



WEEK 3

The Dad Who Doesn't Make Sense

Sept 30 & Oct 1, 2017

Pastor Jared Herd

LEADERS GUIDE

1. Who is/was your favorite TV dad? What do you like most about this character?

If your group needs a few memory joggers, here are TV Guides' top 20 dads of all time. Chat about what made these fictional dads memorable. Were any of them out-of-the-box or nonsensical? What would their shows have been like if they had exercised God's kind of parenting?

1. Cliff Huxtable (The Cosby Show)
2. Ben Cartwright (Bonanza)
3. John Walton, Sr. (The Waltons)
4. Charles Ingalls (Little House on the Prairie)
5. Danny Williams (Make Room for Daddy)
6. Jim Anderson (Father Knows Best)
7. Steve Douglas (My Three Sons)
8. Andy Taylor (The Andy Griffith Show)
9. Howard Cunningham (Happy Days)
10. Ray Barone (Everybody Loves Raymond)
11. Reverend Eric Camden (7th Heaven)
12. Steven Keaton (Family Ties)
13. Dan Conner (Roseanne)
14. Mike Brady (The Brady Bunch)
15. Tom Corbett (Courtship of Eddie's Father)
16. Alex Stone (The Donna Reed Show)
17. Forrest Bedford (I'll Fly Away)
18. George Lopez (George Lopez)
19. Herman Munster (The Munsters)
20. Tim Taylor (Home Improvement)

Do you know of a father in real life who is like this?

2. Take a look at Luke 15:25-32.

Luke 15:25-32 (NIV) 25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened

calf because **he has him back safe and sound.**' 28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours **was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**'"

What did it mean that the younger son had returned "safe and sound"?

Pastor Jared told us that the party that resulted from this son's return was not in honor of the son but the father. This was a patriarchal society where the father's position in the society was paramount. This father had lost something – his child – and now his child had been returned to him. Verse 27 gives us the telling verb – the father **HAS** him back. The party is not to celebrate so much that the son returned, but that the father received him. The word Jesus uses here in the Greek means "to receive, to take back, to recover."

The word Jesus uses here for "safe and sound" (that's our colloquialism, not so much the first century's) means "whole" or "in good health." It's the same word Jesus used in Luke 5:31 when He said that's it not the **healthy** that need a doctor, it's the sick. The fictional father more fully explains this concept when he's talking to the older brother. The younger brother had been "dead" and was now "alive" again. Whole.

Can you relate to the older son's response?

Parcel out his response and discuss:

1. **He became angry.** Talk about what he might have been before. How long might his brother have been gone? What emotion do you suppose the older brother had been nursing up to this moment?
2. **He refused to go into his father's party.** He had to have known this response would shame his father. Yet he did it anyway. Talk about that.
3. **He says, "this son of yours,"** in effect *rejecting* his brother. Note the father's kind response and how he restores the older son to his brother when he says, "this brother of yours."
4. **Calls out his brother's sin, refuses to consider he has faults of his own.**

3. How did the older son describe his relationship with his father (verse 29)?

The word here that the brother uses to describe how he saw his relationship with dad (*All these years I have been **slaving** for you*) is translated very simply to be a slave, to yield obedience. What is the son telling us here about how he sees dad and how he sees himself? What is their relationship based on, as the older son sees it?

Why do you think he felt this way?

In this story, Jesus is telling us He knows how we are prone to think, that if we do good, God will love us; and that the more good we do, the more He will love us. The older son thinks he's the **good** son. What is the problem with that kind of thinking? (It puts us in charge of our relationship with God; meaning we think it's what we do or don't do that defines the relationship rather than what He has done.)

Round out the convo by reminding everyone of the stage illustration Pastor Jared used with the rope and the stanchions. There is God on one side, and everyone else on the other. Everyone: older son, younger son, everyone.

4. Both men in this parable misunderstood what it meant to be a son of their father. What distinguishes a slave from a son or daughter?

Make a list of as many differences as you can think of. Here are some:

Slave	Son/Daughter
Owned	Loved
No inheritance	Inheritance
Possessing nothing	Possessing much
Not a member of the family	A member of God's family
No access to the master	Access to the Father
Representative of no one	Identified with the family
Obeys because of duty/law	Obeys out of love

5. How are the two brothers alike? How are they different?

DIFFERENT:

- The younger son turned his back on home; the older son stayed.
- The younger son was wasteful; the older son was productive.
- The younger squandered his inheritance; the older son did not.
- The younger did feel worthy of his father's favor; the older son did.
- The younger realized his sin; the older felt righteous.
- The younger son was full of repentance; the older son was full of resentment.

SIMILAR:

- Both sons wanted to celebrate/party without their father. The younger brother partied in a far-off land. The older brother refused to celebrate with his father but made it clear he wanted to party with his friends. For both, dad was not seen as a part of their happiest, celebratory moments.
- Neither son seemed to love or appreciate their father, even though he loved both of them.
- Both sons saw themselves as slaves, which means they saw dad as taskmaster, not loving father.
- Both sons appear to be rather materialistic. The younger son's materialism is obvious; the older son's view of materialism is exhibited by his hot and bothered response to his brother's wasting of his inheritance. Both sons make it clear they loved money; they just differed in what they wanted to do with it.
- Both sons were sinners.

6. We learned this weekend that when it comes to God's grace it doesn't matter how bad you've been but it also doesn't matter how good you've been either. What does that mean?

This verse is a great one for making it clear what this concept means but let people share first and use this to round out the question:

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 **not by works, so that no one can boast.**

How do you feel about that?

It should actually make us feel great! When we truly understand that our good works do not bridge the Grand-Canyon sized chasm between us sinners and a holy God, then we should feel tremendous relief! But we must understand who we are first: sinners lost without the cross and grace of Christ. Until we understand that, we might feel that our good works should count for something, or why should we bother? (We bother because the transforming work of Christ in our life produces results in keeping with repentance. The good works don't count, they reveal.)

7. Pastor Jared said that when you understand grace, sinners will become increasingly comfortable around you, and you will become increasingly comfortable around them. What did he mean by this?

Pastor Jared reminded us that the sinners who hung around Jesus (and whom the Pharisees couldn't stand) *liked* Jesus. And the more they liked Him, the more they wanted to be like Him. Romans 2:4 tells us it is God's KINDNESS that leads to repentance, not criticism and judgment.

(Romans 2:4 “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that **God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”**)

And yet we sadly too often think judging people who are out of fellowship with God and His standards will lead them to repentance. Talk about that.

The worst sinner and the most righteous do-gooder are the same. Both need the grace that bridges that gap between them and God and which neither can cross without Christ.

8. Take a look at Isaiah 55:8.

Isaiah 55:8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.

What does it mean to you that God is, as Pastor Jared reminded us, Other, that He is not like us?

How is grace a “divine insanity?”

Pastor Jared shared that grace is not a way to operate a business because it’s not what we would call fair. At all. Grace makes no sense business-wise because it’s not fair. To be clear, fairness is NOT a bad thing; it’s a good thing. But when it comes to our relationship with God, it’s not going to save us, no matter how good it is. We don’t need God to be fair to us (that would be our undoing), we need Him to lavish His grace on us. It makes no sense that He does, but He does. And here’s the why of it. He loves us.

“For God **so loved** the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” – John 3:16

MEMORIZE Isaiah 5:8 (NIV): "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

MEDITATE: This week spend some time in prayer thanking God that He does not deal with you as your sins deserve (Psalm 103:10) but rather is lavishly extravagant with His grace concerning you.