

The Lost Son Comes Home

Overview



Materials You'll Need

- chenille wires
- large beads
- scissors



Scriptures

Lk 15:11-24

Bible Truth Objective(s)

God is always waiting for us to come to Him

Behavioral Objective(s)

To know that Jesus loves us no matter what happens; to know we are special to God; to identify situations where God is always there

Memory Verse

"He was lost and is found." (Lk 15:24)



Bible Knowledge

The Younger Son's Inheritance

In biblical times, the eldest son in the family received a "double share" of the estate (Deut 21:17). With two sons in the family, the portion for the younger son would have been one-third of the estate. It was possible for the younger son to ask for this portion during his father's lifetime. This was sometimes done so that the younger son could leave and establish himself.

However, in this parable the younger son, likely single and in his late teens, indulged himself in reckless behavior. In fact, the word "prodigal," which is often used to describe the young man in the story, means "reckless" or "wasteful." The Bible records that he wasted the money and he eventually had to get a job feeding the pigs. It was an insult for a Jewish person to take on such a job because pigs were seen as unclean animals. Eventually, he came to his senses and realized that all he had to do was admit his mistakes and return to his father. When he saw his father, he humbled himself and did not expect to be treated as a son.

Rather, he offered to work as a servant to earn his keep. But Jesus told this parable to illustrate God's mercy and grace. Instead of accepting his request to make him a servant, the father restored his son's position in the family. He was given the best robe, a ring and a pair of sandals. No only that, a fatted calf was killed and the father held a feast for the return of his lost son.

Today, God also rejoices when someone repents and comes before Him to ask for forgiveness. Just as the father in the story restored his son, God will restore us. He is waiting for us and ready to welcome us home.

However, the older son in the story was not happy about his father's treatment of his younger brother. He didn't feel his brother deserved to have such a reception and celebration. The older brother is often compared to the Pharisees or self-righteous people. They could not stand to see Jesus accept sinners, and the Bible records many incidents where they complained outright to Jesus about His fellowship with such people. But Jesus told this parable to point out their hypocrisy. God's kingdom is not about following rules and regulations. It is about love, compassion, and forgiveness.



Understanding Your Students

Share with your students that God's love is a perfect one. Just as parents forgive their children's wrong-doing, so God forgives our wrong-doing.

Instead of pointing out their specific faults, take some time to brainstorm some things that children sometimes do that are not acceptable. Then ask them what the appropriate behavior should be. This way, the children are focused on the positive aspects instead of the negative.

It is also important for us to remember that young children often don't have the ability to control themselves. That's why it is very helpful for teachers to cre-

ate a set of classroom rules. That way, the students know what kind of behaviors are expected of them and what things are acceptable. At this age, we cannot expect them to know completely right from wrong. It is our job to assist them. As they grow older, they will be more able to monitor their own behavior and will need less "rules."

Do remind the students though, if they end up doing something they know is wrong, it is their job to apologize and then ask for forgiveness from both the person and from God. They also need to make the determination to not do it again. Encourage them through gentle words. We do not want to scare them so that they are afraid to tell the truth. It may also help to share some testimonies and real life situations.



Vocabulary

Forgive

to not stay mad at a person and the bad things the person has done

Famine

when there is very little food and water in the land; many people are hungry

Celebrate

to have a good time, like at a party, where there is a lot of food and drinks

Feast

to have a huge meal, where there is a lot of food and drinks



Before You Teach

In the parable of the lost son, there is a happy ending in that the younger son returned home and repented to his father. He humbled himself and asked for forgiveness. Even when his father forgave him, he felt he was not worthy to be his son and asked only to be a servant in the house. His father didn't want that. Instead, he joyfully accepted his son as part of the family again and threw a big celebration for his return. Just like the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd was so happy that his sheep was found, he invited his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. Our Father in heaven is also waiting for all people to come back to Him.

The only one who didn't seem to be happy about the whole event was the older brother. He found many reasons to protest the celebration. First he brought up the fact that he had worked hard for many years but not once had his father thrown any fancy parties to honor him. Then he pointed out the sins of the younger brother. His

behavior, according to the older brother, was just inexcusable. It didn't make sense to accept him once again as part of the family, much less throw a party. Actually, his response is much like that of the scribes and Pharisees. They are interested in showing off their self-righteousness and casting the first stone at the sinners.

Today, we may sometimes fall into the trap of becoming proud and unforgiving like the older brother. In fact, he had done nothing really wrong. He did spend many years diligently working for his father. He did not squander his father's inheritance. He was probably the kind of son that many parents wanted. Yet, that might have been the very reason why he became proud and why there was a big flaw in his character. He found it difficult to forgive his brother. Jesus has said that one must love much in order to forgive much. This brother may have been hard working, and followed all the rules. But God's kingdom isn't about hard work and following rules. In order to receive eternal life, we must bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Then we will naturally want to obey God's commandments and follow in His ways.



Bible Story

Jesus Is Forgiving

In the last lesson, we learned about a short man who wanted to see Jesus. He had to climb a tree in order to see Him because there were too many people who wanted to see Jesus too. Do you remember his name? His name was Zacchaeus. When Jesus saw him on the tree, Jesus told him to come down. Do you remember why? Jesus wanted to stay at Zacchaeus' house. When Zacchaeus heard that, he was very happy. But the other people who heard it were not. Many of them did not like Zacchaeus because he was a tax collector. He often took more money than he was supposed to and kept some of it to himself, before giving the rest to the rulers of the land. The people didn't think Jesus should go to the house of such a bad person. But Zacchaeus wanted to change. He didn't want to be a sinner anymore. So he told Jesus that he would give half of his money to the poor and return the money he took from the people. Jesus was glad to hear that Zacchaeus was ready to change. Jesus forgave him. Sometimes we do wrong things and we feel sorry about what we have done, just like Zacchaeus. And sometimes it can also be scary to tell the truth because we don't want to get into trouble. But it is very important to tell the truth. There is someone who can always help us and who always knows if we are telling the truth! Who do you think that is? (Allow students to respond.) Jesus can help us do what is right. We can pray to Him and ask for help. Let's listen to another story that Jesus told about a loving father and his son who told the truth.

A Loving Father

There was once a father who had two sons whom he loved very much. He gave them food to eat and clothes to wear. The father looked after them as best as he could. We are happy when our parents take good care of us.

But one day, the younger son asked his father a question. He said, "Father, can you give me the money you have saved for me?"

Why do you think the younger son wanted money? (Allow students to answer.) He wanted money because he wanted to leave the house, and

go out into the world and have a good time. So when the father heard this, he was very sad because he did not want his son to leave home. He loved his son very much. But he gave his son the money. The son got excited just thinking about all the places he could go to and all the new things he would see with all the money he had! A few days later, the younger son packed all his things, took his money, and started on his journey to a country far away.

The Younger Son Spends All the Money

In this far away country, the son started to spend his money. He bought lots of expensive things and wasted his money on things he didn't even need. He was spending so much money that soon, he didn't have much left. But he didn't stop spending. He kept using his money until one day, he didn't even have money left to buy food. Where was he going to find money to pay for food? At that time, the country he was in was having a famine. A famine is when there is not much food because there is usually not enough rain for plants and fruits to grow. What was the son going to do? His stomach was grumbling and groaning. He had no money and nothing to eat. He had no choice except to get a job. If he got a job, he could make a little money and maybe buy whatever food he could. But the only job he could find was feeding pigs. Can you imagine what it would be like to feed pigs? (Let students respond.) This was a such a smelly and dirty job, but the son was so hungry that he even wanted to eat the pigs' food!

The Younger Son Is Sorry

The son started to feel really sad and lonely. One day as he was feeding the pigs, he started to think about his father and his home. He wished he could be back at home and eat the food that was there. He said to himself, "I'm so hungry here while my father's servants have a lot of food to eat at home. Maybe I should go home and tell my father how sorry I am to have spent all the money. Maybe I can ask my father to let me be one of his servants. It is better than feeding pigs here and starving." And that's what he decided to do! He said goodbye to the pigs and made his way home. He thought about what he would tell his father. What the son didn't know was that while he was away, his father

had been very sad too. He still loved his son very much and every day he went outside to look, hoping his son would come home. But every day, he would go back to the house sad because his son did not come home.

The Younger Son Returns Home

After walking for a long time, the son was almost home. As he looked down the road, he could see his house from far away. He could also see that someone was standing in front of the house. It was his father! His father also recognized his younger son right away and began to run towards him. His father had his arms wide open as he was running. When he reached him, he grabbed his son and hugged him tightly. He kissed him and was happy to see his son finally come home. The son was glad to see his father too, but he felt sorry for leaving his father.

He said to his father, "Father, I'm so sorry I left home. I have done many wrong things. I have spent all the money. Please forgive me and let me be one of your servants."

What do you think the father said? (Give students time to give their opinions.) The father was not angry at his son at all, even though he

had done many wrong things. He was just happy to have his son home.

He called his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on my son! Put a ring on his finger and put some sandals on his feet! My son is home and we are going to celebrate with a big feast. My son was lost but now is found." That means that a long time ago, the son did many wrong things but now he knows what he did wrong and is sorry. He has found his way home. And instead of being angry, the father was happy his son was sorry and came back to him. That is why he gave him the best clothes to wear and good food to eat. That night there was a big feast, with a lot of music, singing and dancing. Everybody had a great time!

We Can Forgive Others Too

Jesus told this story to show how a father forgave his son, even though his son had done wrong things. God is our Father in heaven and He wants us to know that He loves us always and wants to forgive us when we have done wrong. God quickly forgives us each time we're sorry for the wrong things we do. Jesus' story reminds us that because God forgives us we should also forgive others. When we forgive, we are showing God's love for people.



Check For Understanding

1. **How many sons did the father in the story have?** (He had two sons.)
2. **Who wanted to go away?** (The younger son.)
3. **What did the younger son ask for before he left?** (He asked for his portion of the money.)
4. **Why did the younger son want to go to a far away country?** (He wanted to leave his father's home and live the way he wanted to.)
5. **Did the son have a good life in the different country?** (In the beginning, he was having a good time because he spent his money on whatever he wanted. But soon,

he used up all the money and did not have money for food. He had to feed pigs.)

6. **Why did the son want to come home?** (He knew he had done wrong things. He had sinned against God and was not obedient to his father.)
7. **What did the father do when his son came home?** (He hugged him, kissed him, forgave him, gave him gifts and had a big feast.)
8. **Who loves us just like this father loves his son?** (God is like the father in this Bible story. When we do wrong things, we need to ask God to forgive us in our prayers and He will hear us. Most importantly, we must not repeat the mistakes.)
9. **When you do something wrong, what do your parents do?** (Allow students to respond.)



Life Application Story

The Broken Jar

Michelle and her mom, Mrs. Marsh, were out shopping at the market one afternoon. They were at the ice cream aisle. Michelle loved ice cream and her mom had promised to buy her some because she had done all her chores that week. As Michelle looked at all the different flavors, she suddenly heard a loud crash. Both Michelle and Mrs. Marsh turned their heads toward the sound. They saw that just down the aisle, a young boy had knocked over a big glass jar that was holding a lot of candy. There was glass everywhere.

"Didn't I tell you to stay close to me?" said the mother to the boy. "Now, look at what you did!"

The boy just stared at the mother. Michelle could see that he had tears in his eyes. Then the manager of the store came to see what had happened.

"Oh, it's just some broken glass. We will get it cleaned up right away. Do be careful though. I don't want anyone to get cut," said the manager.

The boy's mother picked up the boy and apologized to the manager.

"I am really sorry. I can pay you for the candy and jar that we broke," offered the mother.

"Oh no. Don't worry about it. We will take care of it. Just be careful next time, okay?" said the manager to the young boy.

The mother thanked the manager for cleaning up the mess and left the store right away with the young boy.

"How come the boy didn't get in trouble for breaking the jar?" Michelle asked her mom.

"Well, the store manager was nice and just told him to be more careful next time," explained Mrs. Marsh.

"Usually, if I break something, I have to be the one to clean up the mess," said Michelle.

"That's because you are much older than he is. Besides, the manager had the power to decide what to do. And he decided to forgive the boy and let him leave without getting into more trouble," Mrs. Marsh said.

"I wish that would happen to me the next time I do something wrong," sighed Michelle.

"You know, that does happen to you. Every time you do something you are not supposed to, God forgives you when you are sorry. He doesn't punish you if you repent and pray to Him," explained Mrs. Marsh. "Remember the story of the lost son? He asked his father for money and went to a far away country. When he was there, he wasted the money and soon, he had nothing left. There was a famine in the land and he had to go find a job feeding pigs."

"Yeah, I remember that story. It must have been kind of gross to feed the pigs since they smell and everything," said Michelle.

"Yes, that's probably true. But one day, the son remembered his father and decided to go home. He asked his father to forgive him for the wrong things he had done. And you know, the father wasn't even mad. He was so happy his son had come home, he gave him all the best things and threw a big party to celebrate."

"The son was lucky his father was so nice," commented Michelle.

"This story isn't about how lucky the son was. It is about how loving and forgiving the father was. Jesus wants us to understand that our Father in heaven is always ready to forgive us, no matter what kind of wrong things we have done, as long as we repent. That means we tell God how sorry we are and decide to change so we don't do it again," Mrs. Marsh said.

"I am glad the boy didn't get in trouble," Michelle said.

"Yes, and we should remember that God is always waiting for us to do the right things. We should feel very lucky that Jesus is our God," said Mrs. Marsh.

Michelle opened the freezer door and picked out the one she wanted- mint chocolate chip.

"I think that's all we need. Let's go and pay. Then we can go home, have some ice cream and thank God for another wonderful day!" said Mrs. Marsh as they walked toward the check-out.

Questions to Think About

1. **What did the store manager say to the boy after he broke the jar?** (He told him it's okay and to be more careful next time.)
2. **Why did Michelle think the boy was lucky?** (He was forgiven and didn't get in trouble.)

3. **When does God see what we are doing?** (He is always there watching us. We should try our best to do what makes God happy. But when

we do something we shouldn't, we need to ask for forgiveness.)



Activity 1

The Lost Son Comes Home

Cut out the book along the solid lines. Fold along the dotted lines. Review the story with the students by reading it out loud. The students can color in the pictures.



Activity 2

God Is Always With Us

Look at the pictures. God is with us all the time, no matter where we are or what we are doing. That means we should do things that please God all the time. Fill in the blanks.

1. God is with when we _____ (sleep).
2. God is with us when we are at _____ (school).
3. God is with us when we are at _____ (church).
4. God is with us when we are at the _____ (park).



Activity 3

Special Rings

Materials:

1. chenille wires
2. large beads
3. scissors

Directions:

1. In this activity, the students will be making rings to remind them of the ring the son received from his father in the story.
2. Provide each student with a short piece of chenille wire.
3. Have them slip several beads onto the wire.
4. Help the students bend the wire into a circle. Tuck the ends of the wire into one of the beads.
5. Help the students adjust the ring so it will fit on

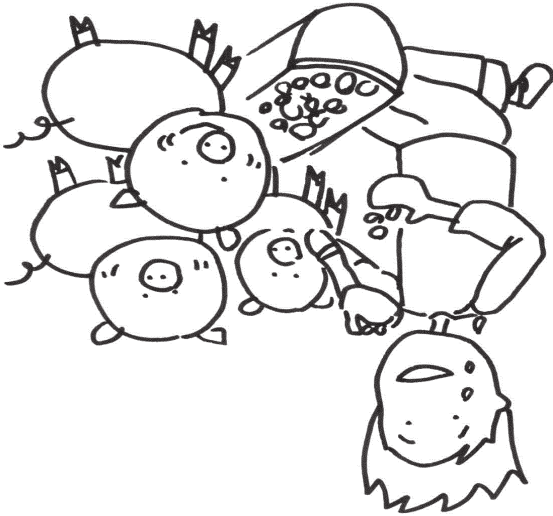
their finger.

6. As the students work on this activity, discuss how the father felt when his son came home. Talk about why he gave his son the robe and ring. How are we also special to God?

Activity 8:1

The Lost Son Comes Home

Cut out the book along the solid lines. Fold along the dotted lines. Review the story.



The younger son has to find a job feeding pigs.



The younger son spends all the money.

The younger son tells his father he is sorry.



The younger son takes the money and leaves ~~the house~~.



Activity 8:2

God Is Always With Us

Look at the pictures. God is with us all the time, no matter where we are or what we are doing. That means we should do things that please God all the time. Fill in the blanks.



WORD BANK

school
church
park
sleep



God is with us when we

_____.

God is with us when we

are at _____.



God is with us when we
are at _____.



God is with us when we
are at the _____.