

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

Preschoolers have a unique ability to forgive and forget very quickly. If you have ever watched them playing together with one another, you've noticed how they can be archenemies one moment and best friends the next. Their memory of wrongs done against them is generally very short. As you teach this lesson, draw upon their abilities to forgive and forget. Point out that God is loving and forgiving and always ready and willing to forgive us.



► 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 loving and forgiving them.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started <i>about 10 min.</i>	Welcome and Celebrate Welcome each other, and praise God through music.	CD player Teacher Pack: CD, whistle	
2 Key Verse Activity <i>about 5 min.</i>	Forgiving and Loving Sing a song about God forgiving and loving them.	Bible, CD player Teacher Pack: CD	
3 Bible Exploration <i>about 20 min.</i>	Puppy Pointers Hear Theo ask for and receive forgiveness.	CD player, Theo puppet, torn picture, tape Teacher Pack: CD	Tape the torn picture to Theo's paw.
	Bible Time: So Much to See and Do Learn about the prodigal son with a floor poster.	Bible, double-sided tape, heart sticker, crayons, ink pad, wet wipes, scissors Teacher Pack: "Lost Son" poster, gold coins 	Cut out the father and son figures from the poster. Set the poster on the floor, and place the father and son next to the home. Place a few of the gold coins in a pile next to the father.

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Weaving Faith Into Life <i>about 20 min.</i> <i>(Choose 2 centers.)</i></p>	<p>Center 1: Coming Home! Make a movable son puppet.</p>	My Bible Hugs, 1 craft stick per child, tape, scissors	Remove the Lesson 2 pages from each My Bible Hugs student book, and write children's names on them. On each page, cut out the son and slit the paper along the dotted line.
	<p>Center 2: Mud! Make and eat chocolate pudding "mud."</p>	instant chocolate pudding, milk, container with lid, paper cups, plastic spoons	
	<p>Center 3: Home and Away Act out the Bible passage.</p>	blocks Teacher Pack: father and son figures from the "Lost Son" poster 	
	<p>Center 4: Welcome Home Greeting Create greetings to celebrate coming home.</p>	1 sheet of construction paper per child, glue sticks, magazines, scissors, crayons	Cut pictures of happy faces out of magazines. Print "Welcome Home!" on a sheet of 12x18-inch construction paper. Prepare one sheet for each child.
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lasting Impressions <i>about 10 min.</i></p>	<p>Daily Challenges Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.</p>	My Bible Hugs, crayons	
	<p>Action Prayer Say a prayer about being forgiven.</p>	1 heart sticker per child Teacher Pack: "The Lost Son Returns" poster (from the Big Bible Poster Pack) 	
	<p>Weaving Faith at Home Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.</p>		

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.



Welcome and Celebrate Supplies

CD player

Teacher Pack

CD: "Ain't It Great to Be at Church" (track 5), "Jesus Welcomes Everyone" (track 3)
whistle

1 GETTING STARTED

Welcome and Celebrate



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 one with a smile. When it's time to begin, use your whistle to gather the children together in a circle on the floor.

Lead children in singing "Ain't It Great to Be at Church" (track 5 on the CD) to the tune of "Boom, Boom! Ain't It Great to Be Crazy?" Encourage children to follow the motions in parentheses.

 **Boom, boom! Ain't it great to be here at church?** (*Stomp feet.*)
Boom, boom! Ain't it great to be here at church? (*Nod head.*)
We've come to worship Jesus Christ. (*Clap hands.*)
Boom, boom! Ain't it great to be at church? (*Stomp feet.*)
(Repeat 2x.)

Say: **At church we get to learn how ► GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING. Let's sing about how Jesus wants everyone to come to church.**

Lead children in singing "Jesus Welcomes Everyone" (track 3 on the CD) to the tune of "Are You Sleeping?" Encourage children to follow the motions in parentheses.

 **Jesus welcomes, Jesus welcomes** (*Point up.*)
Everyone, everyone. (*Make gathering motion.*)
He is here among us. (*Nod and point to ground.*)
He is here among us. (*Nod and point to ground.*)
Come and learn, come and learn. (*Make gathering motion.*)
(Repeat 2x.)





2 KEY VERSE ACTIVITY

Forgiving and Loving

What You'll Do

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

Say: **I'm so glad God forgives us when we're sorry! 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.**

Have the children show you how they look when they are sad and happy. Then ask children to show you how they tell others they're sorry. Finally, ask children to show you how they tell others, "I forgive you." Explain that children are going to sing a song about how God loves them and forgives them.

Lead children in singing "My God" (track 4 on the CD) to the tune of "My God Is So Great." Encourage children to follow the motions in parentheses.

 **My God is so good.** (*Give the thumbs-up sign.*)
God forgives me and loves me (*Hug yourself.*)
Even if I do something that's wrong. (*Give the thumbs-down sign.*)

My God is so good. (*Give the thumbs-up sign.*)
God forgives me and loves me (*Hug yourself.*)
Even if I do something that's wrong. (*Give the thumbs-down sign.*)

God loves me always. (*Point toward the sky.*)
God forgives me each day,
And that is why I love him so. (*Hug yourself.*)
My God is so good. (*Give the thumbs-up sign.*)
God forgives me and loves me (*Hug yourself.*)
Even if I do something that's wrong. (*Give the thumbs-down sign.*)
(Repeat.)

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **What have you done that might make God sad?**
- **Have you ever had to say you're sorry? How did you feel?**
- **How did you feel when the person forgave you?**



Forgiving and Loving Supplies

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- Bible
 - CD player
 - Teacher Pack**
 - CD: "My God" (track 4)





Puppy Pointers Supplies

CD player
Theo puppet
torn picture
tape

Teacher Pack

CD: "Here, Theo"
(track 2)

Puppy Pointers Easy Prep

Tape the torn picture to
Theo's paw.

Say: **God forgives us and always loves us—even when we do wrong things.**
▶ **GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING.**

3 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Puppy Pointers

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Listen, everyone, Theo's coming! He has something to show us. Let's find out what it is.** Play "Here, Theo" (track 2 on the CD), and bring out Theophilus the FaithRetriever.

Theo: Hi, everybody!

Teacher: Hi, Theo! It's nice to see you at church today. What happened to the picture you have there?

Theo: I was looking at it, and I accidentally ripped it. I'm really sorry. Will you forgive me?

Teacher: Of course I'll forgive you!

Theo: Thank you!

Teacher: You're welcome, Theo. In our Bible story today, we're going to hear about a son who asks his father for forgiveness.

Theo: That sounds like an exciting story!

Teacher: It is! And do you know what? I'm sure I can tape that picture back together again. Why don't you leave it for me and I'll fix it later?

Theo: Thanks! I'll put it away now.

Teacher: 'Bye, Theo!

Encourage kids to wave or say goodbye to Theo, and then put Theo away in a safe place for next week's use.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Have you ever broken something that didn't belong to you? What happened?**
- **How does it feel when someone forgives you?**

Say: **Sometimes we make mistakes. It feels good when others forgive us for those mistakes.** ▶ **GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING.** God forgives us for our mistakes, too.



Bible Time: So Much to See and Do

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.** Let's hear a story that Jesus told about a father who loved and forgave his son.

There once was a father who had two sons. The father loved his sons very much. Ask a child to place the heart sticker on the father. The father's youngest son didn't want to live at home anymore. The youngest son said, "Give me a lot of money, Dad, so I can go away from here."

Ask:

- How do you think the father felt when the son said that?

Say: **The son's words made the father sad, but he gave the son some money.** Have a few children each take a gold coin from the father's pile and use double-sided tape to stick it on the son. **Then the son left his father's home. He went far away to another city.** Have several other children use crayons to color the path the son took from the father's home to the city.

In the city, the son spent all his money on the wrong kinds of things. Have a few children take the coins off the son and place them on the city with double-sided tape. **When he ran out of money, he had to get a job. The only job he could do was feed pigs.** Have one child move the son along the path to the pigsty. Ask each child to place a thumb on the ink pad and then make "muddy" thumbprints in the pigsty. Let children clean their thumbs with wet wipes.

It wasn't a very good job. The son was so hungry that he even thought about eating the pigs' food! All of a sudden, the son realized that even his father's servants were living better than he was. The son realized how much he'd hurt his father by leaving home.

He decided to go back home and tell his father, "I'm sorry." Have a child move the son along the path from the pigsty back to the father's house. **His father saw him and ran to him.** Place the father next to the son. **The father hugged his son and kissed him. The son said, "I hurt you, Dad. I'm so sorry!" Then the father said, "I love you, son. I forgive you."**

Talk With Kids ■■■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- When have you felt bad because you've done something wrong?
- How do you think the son felt when his father forgave him?
- How can you show others that you've forgiven them?



Bible Time: So Much to See and Do Supplies

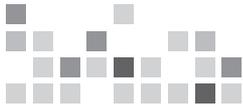
-
- Bible
 - double-sided tape
 - heart sticker
 - crayons
 - ink pad
 - wet wipes
 - scissors
 - Teacher Pack**
 - "Lost Son" poster
 - gold coins

Bible Time: So Much to See and Do Easy Prep

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Cut out the father and son figures from the poster. Set the poster on the floor, and place the father and son next to the home. Place a few of the gold coins in a pile next to the father.





Center 1: Coming Home! Supplies

My Bible Hugs
1 craft stick per child
tape
scissors

Center 1: Coming Home! Easy Prep

Remove the Lesson 2 pages from each My Bible Hugs student book, and write children's names on them. On each page, cut out the son and slit the paper along the dotted line.

Center 2: Mud! Supplies

instant chocolate pudding
milk
container with lid
paper cups
plastic spoons

ALLERGY ALERT

Say: **Just as the father in the story loved and forgave his son, our ► GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING toward us.**

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:

Coming Home!

What You'll Do

Give each child a Lesson 2 page from My Bible Hugs. Help children each tape the son to a craft stick. Show children how to slide the son up through the slit in the page, walk from his father to the far-off land, and come back home again. Talk about how the father was so excited that the son was coming home.

Say: **When we do something wrong, we're as far away from God as this father and son are from each other. But when we tell God we're sorry, we can be close to God again.**

Talk With Kids

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- How do you think the son felt when his father hugged and kissed him?
- When God loves you and forgives you, how do you feel?

Say: **When we do something wrong, we can tell God we're sorry. ► GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING, just like the father in the story.**

CENTER 2:

Mud!

What You'll Do

Have the children clean their hands and then sit down to prepare their snack.



Say: **In our story today, the young son ended up feeding pigs. He was so hungry that he almost ate the pigs' food. Pigs love to roll in the mud. For our snack today, we are going to make pretend mud to eat.**

Pour a package of instant chocolate pudding into a large container. Add the milk and cover with a lid. Let the children take turns shaking the container until the pudding is set (about five minutes). Pour the pudding into small cups and let sit while you discuss the questions.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- How do you think the son felt when he was taking care of the pigs?
- How would you feel if that was your job?

Say: **Let's thank God for loving and forgiving us and for providing our snack.** Invite one child to pray for the snack, and then let kids enjoy their "mud."

■ CENTER 3:

Home and Away

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Encourage the children to use blocks to build the father's home and a far-off town. Give them the father and son figures from the "Lost Son" poster to act out the story.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- How do you think God feels when you do something wrong?
- How can you thank God for forgiving you?

Say: **The father loved and forgave his son. When we do something wrong, we can tell God we're sorry. ► GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING.**

■ CENTER 4:

Welcome Home Greeting

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Give each child a 12x18-inch piece of construction paper with the words "Welcome Home!" printed on it. Let children choose pictures to glue on their papers. They may also draw cheerful pictures.



Center 3: Home and Away Supplies

blocks

Teacher Pack:

father and son figures from the "Lost Son" poster

Center 4: Welcome Home Greeting Supplies

1 sheet of construction paper per child
glue sticks
magazines
scissors
crayons

Center 4: Welcome Home Greeting Easy Prep

Cut pictures of happy faces out of magazines. Print "Welcome Home!" on a sheet of 12x18-inch construction paper. Prepare one sheet for each child.





Daily Challenges Supplies

My Bible Hugs
crayons

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead children in this discussion.

Ask:

- Has someone you loved ever been away for a long time? If so, what was that like?
- When someone comes home after being away for a while, how do you celebrate?

Say: ► **GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING**, so God celebrates every time one of his children comes to him. You can put this greeting on a door at home to welcome a parent home from work or to welcome a visitor. When you welcome someone, you can remember the son in the story and his loving and forgiving father.

5 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

After the children have cleaned up their centers, bring everyone back to a circle area on the floor. Review the lesson activities and the Bible Point, and then encourage the children to share what they remember about what they learned 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 for encouraging your children's growing relationships with Jesus.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Say: Today we learned that ► **GOD IS LOVING AND FORGIVING**. I would like each of you to choose a way to show you know that this week.

Give kids these two challenges to choose from:

- Draw a picture of Jesus and hang it in your room. Each time you see it, thank God for loving you every day.
- Have an adult help you write an apology to someone you may have hurt. Ask that person to forgive you, and tell him or her about Jesus' love and forgiveness.

Say: If you want to draw a picture, circle the choice with one dot. If you want to write an apology, circle the choice with two dots. Check that each child circled a choice on his or her My Bible Hugs 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!



Action Prayer

What You'll Do

Before praying, talk with the children about how important it is to tell God we're sorry when we do something wrong. Remind them that in the story, the son told the father he was sorry for leaving and the father forgave the son. God is loving and forgiving just as the father in the story was.

Place "The Lost Son Returns" poster on the floor, and have children gather around it. Let them identify the father and the son in the picture. Then give each child the opportunity to pray, "God, I'm sorry for the things I do that are wrong." When a child prays this prayer, let the child put a heart sticker on the picture of the son to show God's forgiveness. Let each child take a turn praying and putting a sticker on the picture of the son. Then close by having the children repeat after you the lines to the following prayer.

**Thank you, God, for loving me
And also for forgiving me.
Help me try to do what's right
So I'm close to you all day and night.
In Jesus' name, amen.**

Weaving Faith at Home

Have children take home their My Bible Hugs 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 the parents to help their kids fulfill this commitment during 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.



Action Prayer Supplies

1 heart sticker per child

Teacher Pack

"The Lost Son Returns"
poster (from the Big
Bible Poster Pack)



