**Birth, Not Behavior**

**A Fresh Look at the Prodigal Son**

**Online Questions**

**Chapter 1 The Three Protagonists**

1. Did Av take Judah’s obedience for granted? Why hadn’t he celebrated Judah’s faithful service before?
2. Everyone is unique from birth. If you are a parent, how do you treat your children the same while respecting their uniqueness?
3. Have you seen or experienced sibling rivalry that led to broken relationships and bad outcomes? If they had involved you, what could you have done differently?
4. The Bible says, “God so loved the world . . .” but have you felt unconditionally loved by God just by being born into this world? If not, why do you think that is?

**Chapter 2 The Younger Son**

1. What do you think motivated Lev to leave his comfortable home and head as far away from his family as possible?
2. There are different ways of dealing with the four brutal realities. Which of these approaches do you naturally lean toward:

Adopting a “woe is me” victim mentality

Suffering in silence and being passive-aggressive

Persevering and pushing ahead no matter the cost

“Coming to your senses” and letting the situation change your mind (repentance)

1. Our beliefs influence our behavior. These beliefs act as a “governor” that limits our relationship with God and others. Lev’s governor is the idea that his father will treat him as his conduct deserves. Do you share this same belief? If so, where do you think it comes from?
2. Grace means “unmerited favor,” so why do so many of us feel we have to earn grace or can lose it by behaving badly?

**Chapter 3 The Older Son**

1. What do you think Judah’s awareness of the four brutal realities was at this stage in his life?

Brutal reality number one: *The world does not revolve around you*

Brutal reality number two: *Life is hard*

Brutal reality number three: *You are going to die*

Brutal reality number four: *You are not in control*

1. Was Judah justified in being angry with Lev and Av? What was negative about how he expressed his anger? What was positive?
2. Neither son got what he expected from his father based on his behavior. What did Lev expect? What did Judah expect?
3. Av’s attitude toward his sons was the same, but did he treat them differently when Lev returned?

**Chapter 4 The Loving Father**

1. If you’re a parent, have you faced a similar situation as Av did with Lev? If so, did you refuse the request to spare your child the pain, or did you let them go? How did the situation turn out?
2. Young children need to be protected from themselves, but as they grow older, what are some reasons to say “no” to a son or daughter’s selfish and harmful demands? What are some reasons to say “yes”?
3. Why doesn’t the God who knows everything protect us from choices and circumstances that are destructive and deadly?
4. The parable ends with Av’s appeal for Judah to join the party but doesn’t say if he did. Why did Jesus stop here?

**Chapter 5 Ephraim’s Story, part 2**

1. What did it represent that Av had the best robe put on Lev, along with a ring and sandals? What was signified by the killing of the fattened calf?
2. Does forgiving someone mean forgetting what they have done or treating them the same as before their misdeeds?
3. If you were Judah, what would it take for you to forgive Lev? Would you ever give him part of your inheritance to make up for what he squandered? Why or why not?
4. Forgiving a debt isn’t the same as having it paid. If someone owes you $1,000 and a friend pays you the money, there’s nothing for you to forgive. If you forgive the $1000, there’s nothing for anyone to pay. It’s either-or, not both-and: forgiveness or payment. Which is it when it comes to God’s forgiveness of his children?

**Afterword**

1. Can the “allness” of God’s love be seen in the “allness” of his plan of redemption? Will the redemptive work of Jesus Christ win out over sin and rebellion? Based on what Jesus taught in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, what do you think?
2. How does an eternal hell of conscious torment square with what the Bible teaches about God’s love, grace, mercy, and justice?
3. Do you believe God’s love can be thwarted in the end by defiant human will or satanic interference?
4. How does what you think about the “allness” of God’s love make a difference in your everyday life?