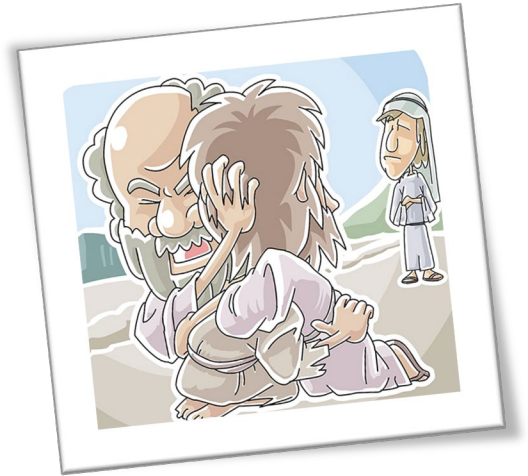

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Sunday School Lesson and Activities on the Parable of the Prodigal Son from Luke 15:1-3; 11-32



The God of Lost Things... Sunday School Lesson: The Parable of the Prodigal Son

The parable of the prodigal son is a wonderful reminder of God's grace and love. Hopefully, children know that they are loved by earthly parents, but they still face punishment and consequences for poor behavior at home. Although God is saddened by sin, He promises to forgive us when we genuinely repent. It's important for kids to understand that God is our Heavenly father and genuinely wants us close to Him. He wants the best because He loves us!

Bible Lesson focus: This lesson emphasizes the love and grace of God. Through a fun interactive experience of the story and extra activities, students will learn the parable of the "two lost sons." The proud angry older son was just as in need of forgiveness as his brother! Students will be encouraged to return to God and trust Him, no matter what. We love because He first loves us and seeks us!

Passage: Luke 15:1-2; 11-32

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Construction paper, markers, stickers, scissors, tape/glue, paper towel tubes, paper bags or plates, toy money, popsicle sticks, cotton balls, (all optional, depending which activities you choose to use).

- Watch video demonstration of this [children's sermon lesson](#) and related [Bible craft activities](#)
- See our resource page for [teaching the Parable of the Prodigal Son for Kids](#)
- Compare our [prodigal son children's sermon](#) and another [prodigal son children's sermon](#)
- Download our [Prodigal Son lesson for kids](#) and [Preschool Bible lesson on this parable](#).
- Learn about the [meaning of the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Bible](#)
- Download our [free Prodigal son coloring pages](#)

The Parable of the Prodigal Son: Sunday School Lesson and Activities from Luke 15:1-2,11-32

Game Activities and Lesson Opening: This lesson describes God’s love and grace, despite our sins and mistakes. The focus story features the parable of the prodigal son, which follows the parables of the lost sheep and coins. There are fun opportunities to emphasize the “lost and found” or pig elements of these stories! To get started, select from one of the following openers, or select another of your own choosing!

- Pig slop scoop: build “pig slop” by saving a variety of scraps and wrappers from food. Place two containers of the “slop” on one side of a room, and have students line up and race relay style to bring the slop back to an empty bucket near their line.
- Hide and go seek! To coincide with the element of seeking lost things, play a classic or nontraditional version of the playground favorite. Consider “sardines” as an alternate, or play “hide and go sheep” inside by hiding cotton balls for children to find.
- Lost and found: hide a specific item, or several small items, in a designated area, and challenge student to find them.
- “Spending spree” fun: Give students each an amount of play money, or a certain “imaginary money” number to spend. Display pictures or descriptions of items and invite them to “purchase” the things mentioned. When the money has run out, announce that there is now a food shortage and nothing has been saved up. (This happened in the story!)
- Pig snort challenge: Have students sit in a circle. One “pig” will go around the circle and make a snorting noise at students one at a time. The object is not to laugh when snorted at. If a student laughs at the snort, they become the next pig.
- Pen the pig: Use popsicle sticks to play this game with partners. Take turns placing sticks down on a grid design. When four sticks complete a pair, place a small object inside to represent a pig. The object of the game is to complete the most pig “pens.” Keep track of progress as you go. This could also be played with pencil and paper.

- Group hug! To remember the father's embrace in the story, have all students gather together for a large group hug! (As you feel comfortable, of course...)

Transition into the Scripture study component and discuss how God gives us grace. What is that? Quite simply, grace means getting what we don't deserve. Because of sin, we deserve death as punishment. But that's not what we get! Instead, God gives us life through His Son. Invite students to watch for examples of grace as they review the story.

Ask: Have you ever made a big mistake at home? Did you ever worry about what would happen as punishment?

Bible Lesson: The Parable of the Prodigal Son for Kids

Bible Lesson:

This story is a fun one to act out with students. You could have them use homemade or already-made puppets to act, or appoint kids to take on the parts and mime the action as you describe it. You could also take turns reading and explaining the parables.

Option: if time and interest allow, consider incorporating the other two "lost" parables of this chapter, or at least briefly describe them. The lost sheep and coin set the stage for the prodigal son, emphasizing the heart God has for saving each and every one of us. Either way, start off by explaining why Jesus told these stories:

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." -Luke 15:1-2

Explain that during His life, Jesus was often criticized by Pharisees for what He did and how. The Pharisees were people who thought that everyone should follow the rules and act "perfectly" all the time. They didn't think Jesus should be spending time with sinners. Jesus knew that God wanted these "lost people" to come to Him, and He did want to spend time with them. He also saw that the Pharisees were even more lost in their self-righteous pride.

Ask: Who are people that you don't usually hang out with? Do you think God wants you to spend time with different kinds of people?

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. -Luke 15:11-12

Explain that this was a pretty rude demand the son made. Usually, inheritance wasn't given until a father died. With this, the son was basically saying he didn't care for his father, and he might as well be dead! The father knew this wasn't best for his son, but gave him the money anyway. What do you think he did with it?

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

-Luke 15:13-16

It didn't take long for the man to waste all of the money his father had given him, but then he found himself in trouble. There was no food in the land, anywhere! The only job this man could find was feeding pigs, and he was so starved he wanted to eat the slop himself! He was pretty stuck.

Ask: Have you ever suddenly realized something important, or realized you made a mistake? This man sure did!

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' -Luke 15:17-19

So the son decided he would own up to his actions and go home. But he didn't feel worthy of being called son anymore. He planned to beg his father to take him on as a hired hand, just a servant. He probably thought that his father would be angry and wouldn't want to forgive him. But he was in for a surprise...

And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your

son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. -Luke 15:20-24

The father certainly didn't want his son to be a servant! He saw him coming from "a long way off." The father had been waiting for his son to come home. He was so excited to see him, it was like nothing had even happened. He rejoiced and called for a party! Jesus wants us to know that this is how God feels about us. No matter what we do or how far we stray from Him, we can always return, and He will welcome us with open and loving arms. God rejoices when sinners come to belief. He seeks out the lost and longs for us.

"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'" -Luke 15:25-32

There's a final scene to this story, after the celebration has started. The older son did not appreciate what was happening. He didn't think it was fair that his brother had strayed and squandered money, and was still treated so generously with forgiveness. With this, Jesus was sort of explaining that the Pharisees were acting the same way. It was as though they thought only they should receive grace, or only people who worked hard and were "good enough" should have God's favor. Jesus wanted them, and all of us, to understand that God loves everyone. We all sin and need forgiveness, and God will give that mercy to all who believe and repent! He loves us and cares deeply for us. We make mistakes, but when we bring them to God, He gives grace every time!

Pray: Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His grace and forgiveness, acknowledging need for Him. Ask for help in trusting Him and leading others to Him.

The Prodigal Son Craft Activities for Sunday School

Craft Suggestions: There are several wonderful options when it comes to crafts that illustrate the Prodigal Son parable! These include, but are not limited to such things as:

- Interactive puppets (from paper bags or paper plates)
- Pig crafts (puppets, paper towel roll “snouts”, mini posters)
- Arms open wide: create a puppet or display of the father, complete with hearts and extended “hugging” arms to remember the love of the father (and love of God) represented in the story.

You Don't Have to Eat with the Pigs...God Grants Grace! Craft Ideas for the Prodigal Son

The story of the prodigal son provides us with a comforting reminder that God loves us and forgives us, no matter what we do. Even when we make mistakes, He is faithful and loves us as His dear children. These crafts serve to recount and act out the story for children. A “pig in the mud” is a fun and creative illustration of the son's hopeless despair and moment of return to his senses (plus, it's just fun to craft pigs!). A double-sided puppet helps to tell the parable and engage with it, considering how the son was before and after leaving-- and returning-- home.

Bible Verses or Captions to Consider... (Main Text: Luke 15:11-32)

- *And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. -Luke 15:20*
- *For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. -Luke 15:24*
- *Don't be a pig in the mud!*
- *Riches...to rags...to riches... the story of the Prodigal Son!*

Craft one: "Prodigal Pig in the Mud"

You will need:

- Partial paper towel or toilet paper tube (optional)
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- Construction paper, cardstock or cardboard
- Markers or decorating materials
- Stickers, glitter, jewels, or other decorations



Procedure:

1. Decorate paper or cardstock with verses or captions. Consider using a brown "mud-colored" paper for the background.
2. Cut shapes out of pink (or other "pig-colored") paper to create a pig shape. Glue onto the background paper. Add ears, eyes, and tail.
3. If desired, attach partial paper towel or toilet paper tube as "snout."
4. Add extra stickers, glitter, and decorations as desired. Display to recall the story and need to not "eat with the pigs"!

Craft Two: “Prodigal Son Puppet”

You will need:

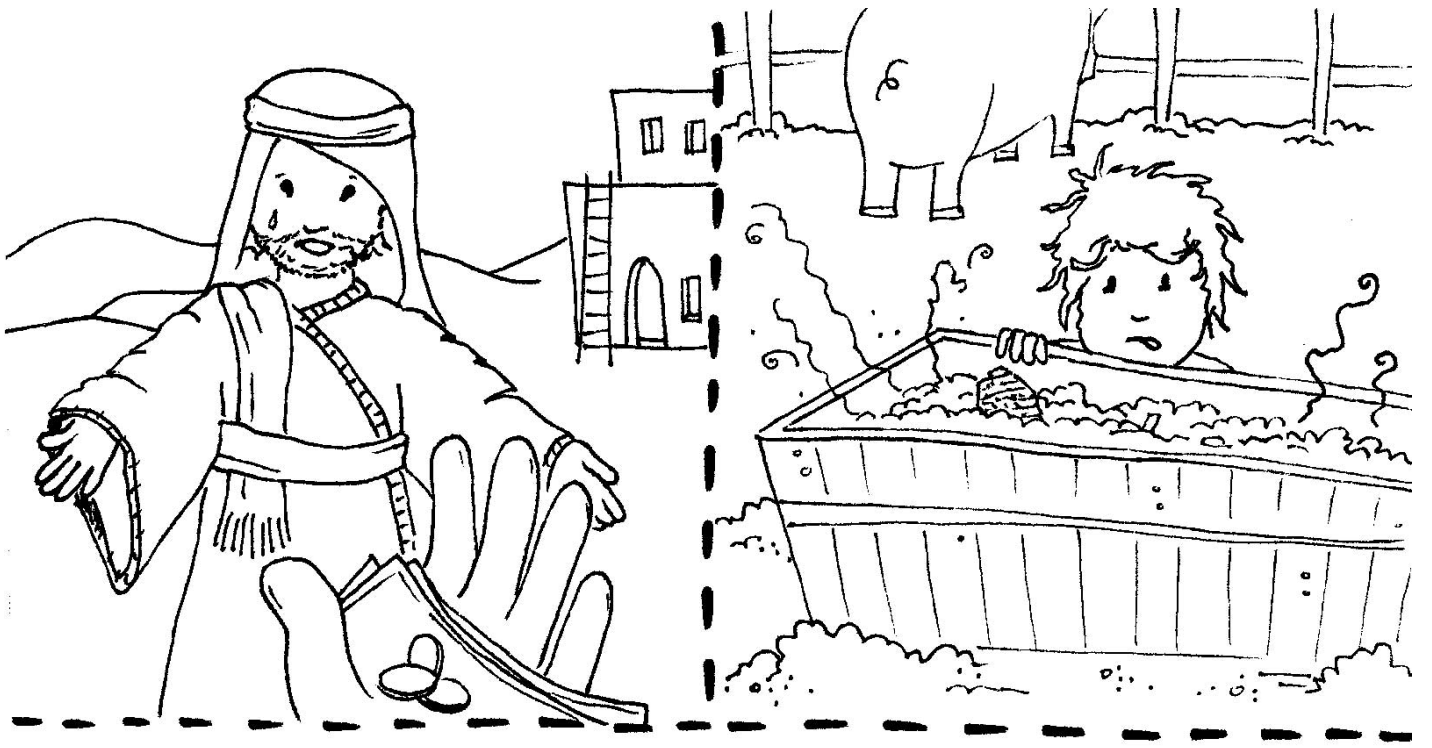
- Scissors
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue and/or tape
- Decorative materials (markers, crayons, stickers)
- Paper bag (or paper plate)
- Cloth or felt (optional)



Procedure:

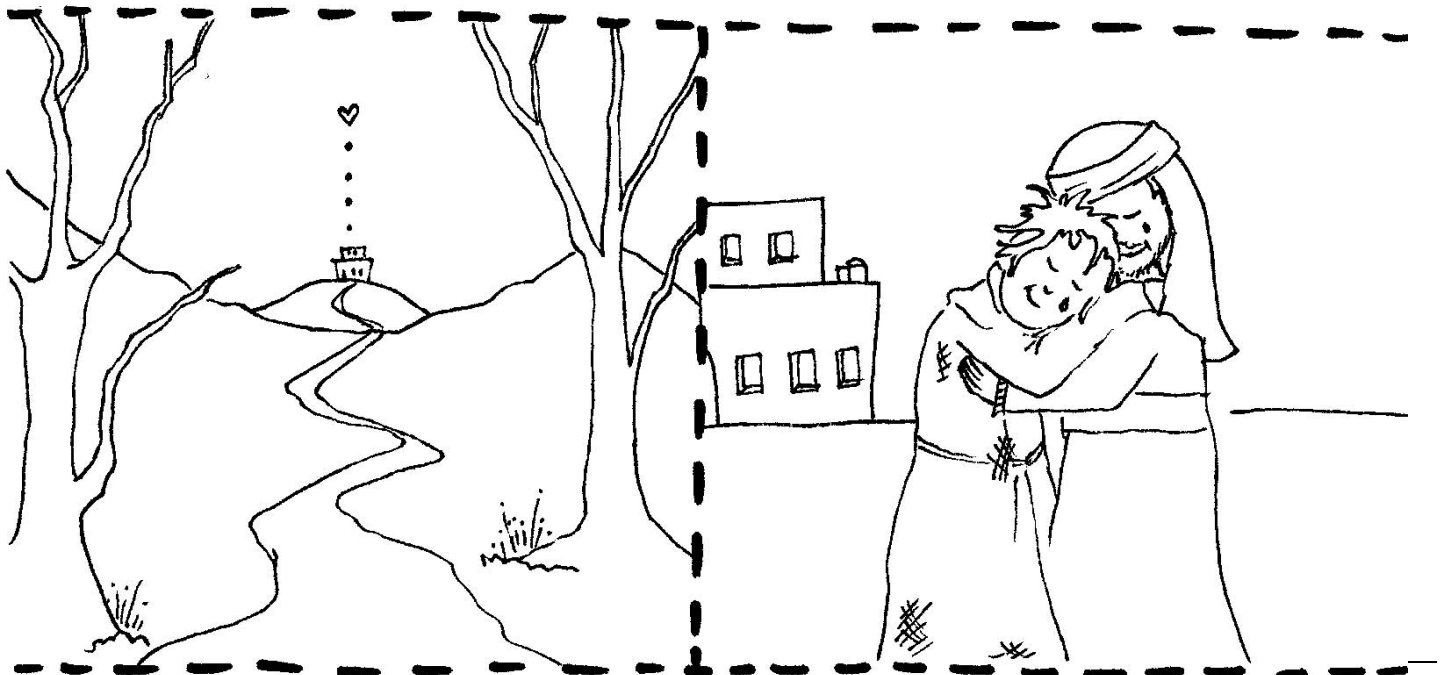
1. Decorate the bag or plate to be a two-sided puppet. On one side, create an interpretation of the “extravagant” or rich son. Use felt or cloth for robes, gems for rings on fingers, and other items to represent the son in “privileged” state.
2. On the other side of the puppet, depict a sad and poverty-stricken son, with rags and mournful features. Perhaps even smear or draw some dirt on this side.
3. Add verses or captions as desired.
4. Use the puppet to tell the story. The “rich side” can show the son when first running away, as well as after returning home. The “poor side” can be used to exhibit the action in the middle of the story. If desired, make additional puppets to portray the father, brother, and pigs in the story!





the
Prodigal Son ...

Luke 15



1.

A greedy son
leaves his
Father.

2.

His sin leaves
him poor.

3.

The son journeys
home.

4.

The Father receives
his son with love!

Thank you for downloading these free materials. Our team is grateful for your trust and pray that God will bless your ministry.

This resource was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#) (pictured right). She serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO. She has shared her teaching gifts through Ministry-To-Children since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.



Every week she writes new [Sunday School lessons](#), [Bible crafts](#), and [children's sermons](#).

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May 2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader. In addition to children's curriculum, she shares her student ministry activities and lesson ideas on [YouthGroupMinistry.com](#)

My name is [Tony Kummer](#) (pictured below). I started Ministry-To-Children.com in 2007 as a free resource for anyone sharing Jesus with kids. I am building three new websites. One is called [Ministry Answers](#) to help Christians find answers in God's Word. The other two are [Devotional Christian](#) and [10 Bible Verses](#) to help you focus on personal prayer and quiet times.



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Tony Kummer