

July 11/12, 2026

“The Prodigal Son”

Guest Pastor Ricky Jenkins



Beyond the
Weekend

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY, + ACT.

2026 Focus: 12 Months of Prayer | July: Worship

Each month, journey through a different biblical model of prayer.

Day 1 [Luke 15:11-32](#) | The Father's Heart

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. Luke 15:20b

Jesus uses parables to teach people about God and the human heart. In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus tells of two sons—one who openly rebels and one who carefully follows the rules. The younger son demands his inheritance, leaves home, and wastes everything. This would bring great shame upon the family, and people would expect the father to reject his son if he returns. Instead, the father watches and waits. While his son is still far away, he sees him, feels deep compassion, runs to him, hugs him, and welcomes him home. The father does not wait for an apology before showing love. His first response is compassion.

This is the heart of God. God's love is not earned by our good behavior or lost because of our failures. He is holy and just, yet he is also full of mercy and compassion. He patiently calls us back to himself and delights when we return. Jesus came to show us exactly what the Father's love is like. Through him, we see a God who welcomes the rebel and the rule follower, restores the broken, and never stops loving us. His love is steady because it is based on who he is, not on what we do. God's love is never coerced. Rather, it is constant, patient, and welcoming.

TODAY: Read [Luke 15:20](#) again. Spend a few quiet minutes picturing the father running to his son. Thank God for his compassion, and ask him to help you trust his love and show that same compassion to someone else today.

Day 2 [Luke 15:1-2](#) | Rebellious Hearts

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Luke 15:2

As his ministry grows, Jesus responds to the religious leaders' criticism with a parable. They believe they are better than everyone else because they keep the laws and commandments. Through this story, Jesus shows that both sons have hearts that are far from their father. The younger son rebels in obvious ways. The older son looks obedient on the outside, but his heart is filled with anger, jealousy, and resentment. One son runs away from the father. The other stays home but is just as distant in his heart.

We can see ourselves in both brothers. Sometimes our sin is obvious—reckless living, sexual sin, or greed. Other times it hides behind pride, entitlement, or a critical spirit. Whatever form it takes, sin always pulls us away from God. It promises life but leaves us empty. It offers freedom but leads to bondage. Our Father invites

us to come home. He is watching, waiting, and ready to welcome every repentant sinner with open arms. This is the daily rhythm of the Christian life: confession and repentance. When we confess our sin and turn back to him, we find forgiveness instead of condemnation, grace instead of rejection, and the joy of being restored to our Father's love. His grace doesn't simply forgive our past; it changes our hearts, making us more like Christ as we learn to walk with him each day.

TODAY: Read [Psalm 51](#) slowly. Confess your sins to God by naming them honestly. Then pray [verse 10](#): "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Ask God to help you turn away from sin and follow him.

Day 3 [Luke 15:17-24](#) | Coming Home

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.
Luke 15:18

Everything changes when the younger son returns home. Expecting shame and hoping to be accepted as a servant, he prepares his confession and begins the journey back. But before he can reach the house, his father sees him from a distance. In a culture where a son who dishonors his family deserves rejection, the father does the unthinkable. The son expects to earn his way back, but the father freely welcomes him home with love, grace, and joy. Instead of punishment, he gives his son the best robe, a ring, and sandals, restoring him to his place in the family. Then he calls for a feast.

The good news is that God does not wait for us to clean ourselves up or earn our way back. He has already made the way through Jesus Christ, who did what we never could through his perfect life. In his death, Jesus took the punishment our sins deserved. In his resurrection, he defeated sin and death so that all who trust in him can be forgiven and welcomed into God's family. The Christian life begins by turning to God in faith, and it continues the same way.

TODAY: If you have never trusted Jesus, today is an invitation to come home. Admit your sin, believe that Jesus died and rose again for you, and receive the forgiveness and new life he freely offers. If you already belong to Christ, remember what he has done. Your standing with God is secure because of Jesus. When you sin, confess it, knowing that "he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins" ([1 John 1:9](#)).

Day 4 [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#) | Communion

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
1 Corinthians 11:26

This weekend, we celebrated Communion as a church family. Communion is a tangible corporate reminder of Jesus's finished work on the cross. The bread and cup represent his broken body and shed blood, given so our sins could be forgiven. As we share this meal together, we proclaim who Jesus is, what he accomplished through his death, and the hope of his return. Communion also reveals the heart of the Father. Like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, God does not wait with folded arms, demanding that we earn our way back. Instead, he runs toward us with compassion, welcoming us through the sacrifice of his Son. The cross is the ultimate picture of the Father's love, making a way for every wandering heart to come home to him.

In a culture that rarely slows down, Communion invites us to pause. It is not an empty ritual or a way to earn God's favor. It is an opportunity to remember that we are loved, forgiven, and welcomed because of Jesus. As we reflect on his sacrifice, we are also invited to renew our hearts in joyful obedience, responding to the Father's grace with lives fully surrendered to him.

TODAY: Spend a few moments reflecting on God’s love for you. Listen to the worship song, “[Run to the Father](#),” and let its words remind you that because of Jesus, you are always invited to come home to the Father’s loving embrace.



Day 5 [John 17:1–5](#) | Jesus’s Prayer of Worship

This year in Beyond the Weekend, journey through different biblical models of prayer—one each month. July’s focus is Worship.

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” John 17:1

His death is only hours away. By the morning, Jesus will be nailed to a Roman cross. Gripped with urgency, he gives his disciples final words of encouragement. He tells them to remain in him. He promises to send a helper, the Holy Spirit, to remind them of his words. He assures them that their grief will be turned to joy ([John 15–16](#)). Now, he turns to heaven to pray. He worships God the Father and asks for his death to bring glory to him. Jesus worships God for his plan to bring eternal life through his death and resurrection. He exalts him for making a way through the impossible canyon of sin and death. Knowing that God will be glorified and reunited with his creation allows him to worship in the face of insurmountable suffering.

Jesus’s decision to worship when facing death reminds us that we, too, can glorify God in our own suffering. Worship reorients our hearts toward God’s promises. When we worship God in prayer, we remember he is in control and that his purposes will happen. He desires to be known through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. His suffering and ultimate victory over sin and death can turn our sorrow into joy and our pain into triumphant endurance. Not even death can swallow up the eternal victory of Christ.

TODAY: Pray this over your circumstances: “Father, thank you for loving me by sending your Son Jesus to die for my sins. I ask for your glory to be revealed in my current situation. Though I am weary, I know that enduring can lead others to praise you.”