

3) The Father Rejoices - Luke 15:23-24

The Father throws a huge party to celebrate his son coming home. God actually *rejoices* in the presence of the angels.

- Do we miss out on rejoicing? What stops us from experiencing the joy of God as he rejoices over us?
- Does our life look like the party that it should? Are we full of joy like the Father is?

The Mayor, Marvin Rees, laid out some key areas that he is asking the churches in Bristol to step up and help support the city. Three causes that the Love Running money will help in particular are fighting street crime and gang activity, ending period poverty and financing childcare initiatives.

- What about what Marvin shared surprised you?
- How can we as a church make sure that we engaged with the city, especially during a time when political leaders are asking for our help?