

Elevate – Friday Night Small Group Leader Cheat Sheet

Session I Theme: Who Is the Father?

Big Goal for Tonight

Do NOT try to figure out which son the students are.

Tonight is about what students believe is true about God.

Core Teaching Idea (In One Sentence)

"Jesus tells the parable of the Prodigal Son to reveal the heart of the Father—because what we believe about where life comes from determines how we live."

What Leaders Should Be Listening For

Leaders are listening for *belief-level* assumptions about God. Listen for:

- Is God seen as generous or withholding?
- Is He patient or easily disappointed?
- Is life something He gives—or something we earn, take, or manage?
- Is God safe to return to?

These beliefs matter more than behavior *at this stage*.

What NOT to Do Tonight (Very Important)

Don't ask:

- "Which son are you?"
- "Who do you relate to more?"
- "What do you need to repent of?"

Don't push:

- Confessions
- Altar-call energy
- Emotional pressure

Jesus doesn't do that in Luke 15—and neither should we on Night One.

SG Questions:

1. Where in life (politics, Social Media, etc) have you seen different perspectives clarify an issue?
2. What words or actions in the story tell us the most about what the Father is like?
3. According to this parable, where does life actually come from—what gives it meaning or fullness?
4. Why do you think both sons believed life could be found apart from the Father, even though they were both his sons?
5. When you think about God as a Father, what's easy to believe about Him—and what's hard to believe?
6. Right now, do you tend to think abundant life comes from trusting the Father—or from managing things yourself? How could you shift that to the proper fountain of life?

Elevate – Saturday Small Group Leader Cheat Sheet

Session II Theme: The Younger Son — Looking for Life Apart from the Father

Big Goal for Tonight

Help students recognize that sin begins with believing a lie about where life comes from, not just with bad behavior. This session is about misplaced trust, not wild living.

Core Teaching Idea (In One Sentence)

"The younger son didn't leave because he hated his father—he left because he believed life could be found somewhere else."

What Leaders Should Be Listening For

Listen for how students talk about:

- freedom
- happiness
- control
- independence
- "living my own life"

These are often life-replacement stories, not just temptations. You're listening for beliefs, not just confessions.

What NOT to Do Tonight

Don't turn this into:

- "Don't party"
- "Don't rebel"
- "Don't be like those people"
- Don't force personal stories of failure.

The younger son represents *anyone* who believes life is elsewhere, including high-achieving, well-behaved students.

SG Questions:

1. What did the younger son believe he would gain by leaving the Father's house?
2. According to this story, what is the real problem with the younger son—what goes wrong before his life falls apart?
3. Why do you think Jesus uses pigs to describe the lowest point of the son's life?
4. What are some things today that promise life, freedom, or happiness—but often leave people emptier than before?
5. What changes in the son's thinking when he "comes to himself" in verse 17?
6. When you're honest with yourself, where are you most tempted to look for life apart from the Father?

Elevate – Sunday Small Group Leader Cheat Sheet

Session III Theme: The Elder Son — Life Without Loving the Father

Big Goal for Tonight

Help students see that obedience without love is not true relationship, and that proximity to God does not guarantee intimacy with Him. This is the most subtle—and dangerous—error.

Core Teaching Idea (In One Sentence)

"The elder brother stayed close to the Father but never actually wanted the Father—only what he could get from Him."

What Leaders Should Be Listening For

Listen for language like:

- "I've done everything right"
- "That's not fair"
- "I deserve better"
- "God owes me"

These often reveal transactional faith, not rebellion.

What NOT to Do Tonight

- Don't shame faithful students
- Don't imply that obedience is bad
- Don't collapse this into "try harder to love God"

The problem is *why* the elder brother *obeyed*, not that he obeyed.

SG Questions:

1. What do you notice about the elder brother's reaction when he hears about the celebration?
2. Why does the elder brother think his anger is justified? What reasons does he give?
3. According to the story, what does the elder brother believe will give him joy or life?
4. What's the difference between obeying the Father and loving the Father in this story?
5. In what ways can someone stay close to God's people or God's rules and still miss God Himself?
6. Right now, do you find it harder to trust the Father's love—or to actually want a relationship with Him?

Leaders: If students leave unsettled but thoughtful about what motivates their obedience, the session succeeded. However, don't overlook the Spirit's conviction in the moment. Lead students from each category (Older Son, Younger Son, Outsider) to the heart of the Father.