

At The Movies
Pinocchio
Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Isaiah 64:8 (NLT)

8 And yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.

James 1:14–15 (NLT)

14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

Psalms 16:11 (NLT)

11 You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

Luke 15:20–24 (NLT)

20 "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'
22 "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Share a time when you've made a wish or prayed for something important in your life. How did it turn out?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Ephesians 2:10 and Isaiah 64:8.** What do these verses say about our relationship to God and his desire for our lives? Discuss how these verses are portrayed in the movie via Gepetto's creation of Pinocchio and his desire for Pinocchio to gain true life.
- Pinocchio needed Jiminy Cricket as his conscience to help him distinguish right from wrong. How does the Holy Spirit function as our guide and conscience in our lives as Christians?
- **James 1:14-15.** How does this passage help us resist the allure of temporary pleasures that will lead to negative consequences in our lives?
- Pastor Clay mentioned that true pleasure is found in spending time with our Creator (Ref **Psalms 16:11**). How can we seek joy and fulfillment in our relationship with God, especially in a world that offers fleeting pleasures?
- Both Pinocchio and the prodigal son made poor choices but eventually returned home to loving fathers. How does the concept of repentance and God's grace apply to our own lives when we make mistakes or drift away from our faith?
- In the movie, Gepetto goes in search of Pinocchio when he realizes he's missing. How does this illustrate God's pursuit of us when we're lost or straying from our faith? Share a personal experience or thought about God's relentless love and pursuit in your life.

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify and share with your Small Group an area of your life where you have been drawn away by the attractions and temptations of this world.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Ask God to reveal to you areas of your life that you haven't fully surrendered to his will. Seek his strength to resist temptation and his wisdom to live more fully according to his will. And thank him for his unfailing love and pursuit of us.

Question: "What should Christian parents do if they have a prodigal son (or daughter)?"

Answer: There is inherent in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) several principles that believing parents can use to react to and deal with children who walk contrary to the way in which the parents have raised them. Parents need to remember that once their children have reached adulthood, they are no longer under the authority of their parents.

In the story of the prodigal son, the younger son takes his inheritance and goes into a far country and wastes it. In the case of a child who is not a born-again believer, this is just doing what comes naturally. In the case of a child who at one time made a clear profession of faith in Christ, we call this child a "prodigal." The meaning of this word is "a person who has spent his resources wastefully," a good description of a child who leaves home and wastes the spiritual inheritance that his parents have invested in him. All the years of nurture, teaching, love, and care are forgotten as this child rebels against God. For all rebellion is against God first, and is manifested in a rebellion against parents and their authority.

Notice that the father in the parable does not stop his child from leaving. Nor does he follow after his child to try to protect him. Rather, this parent faithfully stays at home and prays, and when that child "comes to his senses" and turns around and heads back, the parent is waiting and watching and runs to greet that child even when he is a "long way off."

When our sons and daughters go off on their own"assuming they are of legal age to do so"and make choices that we know will bring hard consequences, parents must let go and allow them to leave. The parent does not follow after, and the parent does not interfere with the consequences that will come. Rather, the parent stays at home, keeps faithfully praying and watching for the signs of repentance and a change of direction. Until that comes, parents keep to their own counsel, do not support the rebellion, and do not interfere (1 Peter 4:15).

Once children are of an age of legal adulthood, they are subject only to the authority of God and the delegated authority of government (Romans 13:1-7). As parents, we can support our prodigals with love and prayer and be ready to come alongside once they have made their move toward God. God often uses self-inflicted misery to bring us to wisdom, and it is up to each individual to respond correctly. As parents, we cannot save our children"only God can do that. Until that time comes, we must watch, pray, and leave the matter in the hands of God. This may be a painful process, but when carried out biblically, it will bring peace of mind and heart. We cannot judge our children, only God can. In this there is a great comfort: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25b).