

### **LAUNCH**

Share with the group a time when someone extended 'grace' to you: They could have blamed you or shamed you but they didn't. They gave you love and understanding when you deserved something else. How did it feel?

This is the story of a father's grace which witnesses to God's grace in Jesus.

### **DISCOVERY & APPLICATION**

1. Read the passage aloud. Take a look at verses 1-2, which set the scene for all the stories in the chapter. What is Jesus doing, and why are the 'Pharisees and teachers of the law' upset about it? How do they show their disgust?

2. In answer to their grumbling, Jesus tells three stories about people or things that are lost and then found, and about the joy that comes when one sinner repents. We are going to look at the third story, about a father and his son, starting at verse 11.

In verses 11-12, what does the young son ask for? How does he ask? In what way is this a picture of sin?

3. How does the father respond in verse 12b? How do you think he feels?

4. Now look at the description of the son's adventures in verses 13-16. What words in that paragraph describe the fact that he is really a 'sinner'? For a Jewish person, what is especially sinful and disgusting about what he does in verses 15-16? According to verse 16, what effect is the son's wasteful, sinful lifestyle finally having on him?

5. In verses 17-20, what words and phrases describe what 'repentance' is for this young man? How do your observations describe what true repentance is? In what ways are we in danger of watering down repentance in our gospel sharing? Why is this dangerous?

6. Look at the father's reaction in verse 20. What clues do you find that show the father has been waiting for his son's return? In verses 20-24, what strong, emotional words do you see that describe an extravagant welcome? What did the son do to deserve such a wonderful welcome? Why did the father welcome him like this?

7. Jesus' answer to the grumbling Pharisees and teachers is found in verses 25-32. In some ways the older brother in this story represents them. How does the older brother respond to this wonderful, undeserved welcome? What does the father say in return? Along with verses 7 and 10, how is this an answer from Jesus to the Pharisees who opposed his welcoming of sinners?

### **APPLICATION**

Think again about the loving father. How does he show God's grace?

Put yourself in the son's place. How does it feel to have the heavenly Father hugging you, enclosing you in his loving arms, even though you don't deserve it?

Now think about the elder brother. Are there any joy destroying attitudes that you need to repent of?