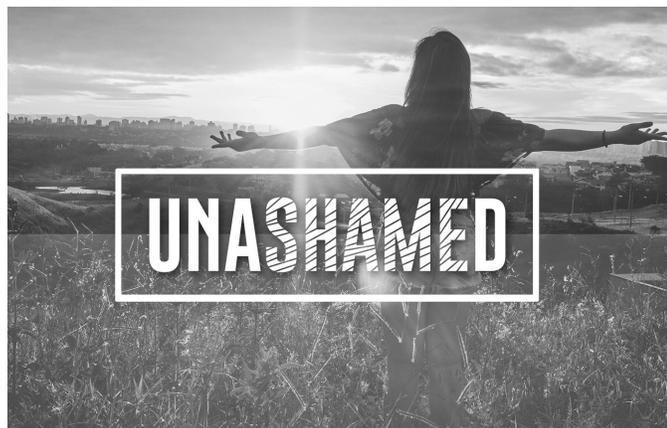


SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



Identity

May 11—15, 2019

Shame distorts our sense of identity. The enemy whispers in our ear that we are a failure, unworthy, unlovable and unforgiveable. The father in the Prodigal Son story beautifully illustrates the One who knows our failures but will never reject or abandon us. This story proclaims a truth we desperately need to hear: our identity as a child of God is rooted in God's grace, not in our behavior. We can't earn it, nor can we lose it.

SCRIPTURE TEXT : LUKE 15:11-24

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

The younger son has blown it about as badly as life can be blown. He's basically told his father he wishes he were dead (by asking for his inheritance early) and promptly squandered it all away breaking every commandment. He has desecrated himself by feeding pigs. Shame, along with hunger, drive him back home, but not as a member of the family. He returns as a servant. Shame has changed his sense of identity.

What's amazing about this story is the father's response. Not only does he run to greet his returning son, but the gifts he gives are significant and symbolic. He puts a coat on his son – likely his own coat. He puts a ring on his son's finger – a signet ring that identified him as a member of the family and was essentially an ancient credit card. He puts sandals on his feet because slave went about in bare feet. In other words, everything the father does seeks to drive home to the young man his identity as a son. No failure, no matter how grave, could change his true identity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you think it felt to be the son in this story? The father?
- What does Satan/your inner critic whisper in your ear when you've blown it?
- What identity distortion are you tempted to believe?
- What helps you to maintain a grounded sense of your true identity?
- How do you know which identity you're living out of?

APPLICATION: This week, take a moment to remind yourself daily that your identity as a child of God is rooted in God's grace, not in your behavior. How awesome is that?!