



# Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

By this age, children have experienced love and forgiveness from others. Children know that when they are sorry for their wrongs, their parents will forgive them and will love them. Children can learn that God loves them, too, and he will forgive them when they're sorry for their sins.



### ► Bible Point


God is loving and forgiving.

### Key Verse

"You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" (Nehemiah 9:17).

### Weaving Faith Into Life

Children will thank God for his love and forgiveness.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<b>1</b> Getting Started <i>about 10 min.</i>	<b>Welcoming Song</b> Sing a song welcoming all their classroom friends.	CD player <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD	
<b>2</b> Key Verse Activity <i>about 10 min.</i>	<b>God Always Loves Us</b> Hide and have their partners find them to learn about forgiveness.	Bible, CD player <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD	
<b>3</b> Bible Exploration <i>about 20 min.</i>	<b>Theo's News</b> Find out what a bag of coins has to do with the Bible story.	CD player, Surprise Box, Theo puppet, bag <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD, coins	Place the coins in the bag; then place the bag in the Surprise Box, and hide the box where it's easily accessible.
	<b>Bible Time</b> Listen and interact with the CD story of the lost son.	Bible, CD player, bathrobe, 1 heart-shaped sticker per child <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD, coins, ring, "The Lost Son Returns" poster (from the Big Bible Poster Pack) 	

*Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.*



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b> Weaving Faith Into Life <i>about 20 min.</i> <i>(Choose 2 centers.)</i></p>	<p><b>Center 1: Family Rings</b> Decorate a ring to remember that the father forgave his son and gave his son a ring.</p>	My Bible Playground, glitter glue, sequins, pencils	Remove the Lesson 2 pages from each My Bible Playground student book.
	<p><b>Center 2: Mixed-Up Snacks</b> Make snacks from a variety of items to remind them of the leftovers the son fed the pigs.</p>	bowls, spoons, refried beans, salsa, corn, sour cream, cheese, chips, paper towels	
	<p><b>Center 3: Loving Homes</b> Use blocks to make a home to remember that the lost son went home.</p>	connecting blocks	
	<p><b>Center 4: Piggy Project</b> Make pigs to give their parents as a gift of thanks for their love and forgiveness.</p>	pink tempera paint, glue sticks, staplers, small sponges, newspaper, smocks, 1 small and 2 large paper plates per child, pink chenille wire, 1 sheet of pink construction paper per 2 children, crayons, scissors	Cut two 2-inch pink pig ears for each child. Cut pink chenille wires into 4-inch lengths. Cover your worktables with extra newspaper, and have kids wear paint smocks.
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5</b> Lasting Impressions <i>about 5 min.</i></p>	<p><b>Daily Challenges</b> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.</p>	My Bible Playground	
	<p><b>"Body Formation" Prayer</b> Form a heart shape with their bodies, and thank God for being loving and forgiving.</p>	<b>Teacher Pack:</b> ring	
	<p><b>Weaving Faith at Home</b> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.</p>		

*Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.*





# Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

BIBLE BACKGROUND  
FOR LEADERS

## The Younger Son Demands His Inheritance

In Jewish law, the oldest son received two-thirds of the inheritance, and the rest was divided among the other children. Since it appears that there were only two sons, the younger would have been entitled to one-third of the father's holdings. However, Jewish law did not allow a person to sell his father's land inheritance because it had been given by God. So in asking his father to give him the land early, the younger son was maneuvering against the law. Any Jew would have seen what the son was doing and would have refused to buy the land. It was also against the law to sell such land to a Gentile. Since that must have been what the younger son did, the Jews listening to this story would have been appalled.

## The Son Squanders His Inheritance

The next part of the story isn't hard to predict. The younger son foolishly spent his inheritance and was left with nothing. At that point, he realized how wrong he had been and decided to return to his father, hoping only that the father would accept him back as a hired hand. He was convinced that he had sacrificed his right to be his father's son. He now decided to do what he knew was right.

## The Humiliated Father Forgives the Son

Because a family would not normally forgive a son for such a sin, Jesus' listeners would have been extremely surprised and angry to hear that the man ran out to meet his returning son. What Jesus described was a father intent on getting to his son before the neighbors did. Even though the son had turned away, sinned willfully, and disgraced the family name, the father was waiting to forgive his

son and save him from the death he deserved. What a wonderful picture of our God, who watchfully waits, ready to forgive us when we return to him in repentance!

## The Jesus Connection

Picture a God anxious to meet you even when you feel ashamed. Know his love for you, and cherish the relationship you have with Jesus.

Who in your life doesn't "deserve" mercy? "They are just out of options." "They've made their bed..." "This change of heart won't last." Reach out to these people in kindness and joy. Pray for them right now. You can write your prayer here.

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### Welcoming Song Supplies

CD player  
**Teacher Pack**  
 CD: "It's Good to Have  
 You" (track 2)

### God Always Loves Us Supplies

Bible  
 CD player  
**Teacher Pack**  
 CD: "God Forgives"  
 (track 5)

## 1 GETTING STARTED

### Welcoming Song

**Tip** Consistently use the same signal to announce a transition to the next activity. You could flip the lights off and on, use a train whistle, have a puppet rustling inside a bag, or sing cleanup songs. Keep it simple, consistent, and fun.

#### What You'll Do

As the children arrive, greet each child and welcome him or her with a smile. When it's time to begin, use your signal to bring the children together in a circle.

Play "It's Good to Have You" (track 2 on the CD) to the tune of "Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?" and lead children in doing the motions.

**It's good to have you in church today.** (*Have the children stand in a circle, hold hands, and swing hands back and forth.*)  
**Let's sing, let's learn, and let's pray.** (*Cup hands around mouth, point to your head, and then make praying hands.*)  
**We'll make new friends, and we'll have so much fun.** (*Shake a friend's hand.*)  
**We're glad you've joined us today!** (*Hold hands in a circle and swing hands back and forth.*)  
 (Repeat 2x.)

## 2 KEY VERSE ACTIVITY

### God Always Loves Us

#### What You'll Do

Have the children choose a partner and sit down together in a circle. Open your Bible to Nehemiah 9:17, and show children the words.

Say: **Our Key Verse from the Bible is Nehemiah 9:17, which says, "You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love." This means that God forgives us and always loves us. Let's say that together.** Lead the children in repeating this simplified version of the Key Verse with you: **God forgives us and always loves us.**





Ask:

- **Have you ever done something bad and then hidden so no one would find out? What happened?**
- **How did you feel when you were hiding?**

Say: **When we sin, we sometimes don't want God to know about the bad thing we did. But the Bible tells us that when we go to God and ask him to forgive us, God will forgive us and always love us.**

**Let's play a singing game. One partner will pretend to have done something wrong and will hide somewhere in the room. The other partner will try to find that person to forgive and love him or her.** Have partners decide who will play which part first, and then tell partners to sit on opposite sides of the room.

Have kids sing "God Forgives" to the tune of "Ten Little Indians." Play the track so that the two groups of children can practice singing back and forth to each other. Then have one group of children cover their eyes while their partners hide. When kids are hidden, re-cue the CD and have the other kids search for their partners by listening for their voices as they respond.



Seeking Child: **God forgives**  
 Hidden Child: **And always loves us.**  
 Seeking Child: **God forgives**  
 Hidden Child: **And always loves us.**  
 Seeking Child: **God forgives**  
 Hidden Child: **And always loves us.**  
 All Children: **The Bible tells me so.**

When the children have found their partners, have kids each give their partner a loving hug or high five. Repeat the game once more giving the other partner a chance to hide.

Tell the children that even though we don't always want to tell God when we've done something wrong, God always loves us and will forgive us when we ask him.

### **Talk With Kids** ■■■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Were you able to find a place where your partner couldn't find you? Why or why not?**
- **How did it feel to be found?**
- **Who will always love you and forgive you?**

Say: **Sometimes we want to hide from God because we've done something bad. But we can always go to God and ask him to forgive us and know that God will always love us. God knows right where we are, and he knows what we've done. Let's say the Key Verse one more time: God forgives us and always loves us.**





### Theo's News Supplies

CD player  
Surprise Box (any box  
will do)  
Theo puppet  
bag  
**Teacher Pack**  
CD: "Here, Theo"  
(track 3)  
coins

### Theo's News Easy Prep

Place the coins in the  
bag; then place the bag  
inside the Surprise Box,  
and hide the box where  
it's easily accessible.

### Bible Time Supplies

Bible  
CD player  
bathrobe  
1 heart-shaped sticker  
per child  
**Teacher Pack**  
CD: "A Father's Love"  
(track 6)  
coins  
ring  
"The Lost Son Returns"  
poster (from the Big  
Bible Poster Pack)

## 3

## BIBLE EXPLORATION

# Theo's News

### What You'll Do

Say: **Friends, it's time for Theo's News!** Have children sit in a circle, and then begin "Here, Theo" (track 3 on the CD). When the CD segment ends, bring out the Surprise Box, and put Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet on your hand. Then follow along with the script.

**Theo:** Hi, everybody!

**Teacher:** Hello, Theo! Tell us what interesting news you've dug up about our Bible story.

**Theo:** I found something I think you'll like! I hid it in the Surprise Box.

**Teacher:** Let's look inside to see what Theo dug up for us today.

*(Choose a child to open the Surprise Box, and have the kids pass the bag of coins around the circle so the rest of the class can see it up close. Give the children time to guess what the Bible story might be about.)*

**Teacher:** What can we do with money?

*(Pause for children to answer your question.)*

**Teacher:** Theo, why did you hide this money in the Surprise Box?

**Theo:** Today's Bible story is about a son whose father gave him lots of money. But the son spent all the money until he had no more money left. Let's find out how the father felt about his son when the son tried to come back home.

**Teacher:** Let's listen to our Bible story about the father and son.

**Theo:** Have a good time today, boys and girls!

**Teacher:** Let's say goodbye to Theo.

Encourage the children to wave or say goodbye to Theo. Then put Theo away in a safe place for next week's use.

# Bible Time

### What You'll Do

Open your Bible to Luke 15:11-32, and show the children the words.

Say: **Today's Bible story tells us that ► GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING. We're going to listen to Jesus tell us the story that he told his disciples.** Hand out the coins as directed on the CD. As children listen to the CD, encourage them to follow along and do the various actions. Start "A Father's Love" on the CD.

When the CD ends, bring out the robe and ring. Choose a child to pretend to be the young son, and have him or her wear the robe and put the ring on his or her finger.



Show children the poster and let them identify the father and son, and review what is happening in the picture.

**Let's use this poster to remind ourselves how much God loves and forgives each one of us.**

Give each child a heart-shaped sticker. Have the children take turns putting their stickers near the picture of the father. As children place their sticker on the poster, have them say, "God, thank you for loving me even when I do wrong things."

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- What were some of the ways the father showed his son that he loved him?
- How do you think the younger son felt when his dad forgave him?
- How do you feel when someone forgives you?

Say: **Even though the young son didn't deserve to be forgiven, his father loved him and forgave him. We all do bad things sometimes. And we don't always deserve to be forgiven either. But because God loves us so much, he always forgives us when we come to him. ► GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING.**

## 4 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Choose at least two of the learning centers to help reinforce today's Bible lesson. Gather the needed materials, and put the supplies in an out-of-sight area until you're ready for them. Allow the children to choose which center they'd like to explore first. Then circulate among the children as they create and explore. Encourage them to make connections between their activities and the Bible by asking them the questions included with each center's description.

### ■ CENTER 1: Family Rings

#### What You'll Do ■■■■

Distribute the Lesson 2 My Bible Playground student pages, and have kids write their names on their pages.

Then have the children decorate the rings with the glitter glue and place the sequins in the circle area to create the jeweled stone.



#### Center 1: Family Rings Supplies

My Bible Playground  
glitter glue  
sequins  
pencils

#### Center 1: Family Rings Easy Prep

Remove the Lesson 2 pages from each My Bible Playground student book.





### Center 2: Mixed-Up Snacks

Supplies

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bowls  
spoons  
refried beans  
salsa  
corn  
sour cream  
cheese  
chips  
paper towels

### ! ALLERGY ALERT

### Center 3: Loving Homes

Supplies

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connecting blocks

## Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- What did the father give his son to show he forgave his son and still loved him?
- Did the young son deserve the family ring? Why or why not?

Say: **God gives us his love and forgiveness not only when we are good but also when we do bad things. We should thank God because God forgives us and always loves us. He makes us a part of his family.**

## ■ CENTER 2:

# Mixed-Up Snacks

## What You'll Do ■■■■

Have children wash their hands (or use wet wipes). Set up an assembly line of containers with the foods in the supply list. Put a small spoon in each bowl or jar. Give each child a bowl, and direct kids to go through the line to make their snacks.

Say: **The son in our Bible story fed the pigs a mixture of all kinds of food. It may have looked a little like this. Let's thank God for loving us and for providing our snacks today.** Invite one child to pray for the snacks.

Have kids sit down to eat, and set out tortilla chips for children to eat with their mixed-up snacks. As kids enjoy eating the food, remind them that the young son was so hungry that he wanted to eat even the leftovers that were given to the pigs to eat.

## ■ CENTER 3:

# Loving Homes

## What You'll Do ■■■■

Place connecting blocks where children can easily reach them. Encourage children to use the blocks to build homes like the young son might have gone back to. As children work, remind them that ► **GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING.**

## Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- How do you feel when you see your home after a long trip?
- How do you think the young son felt when his father welcomed him home?
- How can we show God that we are thankful for his love and forgiveness?







**CENTER 4:**

# Piggy Project

## What You'll Do

Say: In today's Bible story, the son who left home ran into some trouble, didn't he? In fact, things got so bad that he ended up feeding pigs for a living. Let's make a piggy project to help us remember this Bible story!



Help each child staple the rims of two large plates together with the curved sides out, so that a pillow-shape is created. Leave an opening along one edge. Staple a chenille wire to one of the plates, and then let the child crumple and stuff newspaper into the opening before closing the edge with more staples. The child may curl the chenille wire as a tail.

Show children how to glue the smaller plate to the edge of the plate opposite the tail as a face for the pig. Let children use crayons to draw eyes, a mouth, and other features on the pigs' faces. Instruct them to staple the ears to the top of the front plate. Then let kids dab pink paint onto their pigs and set them aside to dry.

Say: **These pigs can remind you that even though the son in our story messed up, his father still loved and forgave him. Parents are wonderful like that! Take your piggy projects home and give them to your parents with a big hug for always forgiving you!**



### Center 4: Piggy Project Supplies

- pink tempera paint
- glue sticks
- staplers
- small sponges
- newspaper
- smocks
- 1 small and 2 large paper plates per child
- pink chenille wire
- 1 sheet of pink construction paper per 2 children
- crayons
- scissors

### Center 4: Piggy Project Easy Prep

Cut two 2-inch pink pig ears for each child. Cut pink chenille wires into 4-inch lengths. Cover your worktables with extra newspaper, and have kids wear paint smocks.





## Daily Challenges Supplies

My Bible Playground

# 5 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

## Daily Challenges

### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

After the children have cleaned up the centers, sit with kids in a circle on the floor. Review the lesson activities and the Bible Point, and then encourage the children to share what they enjoyed learning from the Bible today.

Also use this time to challenge kids in their faith. Encourage them to choose a Daily Challenge for applying today's lesson to their lives this week. Use this challenge to encourage your children's growing relationships with Jesus.

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

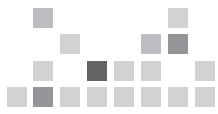
Say: **Today we learned that ► GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING. I'd like each of you to choose one of these Daily Challenges to remember that God is loving and forgiving.**

Give kids these three Daily Challenge ideas to choose from:

1. **Pray and ask God to help you forgive someone who has hurt your feelings. If God is always loving and forgiving, we should be, too!**
2. **The next time your brother or sister says something to hurt your feelings, forgive him or her and explain that God wants us to forgive as he forgives us.**
3. **Have an adult help you write a note to God thanking him for his gifts of love and forgiveness. Then draw a picture underneath your note that shows how it makes you feel when you're forgiven!**

Say: **If you want to pray, circle choice number 1. If you want to forgive your brother or sister, circle choice number 2. If you want to draw a picture with a note, circle choice number 3.** Check that each child circled a choice on his or her My Bible Playground page. Make sure you tell kids the challenge you choose. Your commitment will inspire children and will give them an opportunity to see God at work in your life as well as in theirs!





## “Body Formation” Prayer

### What You’ll Do

Have kids lie on the floor head to toe, and help them form a giant heart shape with their bodies. Tell the children that their heart is like God’s love for us. Remind kids that God forgives us and always loves us as the father forgave his son in the Bible story. Then lead the children in the following prayer as you have kids pass around the ring (from the Teacher Pack).

**Thank you, God, for your love.**  
**Thank you, God, for your forgiveness.**  
**In Jesus’ name, amen.**

## Weaving Faith at Home

Have children take home their My Bible Playground book pages whether they worked on them or not. Have the children tell their parents the challenge they committed to in the “Daily Challenges” activity. Encourage parents to help their kids fulfill this commitment throughout the week. By working together and focusing on the same goals, you and parents can help children weave faith into their lives!

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church’s families. Available at [group.com/digital](http://group.com/digital).



### “Body Formation” Prayer Supplies

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**Teacher Pack**  
ring



