



Date: _____

Series: God Is Our King
Fall Year 1, Lesson 15

The Runaway Son

Bible Event: Luke 15:11-32

Take Home Point: *GOD ALWAYS FORGIVES – *Tell God you're sorry.*

*Repeat this phrase throughout the lesson. The leader will say the first part of the phrase (*CAPS*). The children respond with the second part of the phrase (*italics*).

Jesus Link: Because Jesus died for us, God forgives us.

What kids will learn about God in this worship experience:

- Preschool children need to encounter God as the faithful Father who is always willing to forgive and love his children. As they hear the story of the runaway son, they will participate in various activities to retell the Bible Event.
- They will encounter a God who always forgives. They can learn the importance of telling God they are sorry when they do wrong.
- They can understand as well that Jesus, God's Son, paid the price for their sin on the cross, so that God always forgives.

Kids Church Year 1 - Lesson 15 - 1



Welcome Zone: (15-20 minutes)

Purpose: While kids arrive, give them a simple learning readiness activity that requires minimal supervision. This might include a video, games, blocks, or puzzles.

Video Suggestion:

- *Animated Stories From the New Testament: The Prodigal Son*, 1988 Nest Family Entertainment—www.nestfamily.com (25 minutes)
- *The Beginner's Bible Video: The Story of the Prodigal Son*, 1996, Time-Life Kids and Sony Music (39 minutes)

Activity Suggestion: Blocks, toys, puzzles, paper, and crayons.



Opening Worship: (10-15 minutes)

Children can bring forward the cross, candles, Bible, offering plate, and treasure box. The treasure box contains the props used to tell or dramatize the Bible event. Open with a simple prayer, having the children repeat after you. Collect offering and talk about how God will use it.

Praise Songs:

Choose two or three songs and list them here.

Bible Event: A Visit from the Traveler

The traveler is a character costumed in traveling gear: backpack, walking stick, hiking hat and shoes. He explains that he has traveled all around the world discovering wonderful deeds that God has done. He tells of an adventure he just discovered in God's Word as he pulls the Bible out of his backpack. As he tells the Bible event, he pulls out objects from his backpack that illustrate the story.

His story could be read from the Bible storybook or as follows:

Traveler: Jesus was God's own Son who came to earth to tell people how much God loved them. God is our Heavenly Father and God wants us to know that even if we do wrong, we don't have to run away from him. We can go to him and tell him we are sorry. ***GOD ALWAYS FORGIVES—Tell God you're sorry.**

This is the story that Jesus told. There was once a very rich man who had two sons. Show the two figures. The younger said, "Father, I'm tired of living here anymore. I want you to give me all the money that I'm supposed to get when you die.

I want to go far away. The kind father was sad to think of his boy going far away and forgetting all about him. But he did not stop him; instead he gave him the money and told him that he loved him. Show the money. The other son stayed at home and continued to help his father.

Now, the younger son packed up all of his things and went on a long trip. He spent his money on anything he wanted. He spent it very fast. He wasted most of it having a good time. He thought that he had many friends, and he spent money on them, buying anything they wanted. He only ate the finest food and stayed at the finest places. He laughed and thought he was having a wonderful time, until finally, guess what happened? He ran out of money. Now, what do you think happened to his friends? They all left. There were only interested in his money.

Now, he was far away from home and had no money. In that land, many people were out of work. The young son couldn't find a job anywhere. Finally, he had one of the worst jobs possible. Show the pig. His job was to help throw slop to the pigs. He was so hungry, he would do anything. Even the food that he fed to the pigs was beginning to look good to him. How do you think the young man felt? Show the rag. He looked at his clothes, which were shabby and worn. They looked like rags. He didn't have a place to stay. He had no food, he had no money, and he had no friends. He knew that he had done something very wrong by running away from home and wasting all of his money. What do you think he should do? Take a few suggestions.

He thought about his home. He knew that his father was a kind man. Even the servants that worked for his father lived much better than the way he was living at the moment. He thought, "Maybe I will go back home and ask my father to hire me as a servant. Certainly, he would not want me as a son anymore. So, the young man started to walk home.

All this time his father had missed his son very much. Every day, he worried about his boy. Every day, he wished that his son would come home. Every day, he watched for him. Then one day, in the distance, the father saw a ragged, dirty boy walking down the road. Who do you think it was? Right. It was his son. The father jumped up and started running down the path to the front gate. By then, his son was almost there. His son held his face down in shame. The boy said, "Daddy, I have done wrong against heaven, and I have done wrong against you. I'm not even worthy to be called your son anymore." But before he could finish, his father grabbed him in his arms and hugged him tight. Tears of joy came down his face. He said, "Hurray! My son has come home! Quick, everybody come and

see!” He led his son back to the house and gave him his very best robe (show the robe), and put a ring on his finger. This meant to the father that the boy was his son once again. The father shouted to everyone, “My son, who was lost, is now found. He was once as good as dead, but now he is alive! Come; let’s have a party together! Let’s have a big meal and lots of dancing and music. My son has returned!”

The Traveler concludes:

Jesus told this story to remind us that God is like our father. And, if we are ever like the boy who runs away and doesn’t obey God, he wants us to come back to him.

Saying, “I’m sorry” is like coming back to God. Then God will forgive us. Remember that Jesus paid for all of our sins when he died for us on the cross. Because of that, *GOD ALWAYS FORGIVES—*Tell God you’re sorry* when you do something wrong.



Action Zones: (20-30 minutes)

Purpose: Children move at their leisure to the activities according to their interest. Adults are assigned to oversee each of the zones watching for safety, assisting any activity, and helping the children connect to the lesson of the day. All zones are introduced at the beginning of Zone Time. Some suggested zones are included below. It is usually best to have all children go to the Snack Zone first. Sing a blessing song or say a snack prayer together before dismissing to the zones.

During the Zone Time, children may arrive from mid-service dismissal if this is an option at your church. Be prepared to welcome the children and invite them to choose a zone.

Snack Zone: Make an edible “pig.” Using one vanilla wafer for the pig’s face, use 2 chocolate chips for the nose, two, cinnamon Red Hots or mini M&M’s for the eyes, and a pink waffle cookie cut into two triangles for the ears. Have the kids assemble using frosting for “glue.”

Drama Zone: Have a “celebration feast.” Provide party supplies (streamers, party hats), tableware (party plates, cups and silverware), and party clothes for the children to dress up and prepare a celebration meal for a “special guest.”

Felt Zone: Use felt board materials to show the story of the Prodigal Son. (For example, materials can be found in #133, “A Lost Boy Came Back,” from *Betty Lukens Through the Bible in Felt.*)

Messy Zone: Finger paint with chocolate pudding (to remind the kids of the mud in the pigsty). When the pudding dries, give each child a sticker (Avery 5160 label) with the take home point, “God always forgives – tell God you’re sorry” printed on them, to stick on their painting.

Video Zone: Animated Stories From the New Testament: *The Prodigal Son*, 1988. (25 minutes)

Craft Zone: Make a “party hat.” On a blank piece of paper, have children draw a party hat with crayons. Next, have them run a glue stick over their drawing and sprinkle it with confetti. Gently shake the page over a garbage can to remove any excess confetti.

Puppet Zone: Have characters act out running away and then coming back to say “I’m sorry” and receiving forgiveness.

Play Zone: Using a parachute, play the parachute game “Gone and Back.” The parachute is lifted slowly up and down. While the parachute is on the way up and before

it comes down, a child's name is called. That child has to run underneath the parachute, around another child, and return back to his place, before the parachute comes down on him. This reminds us how we can always run back to God if we have run away.

Quiet Reading Zone: Basket of books. Include any stories about the Prodigal Son.

Music Zone: Have the children play celebration music using "party" musical instruments (party horns, maracas, tambourines, etc.)

Coloring Zone: "The Runaway Son" coloring page



Closing Worship: (20 minutes)

Purpose: As you empty the zones and clean up, begin the music so the children can start wandering over.

Worship Songs:

Choose one or two songs and list them here.

Bible Application with Puppet Presentation:

Purpose: The puppet demonstrates the need that will be met in today's lesson. The scripts are not written verbatim, but give a story line in which the group leader can interact with the puppet.

The large group presenter calls for Bubba to come out, but Bubba doesn't want to. He says he broke his big sister's piggy bank. He is afraid to come out, because he doesn't want to get in trouble. The presenter explains that Jesus taught us that it is always best to say we are sorry. When we say we are sorry, God forgives us. This reminds the large group presenter of a story that Jesus told about a boy who ran away from his family and even ended up living with pigs, before he came home and was forgiven.

Have the children help to tell the Bible event again, but this time use costumed characters from the audience. They can act it out while it is being told. You can use the script from the opening presentation, or read it from your own Bible storybook. Give costumed headpieces to the father and the two sons. Use the play money and lots of imagination. Other children can pretend to be pigs. Some children might also take the role of friends, who liked the son when he had money, but left him when his money was gone.

In conclusion, have the children recall the take home point ***GOD ALWAYS FORGIVES**
– *Tell God you're sorry.*

Prayer Time:

Purpose: Allow children to contribute their own prayers. This will teach them to turn to God in both good times and in times of trouble. End with the Lord's Prayer.

"Children Pray" Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Train Option:** Children line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone and speak their brief prayers of thanksgiving.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Children stand in a circle around one child sitting on a chair in the middle. All children in the circle will lay a hand on the child sitting in the chair as they say a prayer together.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and taps children on the head to stand and speak their prayer.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire Prayer along with you.

Blessing:

May God, who is all around you,
pour his love upon you.

(Beginning at the bottom of the circle, slowly make large circle with your hands. Finish by bringing your hands down and wiggling your fingers to resemble rain.)

And Jesus, his life a sacrifice,
walk right there beside you.

(Slowly make a large sign of the cross. Then move your hands out to the sides.)

And may God's Holy Spirit,
the one who lives inside you,

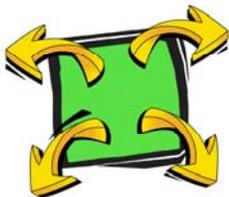
(Cross hands over your heart.)

keep you strong,
comfort, lead and guide you!

(Move to a "strong man" position. Then cross your arms with your hands on corresponding upper arms to communicate comfort. Bring one hand forward with "lead" and the other with "guide" to complete the blessing.)

Song of Sending:

Choose one song and list it here.



Closing Zones:

Purpose: Children go to an activity zone, such as the coloring zone, quiet reading zone, and children's Christian music video zone, as they wait for their parents.

Supplies:

Welcome Zone:

- *The Prodigal Son, The Animated Stories from the New Testament*, 1988 Nest Masters, Inc. (25 minutes)—order from http://www.nestfamily.com/store/product_detail.asp?productID=PSD
- *The Beginner's Bible: The Story of the Prodigal Son*, 1996 Sony Music Entertainment Inc and Time-Life Video—order from <http://www.sonymusicstore.com/store/catalog/SearchAction.do?searchBy=Quick&keyword=Prodigal+Son>, (39 minutes)
- blocks, toys, puzzles, paper, crayons

Opening Worship:

- cross, candles, Bible, offering plate
- Traveler's backpack with the following contents:
 - ❖ Bible
 - ❖ two figures representing the boys
 - ❖ lots of play money
 - ❖ toy pig
 - ❖ dirty rag
 - ❖ beautiful robe

Action Zones:

Snack Zone:

For each child:

- one vanilla wafer
- two chocolate chips
- two cinnamon red hots or mini M&Ms
- pink waffle cookie (cut into 2 triangles)
- frosting (for glue)

Drama Zone:

- party supplies (streamers, party hats, etc.)
- party tableware (plates, cups, silverware)
- party clothes for dress up

Felt Zone:

- felt board and materials to show the story of the Prodigal Son (For example, materials can be found in #133, "A Lost Boy Came Back," from *Betty Lukens Through the Bible in Felt*.—order from www.BettyLukens.com)

Messy Zone:

- blank piece of paper for each child
- chocolate pudding for finger painting
- one sticker* (Avery 5160 label) per child that reads "God always forgives – tell God you're sorry."

Video Zone:

- *The Prodigal Son, The Animated Stories from the New Testament*, 1988 Nest Family Entertainment. (25 minutes)

Craft Zone:

- crayons or markers
- one blank sheet of paper per child
- glue sticks
- confetti

Puppet Zone:

- puppets dressed to dramatize Bible event

Play Zone:

- parachute

Quiet Reading Zone:

- basket of books, include any stories you have about the Prodigal Son

Music Zone:

- party instruments (party horns, maracas, tambourines, etc.)

Coloring Zone:

- “The Runaway Son” coloring page, crayons and markers

Closing Worship:

- Bubba, the puppet
- piggy bank (if available)
- costumed headpieces for children playing the father and the two sons
- play money

Closing Zones:

- colored pencils
- paper
- basket of books

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