



# GRACE & MERCY

Life & Ministry of Jesus • U5#4 1st-3rd Grade • Nov.19, 2023

## Concept

God's love and compassion are always available to any who will receive it.

## Goal

Students will learn that God loves them apart from anything that they do.

## Passage

Luke 15:11-32

Key Verse: "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." Luke 15:20 (NIV)

## Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p><b>Lesson:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Mighty Acts of God, Starr Meade</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Learning Activity #1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lollipop or novelty toy, 1/student</li> </ul> <p><b>Learning Activity #3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toilet tube puppets from Activity Station</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Adam Raccoon and the Circus Master, Glen Keane</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Activity Station:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maze, 1/student</li> <li>Markers</li> <li>Toilet paper tubes, 1/student</li> <li>Plastic drinking straws, 2/student</li> <li>Craft sticks, 1/student</li> <li>Arms copied on cardstock, 2/student</li> <li>Pink construction paper</li> <li>Black chenille stems</li> <li>Scraps of construction paper</li> <li>Yarn (for hair on puppets)</li> <li>Scissors</li> <li>Markers</li> </ul>

### \*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized 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...

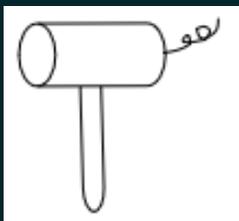
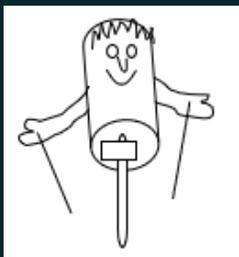
"The father's response is nevertheless tender: 'My son' (or 'child') is followed by words of affirmation, not weakness (v.31)." [2]

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.

[2] Frank E. Gaebelien, Frank E. Gaebelien, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Matthew, Mark, Luke, 1984, Zondervan Corp., pp. 983, 984.

## Incorporation Lg. Group



## Introduction Lg. Group

## Lesson Lg. Group

### Activity Stations:

- **Tube Puppets of Father, Older Son, Younger Son, Pigs**
  - **Instructions:** Give each student a toilet paper tube, printed arms (or they can draw their own), 2 straws, a craft stick and yarn for hair. Draw a face on the upper end of tube. Wrap the yarn around a 5" strip of cardboard, slip the cardboard out, pinch the middle of the yarn together and wrap a small piece of yarn around the middle to tie it in place. Put scissors through each of the loop ends and cut the loops. Lay the yarn over the open end of the tube above the face and arrange it as desired. Tape a craft stick to the inside, bottom back of the tube. Design or cut out provided arms and glue them to the sides of the tube. Draw clothes on the tubes for the puppets. Glue the straws to the hands so they can be manipulated. For pigs use the pink construction paper to cover the tube. Turn the tube on its side as the body and attach a piece of the black chenille stem for the tail. Make a slit through the belly of the pig and push the craft stick through it to hold the puppet up.
- **Worksheet – Maze**
  - **Instructions:** Give each student a copy of the maze and see if they can find the way to the center where the father and son are reunited.

Have you ever thought how great it would be to be your own boss, make your own decisions, not have to listen to your parents tell you what to do? You could go to bed when you wanted. You could spend your money the way you wanted. You could decide if and when you wanted to go to school. If you were on your own, do you think you would make wise choices that would result in the best for you and others?

Jesus told a parable about a boy who thought the same thing. He learned the hard way how much he needed his father. This parable is not just about this boy, but also tells us about the boy's father and his older brother. Listen carefully while I read.

**Instructions: Read "The Parable of the Prodigal Son," Mighty Acts of God, Starr Meade, pp. 205-207.**

Let's read Luke 15:1-3. These three verses introduce three parables. Who can tell me why Jesus told these three parables? (Pharisees believed Jesus couldn't be good if He welcomed "sinners.") What does "notorious sinners" in verse 1 mean? "Notorious" means well known. Why did these notorious sinners go to Jesus? (They wanted to hear Him teach.) Why would these notorious sinners want to hear Jesus teach? (Like the younger son, they knew they were bad and needed to hear what He said.) Why do you think the Pharisees were more worried about the people who listened to and ate with Jesus than about what Jesus was teaching? (They thought they were good and didn't need to listen.)

### **Good News**

Because the older son had behaved better than his brother, he thought he deserved his father's love. Like the Pharisees, he thought he wasn't a "sinner." Jesus made it clear in this parable that being good had nothing to do with the father's love. His father loved him no matter what he did or didn't do. His love was available to both sons if they would receive it. Whether we believe we are good or bad, we are all separated from God because of our sin. Jesus became a man and came to earth to die on the cross to pay for our sin. God loves everyone and waits for us to come to Him like the young son went back to his father. Our key verse is "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). Have you gone to God and told Him you don't deserve to be His child and asked Him to forgive you?

### **Game -- "Have You Seen My Son?" 5**

**Instructions:** All students are seated in a circle on the floor. Choose a student to be the "father" who walks outside the circle, stops behind a child and touches him on the head. The father then asks, "Have you seen my son?" The child answers, "How was he dressed?" The father then describes someone in the circle. The child, recognizing his/her description, gets up and runs around the outside of the circle and the father chases him back to his place. If he is not tagged he is safe and he becomes the father. If he is tagged, he sits down and the father tries again.

Who deserves to get a prize- those who made it around safely or those who were tagged? (Allow the students to come to a consensus.) Okay, anyone who would like a prize can go to <<teacher's name>> and ask for it. (There will most likely be children who will complain about the losers getting a prize. Acknowledge the complaint but explain that you can give the prize to everyone who asks, just as God will give forgiveness to everyone who asks.)

### **Debrief**

Those of you who thought you won the game were mad because you thought the "losers" didn't deserve a prize. Really, no one deserved a prize. All you had to do to get the prize was to go to the teacher, ask for and receive it. It was not given because of what you did or didn't do. It was given because the teacher chose to give it. It's the same way with God's love. He loves everyone because He chooses to love, not because of anything we do. We can never earn or lose God's love by what we do. God's love is available to everyone who is willing to receive it.

Let's gather into small groups so we can discuss this parable.

## Learning Activity# 2 Sm. Groups

### Discussion Questions:

- What do you think? If you were the father, how would you have treated the younger son – would you have a party for the wild son? Why?
- Did the younger son always have the attitude that he didn't deserve to be his father's son? How do you know? Look at verse 12 for a clue. (He asked for money that would come to him and took off.)
- What happened that made him change his mind? Look at verses 14-16. (He made bad decisions & lost all money, no friends, miserable life.)
- When did the younger son finally realize that he couldn't figure life out on his own and take care of himself? Look at verse 17. Do you know what it is called when we realize we're wrong and change our minds? (Repentance.) Have you ever had to repent of the same attitude?
- What does it mean to be humble? How do we know he had a humble attitude? Look at verses 18-19.
- What is our key verse? (Luke 15:20). From this description of the father's response, what do you think he did while the son was away? (He watched, waited and prayed for him to return.) Why did he do that? (He was obviously watching for him-saw him from far off.)
- How does the father in the story compare to God? (He desires repentance, rejoices when we turn back to Him, and delights in celebrating the return of those who have turned away from Him.)
- Are you more like the younger son (before he left or after he came back) or the older son? What do you do when someone gets something you don't think they deserve? What do you do when you get something you don't deserve?

**Mission Prayer:** Talk about and pray for Oasis Giving campaign.

Let's pray

## Transition

We're going to use the puppets you made to do a puppet show of the parable.

## Learning Activity# 3 Lg. Group

### Drama - Puppet Show presented by students and teachers

**Instructions:** Choose students who would like to manipulate their puppets for the show. Characters are: Older son, Younger son, Father, Pigs, Narrator (teacher). There are three scenes so the Father, younger son and older son puppets can change from scene to scene. Choose as many pig puppets as you'd like to take part in Scene 3.

#### SCENE 1:

**Older Son:** Hi, I'm the older son. I have always done what my father has told me to do. I have a younger brother who is not like me at all.

**Younger Son:** I'm the younger brother and I'm tired of doing the same old thing all the time. I want to see the world. Hey, Dad...

**Learning  
Activity#3  
Continued**

**Father:** Yes, Son, you called?

**Younger Son:** Dad, I'm tired of life around here. I'd like to have the money you plan to give me when I get older. It's mine and I don't want to wait. I have some things I want to do.

**Father:** As you wish. I will give both you and your brother your share of the family fortune.

**Younger Son:** YIPPEE!!! I'm free. I'm outa here!! Hasta la Vista, Baby!

**Narrator:** So the father sadly watched as his son left for a far away country.

**SCENE 2:**

**Younger Son:** Wow! I am free. I can do anything I want with my money. No one to tell me what to do. Look over there at those great threads in that store window. I've never spent this much on clothes, but heck I've got the money, why not?

*Walk a little way as though looking in store windows*

This is too cool! Look at that skateboard. I bet I could get a lot of friends if I had a skateboard like that, it's the best skateboard made! I could even buy a few so others could skateboard with me.

The skateboards are fun, but life is still boring. I think I'll have a wild party! We'll need the most expensive wine, an expensive rock band, great food, lots of helium balloons and arcade games. OOPS... that's the end of the money. Oh, well, party on, dude!

**Narrator:** So, in time, the son spent all his money, and as he grew poor, the food in that country also became scarce. The son's friends wouldn't help him. He had to sell all of his things, but still didn't have enough money to eat. Finally he begged a farmer to let him take care of his pigs.

**Younger Son:** I'm so hungry. No one is giving me anything to eat. Even this pig slop looks good to me.

*Stop, look around, put hand up to hit head*

What am I doing here? Look where I have ended up. I thought I could live my own life, have some fun and party forever. But I was wrong. My father has many servants who are well fed and have nice clothes as well as a bed to sleep in. Here I am, his son, without any money or food, sleeping in a pigpen. I will go to him, tell him I have done wrong and beg him to let me be one of his servants.

**Narrator:** So, the son walked the long, weary journey home.

**SCENE 3:**

## Learning Activity#3 Continued

**Narrator:** His father saw him coming from a long way off. Overjoyed and full of love, he ran to him and threw his arms around his neck and kissed him.

**Younger Son:** Father, I have done wrong to God and to you. I am not worthy to be called your son...

**Father:** (interrupting) Servants, come now and bring out the best robe, and put it on my son. Put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf, kill it and let us eat and be merry. For this son of mine was dead and has come to life again. He was lost and has been found!

**Narrator:** And they began to have a great party.

**Older Son:** HEY!! I SAY, HEY!! What is all the fuss about? It's not my birthday, what's the party for? Stop this party and everyone sit down.

**Narrator:** A servant told the older son the wonderful news, his brother was back! But, instead of being happy the older brother was angry and refused to go to the party.

**Father:** My son, my son, did you know your brother is back?!

**Older Son:** Look, for so many years I have served you and always done all that you've asked. And yet, you have never given me such a great party! When this son of yours came home... this son who wasted all your money with wild parties and foolishness gets a great celebration. I just don't get it. It's NOT FAIR!

**Father:** My son, you have always been with me and what is mine is all yours. But we have to celebrate because your younger brother was lost and now he is found.

### Story – Adam Raccoon and the Circus Master

**Instructions:** Read the story and discuss how often we make choices that look good to us but aren't. God is like King Aren. He is always ready to love and forgive us when we admit to Him that we were wrong.

## Optional Activity