



Date: _____
Series: Greatest Stories Ever Told
Summer Year 1, Lesson 12

The Lost Son

Take Home Point: *We once were lost, but now are found. *Repeat this phrase throughout the lesson.

Bible Event: Luke 15:11-32; Ephesians 2:4-10

Key Verses: Luke 15:24, "My son was dead and has come back to life. He was lost but has been found."

We will help kids know:

- The Bible event of the parable of the lost son.
- God's heart is to seek and save the lost.
- They need to be more interested in people coming to know Jesus than criticizing and judging another's lifestyle.
- God sent his Son Jesus as the one who made it possible for us to return to the Father by trusting in his finished work on the cross.

We will help kids feel:

- Thankful that they were once lost, but now are found.
- Secure in their heavenly Father's love. They can return to him no matter what.

We will help kids do:

- Help retell the "Lost Son" parable in a contemporary way.
- Respond to the gospel call if they have never received Jesus as their Savior.
- Pray for someone they know who has never received Jesus as their Savior to "come home."

THIS LESSON'S ROADMAP

DESTINATION	PAGE #	DISCOVERIES ON YOUR JOURNEY	SUPPLIES NEEDED
Small Group Warm-Up 	3	Kids will discuss past failures that have upset their parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • party decorations • popcorn—enough for all the kids • cups for the popcorn
Large Group 	4 7 11	<p>Overview</p> <p>Option One: “The Story of Two _____, Who Really Blew it!” Kids will answer questions from the Key Sheet to fill in blanks throughout the story. The story is the parable of the lost son told in a contemporary version.</p> <p>Option Two: Video—<i>The Prodigal Son: The Animated Bible Stories from the New Testament</i>, produced by Family Entertainment, 1988.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 or 4 key sheets to the story (p. 12) to pass out to a boy(s) and girl(s) in advance of large group • a director’s costume and props • pencils • <i>option</i> :a few small party favors or treats • <i>option</i>: video, <i>The Prodigal Son: The Animated Bible Stories from the New Testament</i>, produced by Nest Family Entertainment, 1988. ISBN #1-56489-002-3—running time is 24 minutes. Order from www.nestfamily.com
Small Group Application 	4	Kids have the opportunity to trust and receive Jesus as their Savior. Each kid is challenged to think of someone they know who does not know Jesus as his/her Savior and pray for that person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none

Small Group Warm-Up: 15 minutes



Purpose: *Get pointed in the right direction!* Build relationships and help guests feel at ease. Do the learning readiness activity that will point your group in the right direction for the lesson.

Summertime Options

Easier Summer Option: Instead of having kids in small groups with an assigned shepherd, the kids can meet all together and divide themselves into triads (groups of three). This allows for larger ratios between students and shepherds. Shepherds will monitor the kids' activity as needed by roaming from group to group. The questions and directions for all the kids and their groups are by the large group presenter. If this is used, go to the introduction of large group to introduce the main character used in this series.

Regular Shepherd Option: Do the Warm-Up activity as a small group. If you like, you can still divide into triads within your small group. This helps each child participate more.

Supplies: party snack such as popcorn, party decorations (optional)

Divide kids into triads and pass out popcorn. Ask the following questions allowing kids time to discuss each one in their triad before going to the next question.

When you were in the first grade, what was the worst thing that you got in trouble for doing?

When you were in the fourth grade, what was the worst thing you did that you got in trouble for?

What is the worst thing you could do now to get in trouble with your parents?

When we think about the bad things that we do, most of us do not worry about our mom or dad not loving us anymore. Even though our parents give us consequences, they still love us.

Some people, however, do not know God as their heavenly Father who wants them to be at home with him. God wants to have a father/son or father/daughter relationship with us. However, some people may feel that they have done things so terrible that God would never want them as his son or daughter.

In one of the "Greatest Stories Ever Told," Jesus reminds us that **we once were lost, but now are found.*

Large Group Overview: 20-30 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids observe what the Bible says. Present the Bible event in creative fashion. Help kids begin to interpret what it means.*

Option One: “The Story of Two ____ Who Really Blew it!” Kids will answer questions from the Key Sheet to fill in blanks throughout the story. The story is the parable of the lost son told in a contemporary version.

Option Two: Video—*The Prodigal Son: The Animated Bible Stories from the New Testament*, produced by Nest Family Entertainment, 1988.

Small Group Application: 20-25 minutes



Purpose: *Help kids map out the meaning of the Bible event in their lives. Use the questions to stimulate discussion, but don't feel tied to them. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. Include personal examples from your own faith journey. The example of Christ at work in your life will leave lasting impressions of how Christ can work in the children's lives.*

Use your Bibles! Children need to learn how to look up references and follow along when scripture is read aloud. Allow for quality time of prayer at the close of the lesson.

Observation Questions: What happened? / Interpretation Questions: What does this mean?

Have kids refer to Ephesians 2:4-10 in their Bibles for the following questions.

How is the father in the parable like God in Ephesians 2:4? *(He is rich in mercy and has great love for us his children.)*

How is the younger son in the parable like us in Ephesians 2:5? *(The son was like dead to the father because he left and sinned so greatly. We too, were spiritually dead because of our failures and sin.)*

What position did the father restore his younger son to? *(He was restored to sonship even though he came back to the father wanting to be a servant.)*

According to Ephesians 2:6, what position are we given once we are brought back to life in Jesus? *(A position in heaven with him.)*

Read Ephesians 2:8-9:

“God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it...so no one can brag about it.”

How is this like what the younger brother had to go through to realize his father’s love? *(The father showed the boy such kindness even though the son didn’t deserve it.)*

Application Questions: What does this mean to me?

The son had to go to the end of himself before he would turn back to his father. Sometimes we are the same way. We have to come to the end of ourselves and realize that we don’t have much or cannot contribute much on our own. When we let go of our pride and turn to God, he lovingly beckons for us to return to him. He even rejoices and celebrates with delight.

In today’s key verse from Luke 15:24, the father says, *“My son was dead and has come back to life. He was lost but has been found.”*

How is what the father said about the son like what God would say about us? *(Once we were lost in our sin, but we become spiritually alive when we accept what God has done for us through Jesus.)*

The presenter should talk to all the kids at the same time during this discussion time. The gospel is presented with an opportunity for kids to ask Jesus to be the Lord and Savior of their lives.

Have you ever come to a point where you have trusted in and asked Jesus to be your Savior? To do so is like coming home. It is a very simple process. You can do this in your heart now if you feel led to.

This is how we know for sure that we have come home to our heavenly Father. First, like the son in our story, we have to realize that what we have done is wrong. We, too, are sinful and have lived in a far away land by following our own sinful desires.

Next, we need to turn and give our sins back to God by saying, “I am sorry. Please take these sins away and not hold them against me. Please forgive me.”

We need to recognize what Jesus did to take our sins away. When he died on the cross, he was paying the punishment our sins deserved. God punished Jesus in our place. After Jesus died, he was raised three days later as proof that the sacrifice was complete.

For all that believe in him, their sins are forgiven and they are made spiritually alive.

Invite Jesus to be your Savior, the one to be your closest friend—the one you will follow in all that you do.

I would like you to think about people who may be lost, who do not know Jesus as their personal Savior. I challenge each of you to think about and spend some time now in prayer for them.

Our friends are just like us. **We once were lost, but now are found.* What a party is held in heaven when one lost one returns to the father! Let's rejoice, too!

Closing Prayer:

Let kids pray for these friends in their triads and then thank God for his faithfulness, forgiveness and lovingly receiving us back to himself.

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Large Group Presentation: 20-30 minutes

Though Jesus makes up the stories, they are taken from slices of real life such as farming, family, or debt repayment. In other words, Jesus' parables had real life characters. This series will challenge kids to see afresh the truth of these parables by experiencing them in a contemporary context. The large group presenter will take the persona of a director of a small theater company called "Great Stories Theater." The director's name can be Pembroke Punchline or Penelope Punchline. He/she might even have a megaphone, a director's beret for a hat and a director's chair.

Option one: Contemporary Telling of the Prodigal Son

Supplies: 4 key sheets to the story, pencil, a few small party favors or treats for prizes (optional)

The presenter reads the following story, inserting Key Sheet answers in the blanks. Make sure the presenter takes responses from both girls and boys to get a wide variety of responses. These answers may be funny.

In advance, pass out the Key Sheet to two boys and two girls. Have them fill in the answers before beginning this story. As you read this story, fill in the blanks with the corresponding answers from the Key Sheet—first from a girl and then from a boy. If you have time, repeat the exercise with the other two children's sheets.

Option: Have the boy and girl come up and sit on chairs and as you read, have them take turns filling in the blanks from their answer sheet.

The Story of Two _____ (Boys/Girls) Who Really Blew It

Once there were two sons (daughters). The oldest son's (daughter's) name was (1) _____, and the younger son's (daughter's) name was (2) _____. Continue in the same way.

The oldest son had already graduated from high school and was in college studying to be a (3) _____. The younger son, (2) _____, just graduated and was eager to explore the world in a new way.

Late one night while his parents were asleep, (2) _____, snuck into his father's bedroom and stole his father's wallet. From the wallet he took the ATM card, his dad's credit card, and the cash.

This son stole the family van, drove to the ATM machine and withdrew all the money, which was in the amount of (4) _____. He drove to a nearby city and used the credit card to check into the nicest hotel available.

The next day he had BIG plans. The family van didn't quite fit into his image so he traded it in at the car dealership for a brand new (5) _____. He was now ready for his BIG adventure.

He had always dreamed of going to (6) _____. So, he set out on the highway with his brand new (5) _____ loving the freedom and excitement. When he arrived, he used the credit card again for a down payment on a beautiful apartment overlooking (7) _____.

(2) _____ thought for sure he had a GREAT life! He had all the money he needed to pursue his interests. One of his interests was (8) _____. He invested (9) _____ into this hobby and loved it!

For adventure, (2) _____ loved to (10) _____. He bought all the newest and best equipment for (10) _____.

In the evenings he would get together with all his friends for a (11) _____ party. It seemed as if he had a lot of friends and was the life of the party. There were a lot of people who came to his parties.

One day when he was returning from one of his adventures very tired from all the excitement of the day, (2) _____ noticed his apartment had a lock put on it. He could not get in. There was an eviction notice nailed to the door. (2) _____ hadn't paid his bills and was now losing his apartment. "This isn't a problem," he said. "I will go down and put it on the credit card."

There was a problem, though. When he tried to pay the bills with the credit card, the manager told him that his credit card was listed as stolen and he couldn't use it. When (2) _____ reached for his wallet to pay for it with all the cash he had, there was only (12) _____ left.

He hurried out of the manager's office, but knew he still had his fancy car to sleep in. (2) _____ got into his car to drive to his favorite park where he could sleep for the night. But, along the way he had a terrible accident and ran into a (13) _____ crossing the road. He should have driven much more carefully knowing he was that close to a game preserve.

Now his car was smashed, he had no credit card and only (12) _____ in his wallet. He saw a car dealership close by, so he walked over and asked if he could put a down payment on a used car. The salesman asked how much he had to put down. "I have (12) _____," he replied. The salesman laughed and said, "You could maybe buy a (14) _____."

(2) _____ was getting desperate. He had no place to sleep, no transportation, and very little money. On top of all that, he was getting hungry.

“I know what I will do,” (2) _____ said, “I will get a job.” This is the first time in his life that he had ever thought about getting a job. For a whole week he looked and looked for a job. He was so hungry that he even thought about going back to that dead (13) _____ and wondered how a week old barbequed (13) _____ would taste.

Finally, he found a job as a (15) _____. This was not a very glamorous job, but at least it earned him just enough money to buy a few meals. These meals consisted of (16) _____.

After a few weeks he began to think of home. He had had great food with his dad. But what he missed most was doing (17) _____ with his father. This reminded him of what a swell guy his dad was and how much his dad really did love him.

With everything that (2) _____ had done (stolen the ATM card, credit card and even the family van), would his dad take him back now?

Little did he know that right at that moment his father was standing in the living room staring out the picture window longing for his son to return home. Every time a car would pass by, his father would rush to the window hoping it would be his son.

Meanwhile, in the land far away, the son said to himself, “I have done a terribly stupid thing. How DUMB can I be? I had it made, but I wanted more. I wanted all the things that I thought would make me happy. But, it has only made me miserable. I need to go home and tell Dad that I have sinned against God and I have sinned against him. Maybe he would let me (18) _____ to trade for meals and a place to sleep—even if it’s in the garage.”

(2) _____ took off for home. He traveled by (19) _____ the long distance home. It was evening when he got to the corner of the street and his house was in view. He was feeling foolish and ashamed. How would his father respond when he saw him? (2) _____ didn’t quite have the courage to walk to the door.

(2) _____ hung his head feeling miserable. Just then as a car drove by, his father looked out the window longing for it to be his son. He saw someone at the corner. “Could that be (2) _____?” he said.

He went outside to get a closer look, hoping it to be his lost son. It was (2) _____! He ran as fast as he could with his arms open wide to welcome his son home again. He held his son close and said, "I have been waiting for you to return."

His son hung his head and said, "Dad, I have sinned against God and you..." His father interrupted, "Quick take a shower. I will run to the store and get you some new clothes. We are going to have a party and eat (20) _____, your favorite food."

There were people everywhere celebrating the return of (2) _____. His older brother returned from college and was surprised by all the activity going on at his house. For so long it had been a quiet and sad place. "What is going on?" he thought.

He asked someone out in his yard what all the excitement was about. "He's home. Your younger brother has come home!" someone told him. "I can't believe it," the older brother said rather disgusted. "It's not fair!"

He refused to go into the house and welcome his brother home. His father came to him. "Dad, here is my report card with straight A's. I have worked very hard. Also, here is the record of my student loans that I will repay with my new job. Where is my party? I deserve it more than my brother. He left and wasted all your money. I have always been here and been faithful to you."

"(1) _____, what is most important here? Don't you know that you have always been with me? Your brother was once lost, but now is found. He was once dead, but now is alive. Can't you be happy for your brother?"

Debrief Questions

Take your Bibles and please turn to Luke 15:11-32. We will not read this out loud. Many of you know this story by heart, but keep your Bibles open.

Offer a prize (*this can be a snack or party favor*) for whoever can give three comparisons from the story and Jesus' parable of the lost son.

It's important to keep the conversation moving. The list may not be exhausted, but it gets the kids thinking.

Then continue with:

Of these two boys (girls) in the story, which do you identify with (1) _____ or (2) _____?

Ask kids to raise a hand for whichever son you name.

The Bible tells us that we can identify with both of these brothers. Every one of us has been lost like (2) _____.

And, have you ever felt jealous about someone who may have just come to know Jesus and received more attention at church or in your family? Then you can relate to (1) _____.

The Bible tells us the heavens rejoice when someone places their faith and trust in Jesus Christ (*Luke 15:7, 10*). So, shouldn't we also?

Option two: Video

Replace the interactive story with the video *The Prodigal Son: The Animated Bible Stories from the New Testament*, produced by Nest Family Entertainment, 1988. Running time is 24 minutes.

Closing prayer:

Maybe some of you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior or maybe you are not sure if you have. This is the best time to say, "I am ready to trust him." If you are, simply talk to God in your heart and place your trust in his Son Jesus. You may follow along as I pray aloud. It is a prayer of trusting Jesus as your Savior. It doesn't matter if this is the first time or a prayer that reminds you that you trust him every day.

Dear God, thank you for loving me as a good father does. I realize that I am lost without you. I didn't want to obey you. I wanted to only think of myself. My sin has brought me to a place far away from you.

Thank you for welcoming me back. I am sorry for my sins and want to be called your child. Thank you for giving me Jesus, your own Son, to die for my sins. He paid the price of my punishment when he died on the cross. He is alive now, so that he can be with me now and forever. Please forgive me. Lord Jesus, live in my life, as I trust you. In your name, we pray. Amen.

The Story of Two _____ (*Boys/Girls*) Who Really Blew It

Key Sheet

1. What is a boy's (girl's) name?

2. What is another boy's (girl's) name?

3. Name a career for which you need a college education. _____

4. Give an amount of money that might be in your parent's account in the bank.

5. Give me a name of a "cool" car. _____

6. Where is a far off place? _____

7. What scene would you like to see as you look out your back window?

8. Name a hobby. _____

9. Name a large amount of money. _____

10. Tell me an "extreme" sport. _____

11. What is something "cool" to do for a party? _____

12. How much money do you have in your room? _____

13. Name a large wild animal. _____

14. What would you drive if you were three years old? _____

15. Name a job that you would never want to have. _____

16. Tell me a food that you do not like, but is very cheap. _____

17. What is an activity that you like to do with your father? _____

18. What are some chores you have to do around the house?

19. What is a way you could travel if you had no money? _____

20. What is your favorite food? _____