

Parable of The Prodigal Son

Teacher Pep Talk: Children need to know that they are loved unconditionally. In fact, we all need to know it! In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus assures us that God will always take us back; that there is nothing we can do that will keep God from watching for us and receiving us when we return to Him. We are His children, and He loves us.

In fact, it is His amazing love that makes it possible for us to come home again at all!

You will need: Copy of the “Pig” page or plastic toy “piggies” of your own
Copy of the “Road” page for each child
Pencils, crayons or markers

A NOTE about Piggies: Once, when my friend, Lynn, taught this lesson, she went around ahead of time to various toy stores and bought all the different little plastic piggies she could find. (*I think she ended up with 23.*) She placed them in a container and, at just the right moment in the story, she brought them all out. The children were thrilled! (*They probably still remember the lesson.*) If you don't want to buy little plastic piggies from the toy store, you may want to color the “Piggy” page and cut out the little pigs to use as examples. Have fun!

Major Points: God loves us (no matter how bad we have been.)
A parable is a story that tells us something about God.
(The Parable of the Prodigal Son)
God always welcomes us home.

Scripture Ref. Luke 15:11-32 (*The Parable of the Lost Son*)

Memory Verse: Luke 15:32b “...*he was lost and is found.*”

Lesson: **God loves us (no matter how bad we have been.)**

- Have you ever been bad? (*Wait for answers.*) How bad have you been? (*Pause and then go on...*) Have you ever been so bad that you got in trouble? Have you ever been so bad that you got sent to “time out?” Have you ever been so bad that... your parents wouldn't love you anymore? (*No!*)
- We are going to hear a story of a man's son who went far away from home and then was very, very bad. Then we'll hear about what happened when the son was sorry and came home...
- But first I must tell you that God loves us very much! In fact, God loves us no matter what we've done or how bad we have been!

A Parable is a Story that tells us Something about God.

- Do you like stories? I'm going to tell you a story that Jesus once told.
- This story is called a "parable." It is a type of story that Jesus used to tell. In it we usually find out something about God and what He is like.
- In this story, you must listen to the part about the Father. The Father in this parable describes what God is like. Since God is Jesus' father, we can trust Jesus to describe Him correctly.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

- Jesus told this story: A certain man had two sons. One day the younger one came and asked his father for all the money that was to come to him later on.
- The father gave the younger son the money.
- A few days later, this son went to a far away country.
- There he stayed and spent his money doing very bad things.
- He had lots of new friends while he had money; but when his money was gone, all his new friends were gone too!
- After his money was gone, there was a famine in the land.
- Everyone began to be hungry, including the son!

Eating with the Pigs!

- The son looked for work, but couldn't find any.
- Finally he got a job working for a man who owned pigs!
- NOTE: If you have plastic "piggies," bring them out here. If not, show the piggies from Piggy page, which you may have colored.
- His job was to feed the piggies their food! (It smelled really bad!)
- The young man was very hungry. Every day when he fed the pigs, even the food the pigs were eating looked good to him!

The Son "Comes to Himself"

- Finally the son remembered something! He remembered that in his father's house even the hired workers had plenty to eat!
- He decided that he would go home and tell his father that he was really sorry. He thought that he had done so many bad things that he didn't even deserve to be called his son anymore.
- Wow! Can you imagine a child thinking he done something so bad that he couldn't be called a son anymore? (*No!*)
- The son hoped his dad would just take him in as a servant, so he wouldn't be hungry anymore.
- So, the son said "Good-bye" to the pigs and went home. (*Wave good-bye to the piggies.*)

Arriving Home

- All the way home the son practiced what he would say to his dad
- *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”*
- What would his father say? The son worried all the way home.
- Remember when I said that we had to watch the Father in this story? The Father represents God and tells us what He is like.
- Let’s see what the Father does when his son comes home.
- Jesus said that “While the son was still a LONG way off, his father saw him coming and RAN out to meet him!”
- He was so happy to see his son that he ran up to him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him!
- Then, while the boy was trying to say all the things he’d been planning to say, the father sent his servants to go get the best robe, and the best ring, and new clothes for his son!
- Then the Father said they would have a big party to celebrate!
- The Father welcomed his son home!

God Always Welcomes us Home

- God loves us! He loves us so much that He is ALWAYS glad to see us come back!
- No matter how bad we have been, God will always take us back, when we return to Him.
- The Father was very happy and said these words about his son, “...he was lost and is found!”
- Let’s practice those words “he was lost and is found.” (Repeat.)
- Those sound like VERY happy words! The Father was very happy! And God is very happy whenever we come back to Him.

Let’s pray and thank God that He loves us, just like the father in the story loved his son.

Prayer: Dear God,
Thank you that you love us!
Thank you that you always welcome us home!
Amen.

Suggested Activities: *(Choose a few activities for your class!)*

Lost and Found *The children will help find “lost” objects in the room.*

Before Class: Take several similar objects (such as balls, teddy bears, blocks, etc) and “hide” them around your classroom. Put some (or all) of them in fairly obvious places, depending on the ages of the children in your class. Provide a container that will hold all of the objects (such as a laundry basket or large cardboard box.)

During Class: Explain to the children that you had several items (like the teddy bears) with you earlier but that you seem to have “lost” them. Ask the children to help you find them and to put them back in the laundry basket or box. When you have found all of the objects say “They were lost and now they are found.” Consider allowing one or two of the children to “hide” the items again, so that you can all play a second time.

Learn Memory Verse *(“He was lost and is found.” – Luke 15:32b)*

Before Class: Bring a Teddy Bear (or another stuffed animal) to class.

During Class: Hold the Teddy Bear in front of you. Tell the children: **In the story we heard today the father said about his son, “He was lost and is found.”** As you say the words “He was lost...” pass the Teddy Bear behind your back, so that it is out of view of the children. As you say “And is found” bring the bear back in front of you so that the children can see it. Repeat this a few times, saying the words together as a group. Allow volunteers to hold the bear and to say the words just like you did.

Sing “Old McDonald”

In this lesson you talked about how the son in the parable fed the pigs and was so hungry that he thought their food looked good! Sing Old McDonald and don’t forget to sing about the pigs... with an “Oink, Oink here, and an Oink, Oink there...”

Count the Piggies *(Children will work with plastic toy piggies, or color activity page.)*

Before Class: Bring plastic toy piggies for the children to see, or make copies of the “Piggy” Page activity sheet for each child. Provide crayons or markers.

During Class: If you have brought little plastic piggies to class, bring them out and let the children look at them and play with them some. Make up some ways of “working” with the pigs. (For example: count the pigs, match up the ones that seem similar, move them around on the table, make “oink, oink” noises, put them in and out of a container, etc.) If you have not brought plastic piggies, consider letting the children color copies of the piggy page. Count how many there are on the page. Write the numbers.

On the Road Again! *(Activity Sheet – Children will help the son find his way home.)*

Before Class: Make copies of the “Road” page for each child. Provide pencils/ crayons.

During Class: Tell the children that the son in the parable had to travel a long way to get back home to his father’s house. Explain that God is always happy when we return to Him, no matter how far away we have wandered. He welcomes us home no matter how bad we have been. Trace the ways home with your finger. *(You will notice that some of them have more piggies along the way than others.)* Chose one of the paths and mark the way home with a pencil or a crayon.

Help the Lost Son find his way Home!



