

Painting Caption

Bethany Christian Trust and Glasgow City Mission are the two charity partners of The Wild Olive Tree Café. As well as profits going to those organisations, both are very active in the life of the church and café. Staff members from Bethany and the Mission are both involved in the Thursday Bible study for men who have been through prison or addiction.

David, who works for Bethany has supported Martin on his journey from prison to reintegrating into society and finding a home at his church in Bathgate. Like the father in the prodigal son story, David has rejoiced at seeing Martin turning around and finding his way home.

Study

Read the text twice

Look at the painting

Read the Painting Caption

Questions

What jumps off the page at you?

FGP

List what the text tells us about the Father and the two sons.

3s/ FB

What do you think makes the son leave, and why does the text say he returns?

FGP

What do you make of the celebration over the return of the son?

3s/ FB

The painting caption notes David's joy at Martin's "turning around and finding his way home." Do you think we as the Church rejoice over the same things as God the Father?

FGP

Is there anything in our attitudes and approach (both as individuals and as a church) that needs to change in response to this text?

3s/ FB

Study Key

3s / FB - Groups of 3 with feedback to whole group

FGP - Full Group

GPS - Larger groups of 6 (if desired)



The Project

The Gospel Sketchbook is a three-year project based in St George's Tron, Church, Glasgow, in which Artist in Residence Iain Campbell is painting 24 canvases from Luke's Gospel, one for each chapter.

Key to each painting is reflecting on the Biblical text and how it might apply to contemporary Glasgow.

The Study

The following Bible Study considers both the Biblical text and the painting on which it is based, encouraging participants to think about how to apply the Biblical text to their context. The study is designed to be used with *The Portrait Gospel*, a special edition of Luke's Gospel that features Our Last Supper on the cover, the first canvas painted as part of this project.

Conversations Bible Study

Each of the individual studies uses the Conversations style. Conversations is a method of Bible study developed by the Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual

Bible Study Group. Conversations seeks to encourage people to actively engage with the Bible and apply it to life.

The questions are designed to stimulate conversation within groups where people may have varying backgrounds and knowledge of the Bible. You will notice a similar pattern of questions used throughout the studies. All of the questions are 'open' questions which don't presume an answer but instead invite people to reflect personally on the text. The first question is always, "What jumps off the page at you?" – an opportunity for people to begin to share their thoughts on a passage. Then there are 'listing' questions that encourage a closer reading of the text, 'theological' questions that seek to understand the meaning, and finally 'contextual' questions that begin to apply the text to life.

We hope you find this a refreshing and stimulating way to study the Bible.

More Bible study resources that utilise the Conversations method can be found at: scottishbiblesociety.org/equip

The Prodigal Son

Study 15 • Luke 15:11-32



Text: Luke 15:11-32 Page 66-67 of The Portrait Gospel

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, “Father, give me my share of the estate.” So he divided his property between them.

¹³ ‘Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ ‘When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.” ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

‘But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms round him and kissed him.

²¹ ‘The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

²² ‘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. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ ‘Meanwhile, the elder 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 elder 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.”