



# Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

By the time kids are in the third or fourth grade, they have a pretty good understanding of what it means to feel guilty. For the most part, they feel remorse when they do wrong things. They may even start wondering whether God can still love them after they've sinned. They may wonder whether God will really forgive them just because they ask him to. Use this lesson to reinforce the fact that God does love them and that he is a forgiving, compassionate God who they can trust.



### ► Bible Point

God will forgive us when we sin.

### Key Verse

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

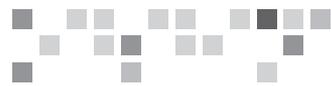
### Weaving Faith Into Life

Kids will ask God for forgiveness.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<b>1</b> Getting Started	<b>Knot Me!</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Form a "human knot," and then receive help to untangle.	Bible	
<b>2</b> Bible Exploration	<b>Story Corner 1: The Father's Mansion</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Begin the Bible story at the father's house, and then make coins to squander.	Bible, scissors, 1 copy per child of the "Inheritance Coins" handout (at the end of this lesson)	Designate a corner of your room as the father's mansion. Simply set four chairs in a square to represent the walls of the father's house.
	<b>Story Corner 2: Squander City</b> <i>(about 7 min.)</i> "Waste" the wealth they had; then become poor like the lost son.	Bible, Bible Truth Sleuth, coins from Story Corner 1, trash can	Tear out the Lesson 2 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.
	<b>Story Corner 3: A Stay in the Sty</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Experience life in a pigsty, and then decide whether to ask for forgiveness.	Bible, CD player, newspaper <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD, "The Prodigal Son" poster 	
	<b>Story Corner 4: Home at Last</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Return home to receive the father's forgiveness.	Bible, CD player <b>Teacher Pack:</b> CD, "Home at Last" poster 	

*Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.*



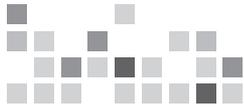


LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<b>3</b> Weaving Faith Into Life	<b>Forgiveness Bracelets</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Make bracelets to remind them of God's love.	Bibles, Bible Truth Sleuth, scissors, tape, markers, pens	
	<b>Let's Celebrate!</b> <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Have a party to celebrate God's forgiveness.	CD player, simple snack, copies of the lyrics (at the end of this lesson) <b>Teacher Pack: CD</b>	
<b>4</b> Lasting Impressions	<b>Daily Challenges</b> <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth	
	<b>Weaving Faith at Home</b> <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

**Bold text** within the lesson is spoken text.







## Knot Me! Supplies

Bible

# 1 GETTING STARTED

## Knot Me!

### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went. Choose a volunteer to be the helper in this activity. Have the helper stand with his or her back to the rest of the group. Have the other children form a circle and join hands.

Instruct kids to quietly turn their circle into a tangled knot by stepping over arms, crawling under legs, and twisting and turning, all without letting go of one another's hands.

When kids are all tangled together, say: **Wow! What a tangled mess! It looks like you need help.**

Have the kids pretend to call out for help, and then have the helper turn around and face the circle. As kids continue to hold one another's hands, let the helper assist them in untangling the human knot. When the helper has succeeded, or after two minutes, have children drop hands and sit in a circle.

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What was it like to be all tangled up?**
- **Did you think [name of helper] could help you untangle? Explain.**
- **What kinds of wrong things do we do that tangle us up in real life and get us into trouble?**
- **How do we get out of those "knots" or problems caused by the wrong things we do?**

Say: **In real life, the wrong things we do are called sins. Our human knot was just part of a game, but in real life, sin get us all tangled up!**

Ask:

- **What does God do when we sin?**

Say: ► **GOD WILL FORGIVE US WHEN WE SIN. God's forgiveness is the only way to become untangled from sin. Our Key Verse tells us that God is the best helper of all! Listen.**

Read aloud the Key Verse from Nehemiah 9:17: **"You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."**





Say: **You became pretty tangled up in our activity, but today we'll hear about someone in the Bible whose life really became tangled up!**

---

## **2** BIBLE EXPLORATION

### Story Corner 1: The Father's Mansion

#### What You'll Do

Say: **Jesus knew that some things about God would be hard for us to understand. And he knew that we'd get into some sticky, sinful situations. So he told us stories (or parables) to show us just how much God loves us. This is one of those stories.**

Invite kids to get comfortable, and then have a volunteer read aloud Luke 15:11-12.

Say: **You know, in Bible times, it was almost unheard of for a son to ask his father for his share of the inheritance. In fact, it was almost the same as wishing that his father were dead! This son's request probably hurt his father very much.**

**The younger son in this story was entitled to one third of everything his father had. And since we learn in the story that the father was pretty rich, the son probably received quite a bit of money. Let's make our own money right now!**

Give each child a sheet of "Inheritance Coins," and have kids cut out the coins. As kids work, ask them what they would do if they received a lot of money.

After kids have finished cutting out the coins, tell them it's time to see what the son did with all of his money. Invite kids to move on to "Squander City."

### Story Corner 2: Squander City

#### What You'll Do

Designate another corner of your room as Squander City. If you choose, hang a simple construction paper sign in that corner.

Distribute the Bible Truth Sleuth pages, and have kids turn to the "Quick Riches" section. Have kids form pairs, and give partners a few moments to discuss which items they'd like to buy.

Ask:

- Which items would you most like to own? Why?
- What would you do if you had lots and lots of money?



#### Story Corner 1: The Father's Mansion Supplies

---

- Bible
- scissors
- 1 copy per child of the "Inheritance Coins" handout (at the end of this lesson)

#### Story Corner 1: The Father's Mansion Easy Prep

---

Designate a corner of your room as the father's mansion. Simply set four chairs in a square to represent the walls of the father's house.

#### Story Corner 2: Squander City Supplies

---

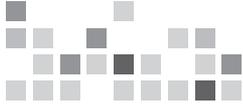
- Bible
- Bible Truth Sleuth
- coins from Story Corner 1
- trash can

#### Story Corner 2: Squander City Easy Prep

---

Tear out the Lesson 2 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.





### Story Corner 3: A Stay in the Sty Supplies

Bible  
CD player  
newspaper

#### Teacher Pack

CD: “Pigsty” (track 3),  
“The Prodigal Son”  
(track 4)  
“The Prodigal Son”  
poster

### Story Corner 3: A Stay in the Sty Easy Prep

“Decorate” the pigsty  
by strewing crumpled  
newspaper on the floor.

Say: **The son in our story suddenly had lots and lots of money. Let’s see what he did with it.**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Luke 15:13. Explain to kids that to squander means “to waste.” Then, to illustrate how the son wasted all of his money, have kids toss their “Inheritance Coins” into a trash can as they tell ways people might waste money today. When they’ve used up all their coins, have another volunteer read Luke 15:14.

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What’s a famine?**
- **What does it mean to “be in need”?**
- **What kinds of things are necessary for you to actually live?**
- **What would it be like to be without food or a place to live?**

After kids brainstorm things they need to live—such as food, water, clothing, and shelter—lead them in discussing what their lives would be like without those things. Then have kids take off their shoes to remind them of how poor and destitute the son had become. Kids will remain without shoes as you lead them to the “pigsty.”

## Story Corner 3: A Stay in the Sty

### What You’ll Do ■■■■■■

As kids enter, have them sit down in the sty.

Ask:

- **What’s the messiest place you’ve ever seen?**
- **What’s the messiest animal you could ever imagine?**
- **Who knows what a pig’s pen is called?**

Say: **The place where a pig lives is called a sty. That’s where the son in our story ended up, and that’s where you’ve ended up, too! Welcome to our very own pigsty!**

Cue your CD to the “Pigsty” segment (track 3), and play it in the background as you continue.

Show children the “Prodigal Son” poster from your Teacher Pack.

Say: **Well, here he is—the son who wasted all of his money and wound up here, right in the middle of a pigsty! I’ll bet he really stinks! He even wished he could eat the pigs’ leftovers!**

**People sometimes hold their noses when they smell something bad. Hold your nose as you answer this question.**

Have kids hold their noses as they call out answers to the following question:





Ask:

- **What’s a really smelly place you’ve been to?**

Say: **Yuck! Those sure are smelly places! I bet the pigsty in our story smelled just as bad!**

Have a volunteer read aloud Luke 15:15-16. Ask kids to describe how they think the son must have felt as he tended the pigs.

Say: **Let’s see what the son has to say for himself.**

Play “The Prodigal Son” segment from the CD (track 4). Toward the end of the segment, the son will ask three questions. Stop the CD after each question, and encourage kids to describe what advice they’d give to the son.

After kids discuss each question asked on the CD, have children form pairs.

### **Talk With Kids** ■■■■

Have kids discuss the following questions with their partners. After each question, ask pairs to report their answers to the rest of the group.

Ask:

- **Tell about a time you messed up, or did something wrong, like the son in our story. How did you feel?**
- **When have you needed forgiveness from someone? What was that like?**
- **How did it make you feel when you were forgiven for the wrong thing you did?**

Say: **The son in our story sure needs his father’s forgiveness, just as we need God’s forgiveness when we do wrong things.**

Ask:

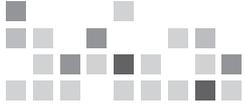
- **What does God do when we sin?**

Say: **God is forgiving and abounding in love. You know, that’s exactly what our Key Verse is all about. Let’s say the verse together.**

Lead kids in repeating the Key Verse, Nehemiah 9:17: **“You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.”**

Say: **This verse says that God is full of love. And because God loves us, ► GOD WILL FORGIVE US WHEN WE SIN. Now let’s go back to the father’s mansion and see what happened to the father and son in our story.**





### Story Corner 4: Home at Last Supplies

Bible  
CD player  
**Teacher Pack**  
CD: "The Son Returns"  
(track 5)  
"Home at Last" poster

## Story Corner 4: Home at Last

### What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Lead children back to the corner in your room set up as the father's mansion, and have them sit together.

Say: **The son in the story did decide to go back to his father's house.**

Ask kids to each discuss with a partner what they think happened when the son arrived home.

Cue your CD to "The Son Returns" segment (track 5). This segment will give kids an idea of the father's perspective.

Then have a child read aloud Luke 15:20-22. Show kids the "Home at Last" poster from your Teacher Pack.

Say: **The father in this picture looks awfully happy!**

### Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Why do you think the father is so happy?**
- **Why would the father be happy to see his son again after how badly the son had behaved?**

Say: **The father loved his son so much that he forgave his son for all the bad things he had done. Even though the son was bad, the father was glad! He was so glad, in fact, that he actually ran to meet his son on the road. Running like that is something that important men in Bible times never did!**

Ask:

- **Have you ever forgiven someone just because you loved him or her? Tell about it.**
- **How are we like the son in the story?**
- **How is the father in the story like God?**

Say: **The father in the story loved his son so much that he was willing to forgive him, even after all the bad things the son had done. And that's just how God is! God is forgiving and abounding in love. In fact, God loves us so much that when we're sorry for bad things we've done and we ask him to forgive us, he does! Every time!**

In our story, the father gave his son jewelry as a symbol of his love and forgiveness. He gave his son a ring. A ring is just one form of jewelry; bracelets are another kind of jewelry. Because rings might be too hard for us to make, let's make forgiveness bracelets to remind us that ► **GOD WILL FORGIVE US WHEN WE SIN.**



**3** WEAVING FAITH  
INTO LIFE

## Forgiveness Bracelets

### What You'll Do

First, have kids turn to the “Forgiveness Bracelets” activity on the back of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages. Have kids cut out the forgiveness bracelets along the dotted lines. Then show kids how to fold the strips in half the long way. On the inside of the folded strips, have kids each write something they’ve recently done wrong for which they needed forgiveness. Next, have kids write the Key Verse onto the outside of their strips, and then let them decorate the strips with markers.

Have kids form pairs. Have partners help each other wrap the folded strips around their wrists to measure where to tape the ends together to form bracelets. Be ready to offer help as kids measure and tape their bracelets.

As kids work, challenge them to repeat the Key Verse to each other. When kids have finished, have them put on their bracelets and sit in a circle.

### Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What does God do when we sin?
- What does it take for you to get God’s forgiveness?

Say: **God is forgiving and abounding in love. He gives his love and forgiveness as precious gifts, just as the father in our story gave the son jewelry and shoes. And just as the Key Verse you wrote covered the sins on the inside of your bracelets, God’s love and forgiveness cover all the wrong things we’re sorry for.**

**In the next part of our story, the father held a big party to celebrate his son’s return. Let’s have a party, too!** Have kids put on their shoes and get ready for a fun class party!

## Let’s Celebrate!

### What You’ll Do

Have a child read aloud Luke 15:22-32.

Say: **Because music is usually a fun part of many celebrations, let’s learn a song to sing at our party. It’s a celebration song to remind us of how the father celebrated when his son came home.**



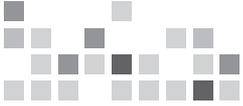
### Forgiveness Bracelets Supplies

- 
- Bibles
  - Bible Truth Sleuth
  - scissors
  - tape
  - markers
  - pens

### Let’s Celebrate! Supplies

- 
- CD player
  - simple snack
  - copies of the lyrics (at the end of this lesson)
  - Teacher Pack**
  - CD: “A New Creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) (track 12)

**! ALLERGY ALERT**



Pass out copies of the lyrics, and play “A New Creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) (track 12) through once or twice to introduce your kids to the song. Practice the song with your kids a few times.

 **If anyone (if anyone)  
Is in Christ (is in Christ),  
He is a new creation (a new creation);  
The old has gone (the old has gone),  
The new has come! (The new has come!)  
He is a new creation (a new creation);  
We have been made new!**

*(Repeat from the beginning.)*

**We have been made new!**

“A New Creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) by Carol Smith. © 2003 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

After the song, let kids enjoy a class celebration to remind them of how the father and son celebrated. The celebration can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose. For a ready-to-go party, just provide juice or water and a simple snack, such as doughnut holes or cookies and crackers. For extra impact, consider letting kids create the snack themselves.

After the party, have kids form a circle.

### **Talk With Kids** ■■■■

Say: **God is forgiving and abounding in love. Let’s say our Key Verse together again: “You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (Nehemiah 9:17). Now look at your forgiveness bracelets. Your bracelets are circles, and just as circles never end, there is no end to the love and forgiveness that God offers to us.**

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What do you think Jesus wants us to learn from this story about the prodigal son?**
- **How does it make you feel to know that God is loving and forgiving?**

Say: **Because God is loving and forgiving, we can be loving and forgiving, too.**





## 4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

### Daily Challenges

#### What You'll Do

Say: **Let's each choose a Daily Challenge for the week to help us remember that**  
▶ **GOD WILL FORGIVE US WHEN WE SIN.**

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on the Bible Truth Sleuth pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- **Think of a way you disobeyed this week, and ask God to forgive you.**
- **Tell a friend about God's forgiveness, and ask if he or she would like to pray with you.**
- **Lead your family in singing a song of praise to God for his forgiveness when we sin.**

Make sure you choose a Daily Challenge as well, and tell the kids what you chose. Kids will be more inclined to follow through on their commitments when they see you doing the same.

#### Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What's a practical way you're going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.**

Say: ▶ **GOD WILL FORGIVE US WHEN WE SIN. Let's seek forgiveness by following through on our Daily Challenges this week.**

### Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about forgiveness. Kids can also do the activities in the "HomeConnect" section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

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

Have kids form two groups, and have groups stand at opposite ends of the room. Tell kids they'll end with a special group hug. Have groups run toward each other in slow motion, just as the father ran toward the son in the story. After the group hug, have kids form a circle. Close with a prayer, thanking God for his love and forgiveness.



#### Daily Challenges Supplies

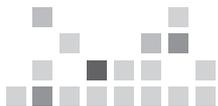
.....  
Bible Truth Sleuth



# Inheritance Coins



**!** OK  
TO COPY



Lyrics ■■■■

## A New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

If anyone (if anyone)  
Is in Christ (is in Christ),  
He is a new creation (a new creation);  
The old has gone (the old has gone),  
The new has come! (The new has come!)  
He is a new creation (a new creation);  
We have been made new!

*(Repeat from the beginning.)*

**We have been made new!**

"A New Creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17) by Carol Smith. © 2003 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.



**OK**  
TO COPY



