

## STARTING POINT (PART 3) “Unbelievable!”

Scripture used: 1 Cor. 15:3, Luke 15:25-32 (NLT)

### OVERVIEW

**Big Idea:** Everyone's faith has a starting point.

This week's message is part three in the Starting Point series where, through the parable of the Prodigal Son, grace is defined. Many people, even believers, feel that they are not good enough to be loved and accepted by God because of their sinful ways. This belief causes them to distance themselves from the love of God which He wants to lavish on us. Unlike the conditional love of human beings, God's love is unconditional and cannot be earned. His love is a free gift for all – believers and not-yet-believers alike. God chose us long before we chose Him, and when His chosen come back to Him, it is cause for celebration!

### KEY POINTS

#### 1) *The Most Important Thing*

- a. **Who is Jesus?** Jesus is fully God and fully human. He is the physical expression of God's character.
- b. **Am I a sinner or a mistaker?** Sin is more than a mistake. This is not about being mistaken, or about lacking knowledge. Sin is what pulls us away from doing the things we know to be right, as Paul describes in Romans 7: 19-20 (NLT).
- c. **Is God's grace really that good?** Many do not understand or can fathom a perfect God loving imperfect human beings.

#### 2) *God's grace is unbelievable because:*

- a. **It does not fit our experience of the world** We've been taught that we get what we earn and that we have to prove we're good enough by working hard for approval and acceptance.
- b. **It is a priceless gift for those who do not deserve it** God's grace cannot be earned. At our worst, God will not kick us out! It is Jesus' character, morality, and faithfulness that covers our lack.
- c. **It is rich in mercy** Mercy is when we do not get what our actions deserve; however, grace does not block the consequences of our actions, but it spares our life.

#### 3) *The older brother's response:*

- a. **Attitude** The older brother is angry and unwelcoming. He was upset and thought it unfair that his younger brother was in a place of honor for coming back home when he himself had never left in the first place. He “slaved” for his father and did not receive a party, why should his disobedient younger brother receive a party? God wants love-based obedience, not fear-based obedience.
- b. **Action** He is rebellious and unaware of his own actions. His father tells him to come join the party but he is so upset that he refuses. He declared he had never been disobedient to his father not realizing that he was being disobedient as he was speaking.
- c. **Articulation** He is self-righteous and unloving. He thought since he was a hard worker and never left his father's home, he was better than his younger brother. He thought he deserved what his younger brother received, not realizing that he could have had even more than his younger brother if he asked.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Was there something you heard in the message that stood out to you about grace? What comes to mind when you think about God's grace?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Read Luke 15:25-32 together. “In each of us, there is some younger brother and some older brother.” Consider some times when you have been either. Which brother do you most identify with and why? Is there someone you think you're spiritually better than?
- 3) **DO** - “Whenever there's a family member who is dead and lost, the family is broken. When the lost one comes back, the party is for everyone.” Write down all the names of those in your physical and spiritual family who are far from God then pray for them to return to the family. Take some time this week to reach

out to one or more on your list simply to say hello, ask how they are, or even share a meal. It is love that brings the lost home, not condemnation.

**Addendum:** For those groups following the Starting Point booklet, you can supplement your discussion with the below questions.

## **DISCUSSION**

- 1) **HEAR** – As a group, watch “Messiah” by The Bible Project, found on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8>), and work your way through the Starting Point booklet pages 15-19 to better understand the Old Testament Story and what we believe at NBCC. While all 8 statements on page 18 are key tenets of our faith, which ones are most impactful to you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** – Using the template to tell your story on pages 19-20, write your story and share it with your group. Why is your story powerful?
- 3) **DO** – Read “For Further Learning” on page 21 of the Starting Point booklet. This week, read God’s Word for 5 minutes each day. Take another 5 minutes to reflect and journal about what you’ve read. Start with Mark 1 on Monday, and read through Mark 5 by Friday. That’s roughly 1 chapter/day. Pray for 5 minutes each day.

*Suggested Booklet Activities: “Now It’s Your Turn. What is Your Story (So Far)?” (pages 19-20)*