

THE PARABLES OF JESUS – VOL. II



Lesson One: The Lost Son – God's Love

Song Time

Choose from one of our Song Time Suggestions from the Teacher's Introduction or a song of your own choosing.

Introduction

How would you describe clouds or the color blue to blind people? (Receive answers.)

To describe the color blue you might pour cool water over their hands or hand them a fluffy pillow to describe clouds. By comparing familiar things to unfamiliar things, you can help blind people "see" and understand what you want them to know.

Jesus taught in a similar way using parables. Parables are simple stories that compare things people are familiar with, to things that are not as familiar—heavenly things or deeper spiritual truths. Over the next several weeks, we will learn six of these parables so we can see and understand what Jesus wants us to know about God's kingdom, his love, and how to serve him better.

The Parable of the Lost Son

One day a crowd of tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and Teachers of the Law gathered around Jesus to hear him teach. But the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were upset with Jesus. They didn't think he should hang around tax collectors and sinners, because they were sinful. So Jesus told three parables to help them learn about God's love and why he hung around these kinds of people.

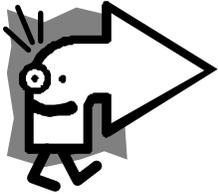
The first parable Jesus told is about a lost sheep: A shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to go find the lost one. And when he finds it there is great joy. Jesus compares this story to the rejoicing over one sinner who repents—turns from his sin—and comes to God, as opposed to ninety-nine people who think they're so good they don't need to repent.

The next parable Jesus told is similar to the first one: A woman loses a coin and doesn't quit looking for it until she finds it. And when she finds it there is great rejoicing with her friends and neighbors! Jesus compares this story to the rejoicing of angels in heaven when one sinner repents—turns from her sin—and comes to God.

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The last of the three parables is similar to the first two. Listen closely now to see how this parable is like the first two.

Read **Luke 15:11-31** from a child-friendly Bible or use the following enrichment idea.



Enrichment Idea - Lost Sons (Adapted from Luke 15:11-32)

For the “actors”, use three large action figures or puppets to retell the story. Familiarize yourself with the story so you can adlib it. Begin by introducing your characters: Father, Younger Son, and Older Son. Optional: dress the “actors” with a head covering (to indicate the younger son straying away, take off the head covering and put a baseball cap turned backwards on his head with gold chains around his neck).

(Father and sons)

“There was once a man who had two sons.

(Younger Son)

The younger son came to the Father and said, ‘I don’t want to wait until you die. I want my share of your money and property now!’

(Father)

So the Father divided all he owned and gave it to his sons.

(Younger Son)

After awhile, the younger son decided he didn’t want to live with his father or obey his rules, so he took all he owned and left home for a faraway country. But while he was there, he wasted all his money and couldn’t take care of himself. So he finally got a job feeding pigs! Yuk! In fact, he became so hungry that he wanted to eat pig food! An even bigger yuk!

Finally, he realized his father’s servants had plenty to eat, and it was stupid for him to starve to death. So he thought, “If I go back home and beg my father to forgive me, maybe he’ll let me work for him; then I’ll have plenty to eat!” So he left the pigpen and pig food and went home to his father.

(Father and Younger Son)

Now the father never stopped loving his younger son and when he saw him coming home, he ran to him, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

(Younger Son)

The younger son said to his father, ‘I have sinned against heaven and against you. I have been a terrible son!’

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(Father)

But before the son could say another word, the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Kill a fat calf so we can have a party and celebrate. For my son was as good as dead, but is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they all began to celebrate!

(Older Son)

Meanwhile, the older son ...[the remainder of the skit is available with purchase.](#)

Discuss the following:

To understand this parable, we must first know why Jesus told it. In Jesus' day, Tax Collectors were known as cheats and liars; no one trusted them. They were considered to be among the worst of sinners. On the other hand, Pharisees and Teachers of the Law strictly followed the laws of God. They even made up some of their own laws, and because they were so strict, they didn't show mercy and love to others. In fact, they considered themselves to be righteous people—people who lived right before God. As a result, they didn't see that they, too, were sinful.

- 1) How is this story similar to the first two parables? (Receive answers. Like the sheep and coin, the Younger Son was lost and then found and there was great rejoicing over him being found.)
- 2) Whom do you suppose Jesus was comparing God, the Tax Collectors and Sinners, and the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law to in this story? What do you think Jesus wanted them and us to understand? (Receive answers. Loving Father=Loving God; Younger Son=Tax Collectors and Sinners who knew they were sinful and needed forgiveness; Older Son=Pharisees and Teachers of the Law, who forgot what blessings they had, how sinful they were and that they, too, needed to repent.)
- 3) What do you suppose Jesus wants us to understand about God, his mercy and salvation from this story?

[The remainder of the discussion questions are available with purchase.](#)

Memory Verse

(Children memorize the verse and during the review session, they will have the opportunity to recite it and earn a sticker to place on their *Memory Verse Tracker Name Tags (in the patterns section)*. Optional, when the designated amount of stickers are earned, a reward, such as candy or trinkets from a treasure box, is given.)

"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

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Life Application

This verse reminds us that even while we were sinners, wandering away from God, he came to find us, to save us and forgive us of our sin. He did this, because he loves us! And like the Younger Son in this parable, if you repent—turn from your sin—and go back to the Father, by asking Jesus to be your Savior and Forever Friend, he will welcome you home to his eternal kingdom. Now that’s a reason to celebrate!

Suggested Prayer

“Dear Jesus, Thank you for leaving your heavenly home to save me. Thank you for dying to take my punishment for sinning. Help me to love you with all my heart and obey you all my days. Amen.”

Craft: Celebration Party Horns

Available with purchase

**Prodigal God*, by Timothy Keller, is an excellent in-depth resource on the Lost Son parable and is available in our affiliate bookstore @ SundaySchoolNetwork.com.



Lesson Review

For use when dividing the lesson into two sessions.

Song Time

In the parable of the Lost Son, when the Younger Son returned home, the Father gave him four things. Do you remember what they were? (Receive answers. He gave him a robe, a ring, shoes, and then killed a fat calf to celebrate his homecoming.) These four things have special meaning:

The Robe was a sign of dignity and honor. If you recall, the son went to work taking care of pigs! At that time, God’s children were not even supposed to touch pigs, let alone feed them. When the Father gave the son his best robe, he didn’t wait for his son to be cleaned up. Instead, he put his best robe on him, showing he was restored to a place of honor in his community. Sin has dirtied our lives too, and we need to be restored—made right—in our relationship to God. The Bible says when we trust Jesus as our Savior and Forever Friend, we are clothed in Christ (Galatians 3:27), we are given a robe of righteousness and given a place of honor in God’s kingdom!

The Ring was a sign of authority. In Bible times, messages from the king were marked or sealed by his signet ring. The ring was a sign of power and authority. The Younger Son was given back his authority as the Father’s beloved-son. For us, the

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Bible says when we trust in Jesus as our Savior and Forever Friend; we are marked and sealed in Christ with the promised Holy Spirit. We have been given authority as God's sons and daughters (Ephesians 1:13).

Shoes were a sign and right of son-ship. Servants went barefooted. The shoes showed the Younger Son belonged to the Father; he was his child. The Bible says, to all who receive him, Jesus, to those who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God (John 1:12)—sons and daughters of the Most High King!

A calf was killed to celebrate the son's homecoming. This reminds us that Jesus was also killed, shedding his blood on the cross to forgive our sin. Jesus' death and resurrection allows us to go to our heavenly home when we die for the grandest of all celebrations!

In today's game, we will race to the cross to put on "God's Clothing,"—a robe, a ring and shoes—to remind us of God's love. Jesus died on the cross to *restore us to a place of honor, to give us his authority* and when we *trust in him, we become sons and daughters of the Most High God!*

Game: God's Clothing*

Available with purchase

Review and Score Memory Verse

"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

(As children memorize their verses, score their progress by marking the matching lesson number with a sticker or check mark on their *Memory Verse Tracker Name Tags*.)

Pray

The Parables of Jesus—Vol. 2 is available for purchase at:

<http://www.sundayschoolnetwork.com/curriculum-Jesus-parables-vol2.html>