

STORY

The Prodigal Son – Luke 15:11-32

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus, You came to earth to save sinners, of which I am the chief. In this lesson You teach me of your great love for me in forgiving all of my sins. I know that all of my sins – those that I regard as small and those that I regard as great – all are forgiven because of what You have done. Please give me the wisdom and ability to teach this truth to my students, that they may always turn to You and know Your loving forgiveness, no matter what sin they have committed. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Prodigal – recklessly wasteful. A "prodigal" is one who spends lavishly and foolishly.

Famine – a time when there is not enough food to eat.

Fatted calf – a calf kept by itself, fed well, and preserved for special occasions.

OUTER AIM

Jesus tells the parable of a foolish son who was lost and then found.

INNER AIM

God shows His love for sinners by forgiving our sins.

BACKGROUND

In Chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel, Jesus emphasizes the fact that God continues to love and seek after those who wander from the fold. This entire chapter demonstrates the depths of God's love and patience with sinful mankind. The Parable of the Prodigal Son was directed toward the Pharisees and scribes, who not only refused to attempt to regain those who had strayed from the fold of Israel, they would not even be seen with them. Their condemnation of anyone who would so associate himself is what prompted Jesus to speak the words of our parable. Since this is a parable, we are again to look for one central truth. This parable stresses the unconditional character of God's love and forgiveness.

v.11-12

- ▶ Note the love (and lack of selfishness) demonstrated by the "Father."
- ▶ By definition an inheritance belongs to an heir only after the benefactor dies.
- ▶ The young son had no claim to "his portion" while the father was still alive; still the father gives it freely.
- ▶ So we read that "he divided to them *his* livelihood."

v. 13

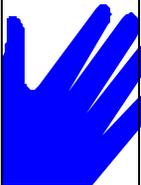
- ▶ The young son falls almost immediately into the same trap that snares so many young people who are given great wealth at a young age.
- ▶ Work is a blessing for many reasons. It occupies our time and energy in worthwhile endeavors, and it teaches us the value of what we receive.
- ▶ Emphasize to the student that having a great deal of money to spend and time to spend it – especially at a young age – may seem like something to be desired. It is in fact, a great temptation that almost no one can master.

v. 14-16

- ▶ Mercifully the money ran out.
- ▶ The young man no doubt regarded this inevitable consequence of his lavish lifestyle as a curse. It was in fact a great blessing from his God.
- ▶ It was not until the god, "money," was gone that the man "came to himself."

v. 17-19

- ▶ The son's contrition here is real. He "came to himself" in that he realized that he had sinned



greatly in what he had done.

- ▶ He did not return to his father expecting anything but to work as one of his servants.
- ▶ He had forfeited his right to be called a son.
- ▶ He recognized that his father was under no obligation to give him anything.

v. 20-24

- ▶ The key to this parable lies in these verses. The father owed the son nothing, but forgave him freely and gladly reinstated him as a son.
- ▶ Note that the father reinstated the son before the son's confession.
- ▶ The son did not earn his father's forgiveness. It was freely given.
- ▶ The robe was a symbol of authority, proof that the son was again regarded as a son.
- ▶ The ring signifies the complete nature of the father's forgiveness. Many regard it as the ancient equivalent of a credit card. A father who did not fully forgive would never have entrusted his son with more "buying power."
- ▶ The sandals also indicated reinstatement, since servants usually went barefoot.
- ▶ The joy was based not so much on proximity as it was on condition; that is, they rejoiced not so much that the son was living at home again, but that he had been brought back to life from spiritual death.

v. 25-32

- ▶ The terrible condition of the youngest son's heart was obvious when he was living a wild, extravagant life of sin.
- ▶ The state of the older son's heart, though concealed, was just as bad.
- ▶ The older brother is a picture of the Scribes and Pharisees, to whom this parable was addressed.
- ▶ Note how the older brother refused to go in and rejoice that his brother had come to his senses and returned.
- ▶ He would not even acknowledge him as a brother, but referred to him as "this son of yours."
- ▶ The father demonstrates his love for both sons, for God is not willing that any should perish.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, in this parable You have shown me how much I am loved by my Father in heaven. I did not deserve His love, yet He gave it freely because of Your death on the cross. Help me to remember at all times that no matter what I have done wrong, God the Father has freely forgiven me all my sins. Please give me now a spirit that is not jealous of this love and forgiveness, but one that makes me eager to share it with my neighbors, friends, and family. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The account is short enough to read to the students, or to be read by them. If you are able, consider telling the story in your own words, using the written account as your guide.

APPLICATIONS

1. God our heavenly Father loves all sinners like the father in our parable loved his sons. We have many faults, God loves us in spite of them – unconditionally. Guide the student to see himself in the prodigal son, for we too have been wasteful and lazy. We too have insisted on going our own way rather than God's way.
2. Work is a blessing. This is sometimes a difficult concept for children to understand, yet it would be well worth our time to have the children try to list some of these blessings on their own. Illustrate their correct ideas with examples from the story. (Greed of the young son, lack of appreciation for the value of money, laziness, seeking after worldly pleasures to the harm of his soul, too much free time led to sin, etc.)

3. Work at making the student realize the terrible nature of the sins of the prodigal son. God does not categorize sins as to "bad" and "not so bad," but we do. Help the child to see that the sins of the young son are among those we would categorize as very bad, demonstrating how God freely forgave them. We want our students to understand that our merciful God does not stop loving and forgiving us when we fall into even the most shameful sins.
4. This is an excellent opportunity to teach the children about true repentance. True repentance is not feeling sorry because you got caught. It is not even simply feeling sorry that you did something wrong. Godly repentance means that we are not only sorry for what we have done, it also includes believing that God the Father has forgiven our sin for Jesus' sake. A truly repentant sinner realizes that he cannot "make it up to God." God does not forgive us *because* we are sorry. He forgives us because of what Jesus has done for us.
5. Show the child what terrible things sin can do to us. What happens when we lie? Hurt someone? Curse someone? How do we feel? How do others feel about us?

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalms 103:12 - As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

1 John 4:19 - We love Him because He first loved us.

John 15:9 - "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."

Middle any of the above and...

Luke 15:7 - "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

1 Timothy 2:3b-4 - God our Savior... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Upper any of the above and...

1 John 3:1 - Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Psalms 103:2-5 - Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Ephesians 2:4-5 - But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

HYMN CHOICES

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven" (TLH 32:1-2)

"From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" (TLH 329:1-3)

"O Thou that Hear'st when Sinners Cry" (TLH 325:1-4)

"The Man Is Ever Blessed" (TLH 414:1-3)

The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32



The Prodigal Son (The Wasteful Son)- Luke 15:11-32

Jesus told this parable to teach an important lesson:

A man had two sons. The younger one said, "Father, give me my inheritance." So the father divided up his things.

Soon, the younger son took his part. He went away. He wasted everything.

Then the land had a famine. The younger son was starving. In order to survive, he fed pigs for a farmer. The younger son was so hungry he would have even eaten the pigs' food.

Then he thought, "My father's hired servants have more than enough to eat. I'm dying of hunger! I will go to my father. I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I shouldn't be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

So the younger son went back home to his father. When he was still far away, his father saw him and loved him. He ran and kissed his son.

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I shouldn't be called your son."

But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand. Put sandals on his feet. Bring the best calf here and kill it. Let us eat and be merry. This son of mine was dead and now is alive again. He was lost and is found." To celebrate, they had a feast.

Jesus taught an important lesson in this parable: that everyone of us who comes back to our Heavenly Father is welcomed with open arms.

Review

1. Color the son returning to his father. Why did he expect his father to be mad?
2. Color the father. Why was he waiting for his son?
3. How does God feel about us?
4. How does God feel about sin?

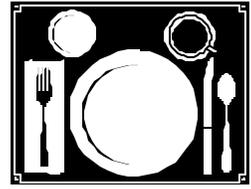
Activity - God's Word tells us, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."
 (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Match the jobs you can do with its picture.

rake leaves ●

pick up toys ●

put away clothes ●

set the table ●



What God Tells Us - Write the words in the boxes and make a sad face under "SIN" and a happy face under "FORGIVES."

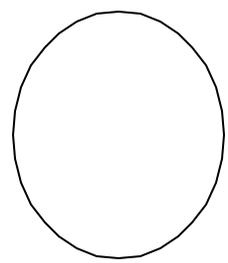
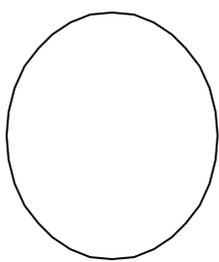
We

Write " SIN"



God

Write " FORGIVES"



Passages

Psalms 103:12 - "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

How close are east and west? Do we have to fear that we are sinful?

1 John 4:19 - "We love Him because He first loved us."

Does God love us even though we are sinful?

John 15:9 - "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you;
abide in My love."

What causes us to love at all?

Hymn - TLH #325 v. 2

Create my nature pure within
And form my soul averse to sin;
Let Thy good Spirit ne'er depart
Nor hide Thy presence from my heart.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, in this parable You have shown me how much I am loved by my Father in heaven. God the Father has freely forgiven me all my sins. Help me share that saving message of forgiveness with others. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32



The Prodigal Son (The Wasteful Son) - Luke 15:11-32

Jesus told this story to teach a lesson:

A man had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my inheritance." So he divided up his things.

Soon, the younger son took his part, went away, and wasted everything. After he had spent everything, that land had a famine, and he was starving.

Then he worked for a farmer feeding the pigs. He was so hungry he would have even eaten the pigs' food.

Then he thought, "My father's hired servants have more than enough to eat, and I'm dying of hunger! I will go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I shouldn't be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

He came to his father. When he was still far away, his father saw him and loved him, and ran and kissed him.

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I shouldn't be called your son."

But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring

on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the best calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Then they had a feast.

But when his older son came home, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what was happening.

The servant said to him, "Your brother has come back alive and well, so your father made a feast."

But the older son was angry and would not go in. So his father came out and talked with him.

He said to his father, "For all these years I have been serving you; I never made you angry; but you never even gave me a young goat, so I could have a feast with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has wasted everything, you made a feast for him."

The father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

Recalling Details

1. Color the son returning to his father.
2. Why did he expect his father to be mad?
3. Color the father.
4. Why was he waiting for his son?
5. Color the other son.
6. Why was the older son upset?

Matching - The things in the first column are from the story. The things in the second column are what they represent. Write the correct letter in the blank.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| _____ 1. The Wasteful Son | a. When we repent |
| _____ 2. Moving to a far land | b. When we sin |
| _____ 3. Deciding to come back | c. God the Father |
| _____ 4. The Waiting Father | d. We sinful people |

Passages

Psalms 103:12 - "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

How close are east and west? Do we have to fear that we are sinful?

1 John 4:19 - "We love Him because He first loved us."

Does God love us even though we are sinful?

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What causes us to love at all?

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The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

Why did Jesus tell stories?

What would Jesus say to people who accuse Him of visiting sinful people and eating with them?

Look at this picture. Do you remember what it shows? Let's read more about the lesson.



Prayer

Dear Father,

In this parable, You show me how much I am loved by You. I do not deserve Your love, yet You give it freely because of Your son's death on the cross. Help me to remember at all times that no matter what I have done wrong, You have freely forgiven me all my sins. Please give me now a spirit that is not jealous of this love and forgiveness, but one that makes me eager to share it with my neighbors, friends and family. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

The Prodigal Son (The Wasteful Son) - Luke 15:11-32

Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. {12} "And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. {13} "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

{14} "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. {15} "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. {16} "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.



{17} "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! {18} 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, {19} "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

{20} "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. {21} "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

{22} "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. {23} 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; {24} 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

{25} "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. {26} "So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. {27} "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

{28} "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. {29} "So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. {30} 'But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

{31} "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. {32} 'It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

Outer Aim - Jesus tells the parable of a foolish son who was lost and then found.

What the Lesson Tells Us - Answer the following questions about the lesson.

1. What wicked things did the younger son do?
2. Why did the son get hungry during the famine?

3. How was the famine a good thing for the son?
4. What did he decide to say to his father?
5. Why did the father have a party?
6. Why was the older son upset?
7. How did he show he was angry?
8. Why did the father go out to talk to the older son?
9. Who was the father in the parable?
10. Who were the sons?
11. What did Jesus mean by the younger son going away and wasting his goods with sinful living?
12. What did Jesus mean by having the father waiting when the son was still a long way away?
13. How should we feel about someone who repents?

Inner Aim - Jesus wants us to know we are forgiven and to forgive others.

What God Tells Us

1. How are we like the prodigal son?
2. How does God feel about us even though we have sinned?
3. How should we feel about other people and their sins?

Your Turn - Use the hymn verse and Bible passages to answer and discuss the following questions.

O Thou that hear'st when sinners cry
Tho' all my crimes before Thee lie,
Behold them not with angry look,
But blot their mem'ry from Thy book.

What does God do with the sins that are written down in His book? (Hymn 325 v. 1)

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner
who repents than over ninety-nine just persons
who need no repentance." Luke 15:7

Which makes God happy? (Luke 15:7)

"Who desires all men to be saved and to come to
the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4

What does God want for sinners? (1 Timothy 2:4)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

What does God do with the sins we confess? (1 John 1:9)

Prayer

Psalm 103:2-5 - "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. " Amen.

The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

How did the Pharisees and Scribes show that they were self-righteous?

Which gives Jesus more joy, a sinner that repents or 99 that need no repentance?

Prayer

Dear Father, in this parable, You show me how much I am loved by You. I do not deserve Your love, yet You give it freely because of Your son's death on the cross. Help me to remember at all times that no matter what I have done wrong, You have freely forgiven me all my sins. Please give me now a spirit that is not jealous of this love and forgiveness, but one that makes me eager to share it with my neighbors, friends and family. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.



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{17} "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! {18} 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, {19} "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

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servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. {23} 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; {24} 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

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Outer Aim - Jesus tells the parable of a foolish son who was lost and then found.

Recalling Details

1. What wicked things did the younger son do?
2. How did he do when the famine came?
3. How was the famine a good thing for the son?
4. What did he decide to say to his father?
5. Why was he happy?
6. What did he tell the older son?
7. Who did Jesus mean was the father in the parable?
8. Who did Jesus mean was the younger son?
9. Who did Jesus mean was the older son?

What God Tells Us

1. How are we like the prodigal son?
2. What can we do with our sins every day?
3. How does God feel about us even though we have sinned?

Passages - The following passages, hymn verse and Petition will help you answer the questions that follow.

What punishment so strange is suffered yonder!
The Shepherd dies for sheep that loved to wander;
The Master pays the debt His servants owe Him,
Who would not know Him. TLH #143 v. 4

2 Thessalonians 3:10 - "For even when we were
with you, we commanded you this:
if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."

Romans 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death, but
the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus
our Lord."

1 John 4:19 - "We love Him because He first loved
us."

The Fifth Petition

"And forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who trespass against us."

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our
Father in heaven would not look on
our sins or deny our prayer because
of them. We are not worthy of things
for which we are asking, neither
have we deserved them. However
we ask that our Father would by His
grace give us what we ask; even
though we sin often every day and
indeed deserve nothing but
punishment. We, too, will from our
hearts gladly forgive and do good to
all those who sin against us.

Your Turn - Use the hymn verse, passages and Petition to answer these questions.

1. What does this parable tell us about the direction we naturally would go? (Hymn 143 v.4)
2. How does God feel about working? (2 Th. 3:10)

3. How does God feel about the seriousness of the sins that the son committed? (Rom. 6:23)

4. Did the father forgive the son because of something inside him or because of something inside his son? (1 John 4:19)

5. How should we react differently than the older son? (5th Petition)

Hymn - TLH #388

Just as I am, without one plea
 But that Thy blood was shed for me
 And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
 Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
 Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am and waiting not
 To rid my soul of one dark blot,
 To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
 Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
 Because Thy promise I believe,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
 With many a conflict, many a doubt,
 Fightings and fears within, without,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am; Thy love unknown
 Has broken every barrier down.
 Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Prayer

Psalm 103:2-5 "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. " Amen.