

## Week Eight—The Feast of the Father—Part Two

“He heard music and dancing.”

Wouldn't life be easier if God had created people more alike? If everyone enjoyed the same worship music, wouldn't churches have more peace and unity? If everyone in a family liked exactly the same activities, wouldn't deciding on a weekend getaway be simpler? What in the world was God thinking?

In Genesis we learn that we are created in the image of God, yet we are all so different. How can that be? Perhaps it is because, like a diamond, God is multifaceted. By ourselves, none of us mirrors the completeness of God. Just as it takes many cuts in a diamond to reflect the fullness of light and color surrounding a diamond, God shows aspects of Himself through each of His people. He shows His compassion through our friend who cooks for the homeless. He shows His joy through the child chasing bubbles. Like a diamond, each of us is “cut” differently by God, in just the right way for characteristics of Christ to shine. By being together, we experience more of Jesus.

It is also through community that our rough edges are revealed—not to discourage us, but in order for them to be refined and restored to reflect the attributes of Jesus we were created to display.

The feast of the Father is for His family and He sees Jesus reflected in each one. Join in. Take your seat at the table. You were never meant to eat alone in the kitchen. The banquet is for you; it is for us. Come.

### Memory Verse:

**He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.**  
Song of Songs 2:4

### Definitions and Translations from the Greek

#### **Water** (*hydōr*) –

- a) A fluid, the most abundant and most necessary for living beings of any in nature, except air.
- b) It is deposited in the earth in inexhaustible quantities, where it is preserved fresh and cool, and from which it issues in springs, which form streams and rivers.

#### **Living** –

- a) from *alive*
- b) Issuing continually from the earth; running; flowing; as a *living* spring or fountain; opposed to *stagnant*.
- c) Producing action, animation and vigor; quickening; as a *living* principle; a *living* faith.

#### **Bread** (*artos*) –

- 1) Food composed of flour mixed with water and baked.
  - a) The Israelites made it in the form of an oblong or round cake, as thick as one's thumb, and as large as a plate or platter. Hence, it was not to be cut but broken.
  - b) Loaves were consecrated to the Lord.
- 2) Food of any kind.

**Read pages 124-133 of Chapter Seven of *The Prodigal God*.  
Highlight thoughts that stand out to you and ideas you would like to discuss.**

**From your reading:**

1. “A high percentage of people want to achieve spiritual growth without losing their independence to a church or to any organized institution. This is often the meaning behind the common protestations “I am spiritual, but not religious” and “I like Jesus, but not Christianity” (PG pages 124-125). Do you ever feel this way? Ask the Lord if this has hindered you from entering into Christian community.

2. Keller says churches and other religious institutions are often unpleasant because they are “filled with \_\_\_\_\_.” He goes on to say that staying away from churches because of this is “just another form of \_\_\_\_\_” (PG page 125).

a) If you realize you have this attitude, take time to repent and receive God’s forgiveness.

3. In your own words, summarize C.S. Lewis’ description of **community and friendship** (PG pages 126-127).

4. What does Keller see as a necessity if you want to get to know Jesus and grow into his likeness (PG page 127)?

5. a) Like the characters in Babbette’s feast (PG pages 128-131), have you ever believed that following God and experiencing joy or fun are incompatible? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, when did that belief change, or has it?

b) Keller says, “Both the worldly life of sensual pleasure and the religious life of ethical strictness fail to give the human heart what it is seeking.” He goes on to say that neither the “aesthetic” nor the “ethical” approach to life is adequate (PG page 131-132). What does Jesus’ parable offer as the alternative?

c) **Ask God what His invitation is to you** through this part of Chapter Seven. Write it down along with your response.

**Read the Parable of the Lost Sons, Luke 15:1-3, 11-32, on SG page 4 or in your Bible.**

**Digging into the Scriptures:**

6. Even though you have read this parable for eight weeks, ask God to emphasize something new. What stands out to you? Write it down.

**7. Read Romans 12.**

a) How do verses 3-8 support the idea that we know Christ more fully through being in relationship with others?

b) From verses 9-21, list instructions for living in community.

c) From verses 9-21, ask God to highlight one idea He would like to talk with you about. Ask Him for His perspective.

--How do you respond?

--Will you share this with a friend or someone in your discussion group, asking him/her to keep you accountable through next week?

8. a) **Read Acts 4:23-31**. After Peter and John were released by the religious authorities, they went to be with their community of faith. If they had gone to their own homes instead, what do you think the consequences would have been?

b) Ask the Lord what He wants to teach you about community through these verses. Write it down.

c) **Read Acts 4:32-37**. Realizing that even as Christ-followers, we are created differently, what does it mean to be “one in heart and mind”?

--Ask God how this is possible.

d) What attitudes keep people from sharing with one another?

--If you struggle with any of these attitudes, ask God how to be set free. Listen. Write down what comes to mind.

9. Try an experiment today. Any time you are with someone, ask the Lord, “What can I learn about You from this person?” Not only will you begin to see more of God’s character, but also the immense value of every person. Write down your experience.

10. Neither the pleasures of the world or following a set of rules will satisfy the longings of our hearts. We were created for God and our spiritual hunger will only be satisfied by spiritual food. The banquet table is set. What does our Heavenly Father provide?

a) Read **John 4:9-14** (DIG DEEPER with the entire chapter.), **John 7:37-39**, and **Revelation 7:17**. What is served to “drink”?

---What is the significance of Jesus being identified this way (See definitions on page 33.)?

b) Read **John 6:25-59** and the definition of “bread.” How many times is Jesus identified as “bread”?  
---Ask the Holy Spirit to personalize the meaning for you.

---Bread that sits on kitchen counters does nothing to nourish our bodies. What must happen for the *Bread of Life* to nourish our spirits? Are you being nourished?

11. a) Ask God to show you where you are at the feast:

\_\_\_ In the kitchen, eating alone.

\_\_\_ Eating only what is familiar.

\_\_\_ Eying the dining table.

\_\_\_ Enjoying all that the host provides.

\_\_\_ Seated at the table, picking at the food.

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

b) What would it take to whole-heartedly join in the feast? What holds you back? Ask God for His perspective and write it down.

12. When he “came to his senses” (Luke 15:17), the younger son went home. He received forgiveness, a place at the banquet table, and the love and joy of his father.

a) Through the study of *The Prodigal God*, is there any way you have “come to your senses”?

b) The Father sees you and is filled with compassion. As He comes to you, what does He do or say?

c) Keller ends his book with a prophecy from **Isaiah 25:6-8**. Re-read those verses along with **verse 9**. Take time to respond to the Father by rejoicing and being glad in your salvation—a gift from the prodigal God for all of eternity. Write a prayer, worship in song, or extend kindness to another in the name of Christ.

*This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.*

Isaiah 25:9b