



THE PRODIGAL SON

Preschool-K • #NT17 • April 19, 2026

Concept

God loves everyone and forgives everyone who asks.

Goal

The children will learn that God loves everyone and if they ask, He will forgive them for all their sin.

Passage

Luke 15:11-24

Key Verse: "'My son was... lost, but now he is found!' So they began to celebrate." Luke 15:24

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p>Activity Station:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Stack of play dollar bills in a sandwich bag</i> <p>Lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>"Robe" from storage room</i>• <i>Ring</i> <p>Learning Activity #4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Party noise makers distributed evenly between rooms</i>• <i>Festive napkins, 1/child</i>• <i>Party snack, 1/child</i> <p>Extension:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Read Aloud Bible Stories Vol. 2, Ella Lindvall</i>	<p>Learning Activity #2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Printed picture of father and son, 1/child</i>• <i>Balloon stickers printed on #5160 Avery labels, several/child</i>• <i>Party hat stickers printed on #5160 Avery labels, 2/child</i>• <i>Markers</i>• <i>Flameproof serpentine, 1 pkg./class</i>

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the shaded areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information/Teacher Helps

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"The lost son parable shows the grace of God first from the divine side, then from the human side. In the prodigal son we see the development of an attitude that leads to repentance. As the younger son, he would have received one-third of the estate, his older brother two-thirds. In that culture, early dividing of the estate carried with it the responsibility by law to care for the father, a principle which the younger brother seemed to ignore. After he had wasted his inheritance, he had to resort to feeding swine for a Gentile, a practice abhorrent to the Jews. Finally, reason got the upper hand over sensual appetite, and he returned to his father in repentance and humility." [1]

"The great parable of the lost son speaks even more eloquently than its predecessors to the situation set forth in vv. 1-2. The first part (vv.11-24) conveys the same sense of joy on the lost being found...; in contrast, the second part deals with the sour attitude of the elder brother. Like the Pharisees, he could not comprehend the meaning of forgiveness. The positions of the two sons would, in a structural analysis, be considered binary opposites, the lost son rises and the elder brother falls in moral state. The central figure, the father, remains constant in his love for both. As in v.2, by telling the story Jesus identifies himself with God in his loving attitude to the lost. He represents God in his mission, the accomplishment of which should elicit joy from those who share the Father's compassion. The parable is one of the world's supreme masterpieces of storytelling. Its details are vivid; they reflect actual customs and legal procedures and build up the story's emotional and spiritual impact. But the expositor must resist the tendency to allegorize the wealth of detail that gives the story its remarkable verisimilitude. The main point of the parable that God gladly receives repentant sinners must not be obscured...

There is nothing that makes one realize so clearly the sinfulness of one's sin and one's utter unworthiness as the personal experience of the love with which the Heavenly Father welcomes the repentant sinner. When the sinner returns to the Father, God does not reproach and punish him, nor humiliate him to position of a hired servant. Instead He accepts him as His beloved child and gives the full status and privileges of a child of God. Repentance not only brings great joy to the sinner, but to God as well.

[1] Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ, Book III, Navpress, pp. 17, 18.

Set Up

Incorporation Lg. Group

Introduction Lg. Group

Lesson Lg. Group

- **The week before class:** Read Luke 15:11-24.

Activity Station:

- **Treasure Hunt**
 - **Instructions:** Around the room, hide the play money provided for the skit. Have the children find it and put it in the bag as they come together for the Lesson.

Did you know God loves you? He loves each and every one of you! He loves you <<name>> and <<name>> (name each child)! But how much does God love you? To help you know how much God loves you, think about how much your mom and dad love you. I bet they love you very much. The Bible says that God loves us even more than our own moms and dads. God loves everyone so much that He wants to forgive everyone for every bad choice we make. God loves us so much that He always wants us to be with Him and to talk to Him. Jesus once told a story about a father and his son to help us know how much God loves everyone and forgives everyone who asks.

The Prodigal Son

Instructions: Have your best storyteller tell this story while the other teachers mime the parts of the father and son. Father should wear a "robe" from the storage room. Use the suggested motions in the (); exaggerate and ham it up to keep the children engaged.

Once there was a father who loved his son very much (wrap arms around imaginary boys on either side of you) and took good care of them. He was a rich father (pull out sandwich bag of play money).

One day this son said to his father (snotty voice), "I want my share of your money now because I'm leaving." The father was sad and asked his son not to leave (sad, pleading face). But the son still wanted to leave so the father gave him his share of the money. (Father give son the bag of money and move to background.)

The son took his money and went on a journey to a faraway land (son grab the stack of play money and skip off without looking back). He had great fun and spent his money very fast (flip through bills and hand to storyteller). He even found friends who wanted to help him spend his money (motion as to friends, laugh and dance around)! He bought the nicest clothes (puff out chest and strut around) and the best food (rub stomach and say, "yum! yum!").

Lesson Continued

It wasn't long before all his money was gone (make a sad face, put hands in pockets and pull out pockets or show the empty bag). And when his money was gone his friends left him too (wave good-bye and look sad). He started to get hungry (hold stomach) so he found a job feeding pigs (pretend to throw things to pigs). He didn't get much money for feeding the pigs so he was still hungry (bend over and hold stomach). Even the pigs had more food than he did!

He started thinking about home (sit down and put head in hands). He started thinking about how his father loved him and had always taken care of him. He wanted to go home so badly but would his father forgive him and let him stay? The son said, "I will go home and tell my father I'm sorry for leaving. I will tell him that I will work for him and do anything he wants if he will just let me live with him. Maybe he will forgive me." (Shake head as if thinking, "yes that's what I'll do;" go out the classroom door.)

(Father step forward.) The son didn't know that his father still loved him very much and wanted him to come home. Every day his father would wait and pray his son would come home (sit as though thinking and praying). One day he saw someone coming up the road. He was too far away to see who it was (shade eyes and squint looking toward the door). When the person was closer the father saw it was his son. He was so excited that he ran up the road (go to door, son come through the door) and hugged him and kissed him. The son told his father, "I'm sorry for leaving, will you forgive me?" The father was so happy his son had come home. He gave his son his best robe to wear and put a ring on his finger. He said, "My son was... lost, but now he is found!" So they began to celebrate" (Luke 15:24).

Jesus said that God loves us like the father in the story loved his son. God wants us to go to Him all the time, even when we make bad choices. He wants us to ask Him to forgive us for all our bad choices so we can be His friends. Do you know that God loves us so much that the Bible says there is a party in heaven every time someone asks God to forgive them? That's how much God loves us.

Teachers, think of an example or two you can share with the children about a time you made a bad choice and someone showed love to you, even when you didn't deserve their forgiveness. Ask questions and talk with the children about a time when they may have done something they know was a bad choice and how their parents or someone close to them showed love to them. Remind them again that God loves us like this.

Let's pray now and thank God that He loves everyone very much and forgives everyone who asks. He wants to be our best friend.

Learning Activity#1 Sm. Groups

Transition

Let's make a craft to remind us of the boy who was lost and then was found.

Learning Activity#2 Lg. Group

Craft – Let's Party

- **Instructions:** Give each child a printed picture, some pieces of the paper serpentine, some balloon stickers and 2 party hat stickers. Color picture and stickers. Glue the serpentine and stick balloons/party hats on the page. Talk with the children about the father's great love for his son. He was very sad when his son left and very excited when he came back.

Transition

Let's pretend we're the father looking for his son to come back. His father said, "My son was... lost, but now he is found!" So they began to celebrate" (Luke 15:24).

Learning Activity#3 Lg. Group

Watch for Loved One

Instructions: Have one of the teachers leave the room, go outside, and approach the classroom from outside the window. Talk about how the father watched for his son and have the students watch out the window and celebrate when they see the teacher approach. Have them meet the teacher at the door or hallway.

Transition

Let's celebrate now that everyone is here. Let's have a party like the father had a party for his son. Get your party hats. Remember that the father said, "My son was... lost, but now he is found!" So they began to celebrate" (Luke 15:24).

Learning Activity#4 Lg. Group

PARTY!

Instructions: Bring out the noise makers and party hats. Distribute party food on party napkins to make it a real celebration.

Extension

Story – "The Boy Who Went Away"

Instructions: Read "The Boy Who Went Away," pp. 37-65, Read Aloud Bible Stories Vol. 2.

The Prodigal Son
Bible Guy Skit -- #NT17

[ENTER Bible Guy, talking over his shoulder to Mrs. Bible Guy off stage]

Bible Guy: ...some fruit and some olive oil...okay...I'll be back in a few hours! (seeing the kids) Oh! Hey there! I'm Bible Guy. I just told Mrs. Bible Guy that I had some work to do in town so she wants me to get a few things for dinner while I'm there. What I didn't tell her is that I'm really going fishing. *[grabs fishing pole that is leaning against the wall]* I know a great spot and it's a beautiful day. Besides I need to relax. Yes siree, I just need some peace and quiet. In fact, I may take a nap while I'm fishing, too.

[Bible Guy walks awhile, whistling and arrives at the fishing spot. He sits down, pretending to bait his hook and cast.]

Bible Guy: I don't even care if I catch anything today. I just need a break. Maybe I'll take that nap. *[He lies down and begins to snore. Suddenly he wakes with a start]*

Oh boy. Where am I? I was really sound asleep. (looking at fishing pole) Oh yeah, that's right...fishing. *[He sits up and casts again]*

Bible Guy: You know, I've been having a great time sitting here fishing and sleeping, but I realize I made a really bad choice. (to kids) Do you know what bad choice I made? (wait for answer) I told a lie. I lied to Mrs. Bible Guy when I told her I had work to do in town. I wanted a break and a rest so I lied about where I was really going. I have been dishonest and selfish. I knew I didn't have any work to do. I just wanted to go fishing. Do you think lying is a bad choice? (wait for answer) Do you think God is happy when we lie? I hurt Mrs. Bible Guy and God by lying. I feel so bad. How can I face them? I don't want to go home...

I wonder what God thinks of me right now? He knows I lied. I bet he is angry with me. I'm afraid to talk to him. Have you ever felt the way I feel right now? Have you ever made a bad choice and been afraid that God was mad at you? (wait for answers) Everyone makes bad choices sometimes. What do you think we can do when we make bad choices and are afraid to talk to God? (wait for answer)

You know what?! I don't have to sit here and feel bad! I don't have to worry about how God feels about me. I know he loves me and he wants to forgive me for lying. (to kids) You know how I know that? Because he sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the price for my bad choices. He must love us a lot to let his son be killed in our place. He wants to forgive us no matter what we have done.

I know that I have started a relationship with God by asking Jesus' death to pay for my sins, including the lie I told today. I know that God has already forgiven me for it because He as already paid the price for my sin.

God loves everyone and wants to forgive everyone who asks. You can be forgiven for your bad choices, too. All you have to do is ask for it. He died on the cross for your bad choices, too, so now you can be forgiven if you ask him.

Well, I'm going to go pick up the things Mrs. B.G. asked me to get for dinner. Then I will go home and tell her I made a bad choice. I will ask her to forgive me, too. See ya!

[EXIT]