

May 8–9, 2021

Spring Lesson 11



Bible Passage: Luke 15:11–32
(Prodigal Son)

The Father Is Love

Remember Verse

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3

RESPOND//15 minutes



Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: The Father Is Love

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- **What did the younger son ask his father to give him?** Luke 15:12
- **What did the younger son do after he spent the money?** Luke 15:14–20
- **How did the father respond when the son returned home?** Luke 15:20–24
- **How did the father respond to the older son?** Luke 15:31–32
- **How do you know God the Father loves His children so much?** 1 John 4:9–10

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER KIDS

- **What did the younger son do after he spent the money?** Luke 15:14–20
- **How did the father respond when the son returned home?** Luke 15:20–24
- **How did the older son respond when his younger brother returned home?** Luke 15:27–30
- **How did the father respond to the older son?** Luke 15:31–32
- **What are some truths about God the Father that this parable reveals?** Matthew 9:13; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7; 1 John 3:1; Daniel 9:9
- **Do you relate to one of the sons? If so, which one, and why?**
- **How do you know God the Father loves His children so much?** 1 John 4:9–10

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*see Resources

Heavenly Father Cards

Children are invited to write (or draw) cards to their heavenly Father.

SUPPLIES

- construction paper or copy paper
- Markers or colored pencils

RELATE

Today we heard a parable about a father who welcomed his son home even after the son wasted his inheritance. Instead of being angry, the father had compassion on his son and showed love to him. Jesus told this parable because He wanted people to know what God the Father is like. He wanted people to know that God is loving, gracious, forgiving, compassionate, and giving. God is all of these things because He is the perfect Father. Read through the verses on the Heavenly Father verses below:

Heavenly Father Verses

I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. 2 Corinthians 6:18

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! 1 John 3:1

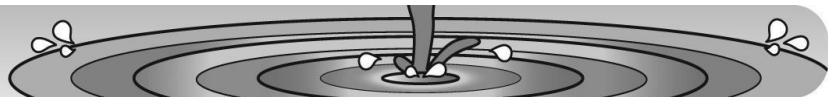
Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:19–20

Because you are his [children], God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” Galatians 4:6

[Jesus said,] “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:1–3

Sometimes, on Father’s Day, we give cards to our dads. Today we’re going to make cards for our heavenly Dad. What are some things you write in Father’s Day cards? Brainstorm some ideas with the child. Then invite them to make their cards. They can tell God what He means to them, thank Him for being good to them, write one of the verses they heard, or tell Him whatever they want. They can also draw what they want to say to God. When they’re done, they can look at the cards throughout the week to remind them of how God loves them and will always forgive and welcome them.

BLESS// 5 minutes



Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

RELATE

Have kids sit as you open your Bible and read 1 John 3:1a:

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

Now, I invite you to close your eyes and imagine your heavenly Father embracing you or looking at you as

His child. If you want, you can wrap your arms around yourself in a hug. Or, you can simply sit quietly.

Encourage the child to stay in this position as you speak the final blessing over them.

May you know that you're a child of God. May you experience His love when you feel sad, confused, or lost. May you remember your Father will always respond to you in love, for He is love.

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

In high school, our girls' Bible study planned a trip to New York City to celebrate the year. As the trip approached, our leader asked me, "Did you invite Cecilia?" "She hasn't been to Bible Study in six months," I protested. "It doesn't seem like she should get the reward of going." "I know," my leader said, "but I thought maybe the Lord could use this trip to help her get plugged into the group again."

I was silent for a few moments. The older brother from the parable of the prodigal son loomed over me—but I didn't want to acknowledge my attitude. It wasn't fair; I hadn't missed Bible study all year!

A few years later, I experienced how the younger brother in the parable may have felt. I went through a season of feeling guilty all the time. I was trying so hard to please God but realizing the impossibility of being perfect. It got to the point where I felt guilty if I walked by a piece of trash on the sidewalk without picking it up.

In the midst of my striving, the Lord told me, "All I want is your heart. You don't have to do anything to please me; I'm already pleased with you." I was never the same. Gratefulness for God's love filled my heart.

After that, I thought about Cecilia with a new perspective. It's amazing how an encounter with the Father's love can change you. He is love.

Kelly Goddard
HRock Church

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

In Luke 15, Jesus tells a memorable story that we refer to today as the parable of the prodigal son—a story that might better be called the parable of the unloving brother. We can see the specific reason why Jesus tells this parable as we look at the story in context.

In the beginning of the chapter, we see tax gatherers and sinners coming to Jesus—something that greatly bothered the Pharisees and scribes. Pious Jews didn't have anything to do with these kinds of people. In direct response to the Pharisees' unloving attitude, Jesus tells a series of three parables, all of which together point to one clear message: God rejoices when the lost are found. He is love.

In the first two stories, we read about a man who loses a sheep and a woman who loses a coin. Both stories end with rejoicing over the lost object being found. This third climactic parable also tells the story of something lost—this time, a wayward son who finds his way home, and great rejoicing ensues (by *almost* everyone).

While we can take away many possible applications from such a story, the main point Jesus was making is that God rejoices when the lost are found and wants us to do the same. The end of the story makes this clear as it closes with the

father teaching a poignant lesson to his older son, who doesn't rejoice when his brother returns.

This lesson points directly at the religious leaders grumbling about Jesus spending time with sinners; it tells the leaders that they should have the same attitude toward the lost. This lesson, from an earthly father, reveals the heart of love our heavenly Father has for His children.

God loves it when His children come home. God is love.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

The parable of the prodigal son is one of the most touching stories in Scripture. We can relate to the son in the story because we may know what it's like to have done something wrong and feel absolutely ashamed. We may know what it's like to have a sibling or a friend who appears to be getting more than we feel is deserved, and we may know what it's like to feel wretched and in need of God's total love and forgiveness.

Spend some time this week praising the God who offers Himself freely to those who repent and turn to Him. Praise Him for the times He offered you grace and forgiveness, even though you didn't deserve it. Praise Him for the blessings He has given you that are far greater than anything you could have imagined—when God forgave you, rejoiced over you, and called you His child.