

WHEN CHILDREN STRAY

This study guide will help us turn what God is saying to us into action steps. The questions and scriptures are here to help us take our "Next Steps." Have a great discussion!

PRAYER & ICEBREAKER

Take a moment to think back to your childhood. As a child, how were you at following instructions? Share with your group.

READ

"If the whole world depends on today's youth, I can't see the world lasting another 100 years."

This is a quote by the classical Greek Philosopher, Socrates, who existed thousands of years ago. Ironically, many people today would probably share the same sentiments. Whether it's for an issue of work ethic or a lack of respect for others, the youth of today have been stamped with a negative label as an entire generation.

DISCUSSION

In your opinion, what do you think causes children/youth to go wayward? Why? Share with your group.

READ

Sometimes, children stray due to lack of discipline. However, this is not always the case, for even the most perfect Father (God), has the most rebellious children.

The Bible is filled with stories of children who have strayed from Him and His ways. It began with the first children, Adam & Eve, it continued to their children, Cain & Abel, and carried on in the many generations that followed. Each and every one of us have strayed in our own way at one point or another. The question is, "how do we deal with children who stray away?" Thankfully, we can look to God as the perfect example.

In the book of Luke, Jesus shares with us the parable of the prodigal son. This story begins with a man who has two sons. One of the sons asks his father for his portion of the family estate as an early inheritance. Read what happens next below:

"And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living." (Luke 15:13)

After foolishly spending all of his inheritance, the prodigal son eventually hit rock bottom. Ready to eat from the same pit as the pigs, he finally came to his senses and decided to return to his father who joyfully welcomed him home with open arms.

DISCUSSION

Can you think of a time when you strayed from your Heavenly Father? Share with your group.

READ

When the prodigal son returned home to his father, not only did his father lovingly welcome him home, we went the extra mile and lavishly celebrated the return of his son.

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:22-24)

This is the perfect depiction of how God deals with His children who stray! He does not condemn them, nor does He rebuke them, but He welcomes them home with loving arms.

DISCUSSION

Have you ever experienced God’s loving embrace even when you didn’t deserve it? Explain and share with your group.

READ

We have all gone astray at least once before. Thankfully, God has demonstrated His perfect and unconditional love for us, and He’s given us the perfect example to follow on how to deal with our own wayward children. Below are a few practical action steps we can take for the sake of our children and the next generation.

1. Watch and Pray

- Pray strongly on their behalf. Watch for open opportunities to connect with and guide them.

2. Pray for Godly Influencers

- Pray for Godly influencers to be around them in their workplace, social circles, etc.

3. Pray for their Salvation

- Remember that Jesus is the only way and the only hope. Only Christ can truly change hearts.

NEXT STEPS...

This week commit to doing the following:

- Pray for Godly influencers to come into the life of your child(ren)
- Pray for your child’s salvation above all else
- Pray 1 Peter 2:9 over today’s youth/the next generation
 - *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9)*
- Thank God for His unconditional love and making a way for You to come home to Him.