#### Lesson 4:

#### The Prodigal Son

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Luke 15:11-24

MEMORY WORK:

John 3:16

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Since God is willing to forgive me when I do bad things (if I say I’m sorry and try to do better—i.e., repent), I should be willing to do the same for others.

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| **LESSON STARTS HERE** |

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever made a bad choice, and then had to say you were sorry for what you said or did? (Allow children to talk about this for a few minutes.) Today, we are going to learn about a parable, or story, that Jesus told about a boy who left home and made some bad choices. We will learn about how God forgives us and wants us to do what is right, and how we should forgive others that want to make things right.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. The Jewish scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus all the time, largely because they thought He spent too much time with “sinners.” They considered themselves to be very religious and, therefore, better than other people. In Luke 15, Jesus told three **parables** to teach them that (a) all men need forgiveness; (b) God is willing and ready to **forgive** *anyone* who **repents** (asks for forgiveness and tries to do better); and (c) we should not have an attitude like the older brother, who was jealous and resentful of his brother, rather than rejoicing over his repentance. The third parable in Luke 15 is often called the Parable of the **Prodigal** Son (or the Lost Boy); sometimes it is called the Parable of the Loving Father.

**Parable:** “a short story that teaches a lesson” (*Basic Bible Dictionary*, Standard Pub.Co., 1984). Commonly called “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

**Forgive:** to let go of some hurt or wrong that someone has done to you; to stop being angry or resentful about something wrong someone has done to you; to erase a debt that someone owes you.

**Repent:** to be sorry for doing wrong and change the ways you think and act; to turn away from wrong choices and turn back to God.

**Prodigal:** wasteful

1. Jesus said a certain man had two sons. The younger son decided that he didn’t want to stay at home and follow his father’s rules. He knew that he and his brother would get a lot of money (inheritance) when his father died, but he didn’t want to wait. He wanted his share of his father’s money right then.
2. This son went to “a far country,” where he probably did not know anyone, and more likely, where nobody knew him. He wanted to be free—free from rules and responsibilities, free to do what he wanted. He apparently thought there would be no consequences for any of his bad choices. But the young man made a lot of bad choices about friends and about how to spend his money. Bad friends, bad activities, and wasted money put him in dangerous situations. When the son ran out of money, his “friends” left him. They were not really friends at all; they pretended to be friends only as long as the younger son could do something for them or give them things.
3. He was hungry and suddenly poor, and he couldn’t find a job—until he found a man who would pay him to feed pigs! The son was so hungry that he wanted to eat the food that the pigs ate (mostly garbage). His “riotous living” cost him much more than money. It cost him his self- respect. The Old Testament law said that Jews could not eat pork or have anything to do with pigs, and the Jews took that law to heart. In this parable, Jesus described a young Jewish man not only taking care of pigs but wanting to eat the same garbage that they ate. This would have been completely disgusting to the Jews listening to Him.
4. The son was homeless and hungry. He finally “came to his senses” and remembered that even the servants in his father’s house had good food to eat and a comfortable, clean place to live. He decided to go home and beg his father to forgive him. As he traveled back home, he had plenty of time to think about what he would say to his father. He decided that he would tell his father he had sinned and was not worthy of even being called “son” anymore. He was determined to make things right with his father and change his life.
5. In His story, Jesus didn’t say how long the son was gone from home, but He did say that the father watched for his son. When the father saw the boy coming from a distance, he ran to meet him. He had not forgotten about his son or given up on him. Instead, he had been watching in the distance, hoping his son would return.
6. The son had disgraced his father and his family name. He asked his father to forgive him and asked to work as one of the servants. According to the Old Law, he could have been stoned to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Even though the father had been very hurt by the son’s behavior and choices, he was more than willing to forgive the son and take him back into his house as part of the family due to his repentance. He hugged his dirty, tired, ragged son and kissed him. He was so excited and happy that he threw a big party to celebrate the son’s return, and gave him a special ring, new clothes, and new sandals for his feet.
7. The father in Jesus’ parable treated his son like God will treat us when we ask for forgiveness, change mind about misbehaving, and make things right. God loves us when we are good, and He loves us when we don’t do our best. He wants us to make good choices, but He knows that we will make mistakes. We can be sure that if we are willing to repent, God will forgive us and welcome us back. There is nothing wrong we can do that God cannot forgive.
8. Make a practical application with a story about a young child running away from home because he thought it would be a lot of fun to be on his own without his parents telling his what to do or because he got mad at his parents. Describe the first hour away from home; near mealtime— hungry, without money, lonely, etc. Ask how they would feel. Would they want to go home? What would they do? How would they want their parents to welcome them?

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAl VISUALS (note disclaimers):

##### Betty Lukens’ felt pieces

* ABeka Flash-a-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book;)
* Free Bible Images – Saved on flash drive. Can be presented on classroom tv. Script included in lesson file.

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS:

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##### God is so Good –

##### Refer to Songs of Faith and Praise, #83

### SUNDAY

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Prodigal Son Sticker Scene – This is in the lesson file. Save this a put in red file to be laminated for the student’s NT binder. Be sure to give instructions for where to put the stickers so the story makes sense. An example of the completed scene is in the classroom NT Binder

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday’s lesson. (See [Review Questions](http://www.apcurriculum.com/dcirfol/4-24-32RQ.pdf) for example questions.)
2. Talk about the blessing of sight, the great design of our eyes, etc.

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Review game: Make one corner of the room the “house” and make a path or road out of masking tape around the room that leads to the house. Have the children stand at the beginning of the path, and ask them review questions. Each time they answer correctly, they take a step toward the house. Alternately, you could draw this out on the dry erase board and move a Bible man figure along the path.

### Review Questions

1. What two groups were always criticizing Jesus?
   1. The Jewish scribes and the Pharisees
2. What is a parable?
   1. A short story with a special meaning
3. Why did Jesus tell them this parable?
   1. To teach them (a) that all men need forgiveness; (b) that God is willing and ready to forgive anyone who repents; and (c) that we should not have the attitude of the elder brother
4. How many sons did the man have?
   1. Two
5. Which son wanted his inheritance?
   1. The younger son
6. Why did the son want his money?
   1. He wanted to be free from rules and responsibilities.
7. Did he make good choices in friends and spending his money?
   1. No. When his money was all gone, so were his “friends.”
8. What job did he find?
   1. Feeding pigs
9. What did his “riotous living” cost him?
   1. His self-respect, his finances, and his good standing with his father
10. What did he want to return home as?
    1. A servant in his father’s house
11. What did his father do when he saw him coming home?
    1. He hugged him, forgave him, and gave him a huge party to celebrate his return.
12. Are we treated like that by God when we ask for forgiveness of our sins?
    1. Yes. God loves us when we are good; but also, when we are not at our best. He watches over us and waits until we make the right choices and ask for forgiveness when we have done wrong.

Additional Notes / Activities Performed & Curriculum Feed Back

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