

GOD IS LOVE

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

LOVE GOOD FORGIVING MISTAKE

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Luke 15:11-24

MEMORY VERSE

“You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you” (Psalm 86:5, NIV*).

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To enable children to experience the love of God in their lives, so that they know to seek God’s love when they make a mistake and ask for God’s forgiveness.

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Jesus told the story of the prodigal son during the last six or seven months of his life. He found himself in Berea, on the east side of the Jordan. He was traveling to Jerusalem for the last time.

Some of the most beloved and best known stories of Jesus’ ministry are found in the book of Luke (the rich man and Lazarus, the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, and that of Zacchaeus).

The chapter contains three parables about loss: a sheep, a coin, and a son. The first two concern things of temporary value (the sheep and the coin); and the last with a person (the prodigal son.) But all are of eternal value.

Jesus contrasts the inclusive love of God with exclusive parables (so that not everyone would understand them). Jewish law dictated how a father should divide his inheritance. The eldest son should receive a double portion. It was uncommon to divide the inheritance before the father died, and even less common that the younger son should request it. (This was considered disrespectful to the father.)

In this parable, the younger son leaves home for a very distant country (possibly beyond the border of Israel). Later the intense desperation in this young man is apparent in the fact that he accepts a job feeding pigs, the lowliest of jobs for a Jewish man.

The word “prodigal” (reckless) refers to a person who squanders his property on useless things, without measure or reason. It can be compared to being “wasteful” or an irresponsible spender. In the story, the son was prodigal in the use of his inheritance.

When he returns to his father, the father gives him a robe, a sign of honor, usually given to a special guest. He also gave him a ring, which signaled authority, and shoes, which were a sign of the restoration of his position as son; slaves and servants did not use shoes.

Each detail is a symbol of the restoration of his previous position and his reacceptance as part of the family. Slaves were not part of the family. Employees and day laborers were contracted a day at a time and could be dismissed without notice. The prodigal son did not ask for the restoration of his previous position; he would have been satisfied with the precarious position of a day laborer.

“Dead” and “alive” are words with implications about the spiritual status of individuals, before and after a Christian conversion. “Lost” and “found” have implications of a search.

It was the love of his father that led this young man to take each step necessary to come home. This love was present as the son remembered his father, and the first idea he had was to go back. The love of God continues to seek out sinners today.

ADAPTATION

Children need to know that there is someone who loves them, regardless of what they do. They know when they do wrong. In this lesson, they will learn that when they act badly, they hurt God’s heart and affect their relationship with him. Because of this, they must repent and confess their sins to the Lord.

Jesus told this story to highlight the love of God and his concern with every part of our lives. Many children will have a loving father and can relate well to this parable. As a teacher, be alert and identify the children without father figures, and those who may have broken relationships with their fathers. In this lesson, highlight how our Heavenly Father is with us.

Children are afraid of being lost. Many of them have been lost in one way or another; or they may have been separated from their parents. Those moments are scary for both parties. If they have never been lost, they will at least know the dangers associated with it.

Help them exchange the fear and pain of being lost for the joy that comes with being found, so that they can understand the love of God better.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Children can tell when someone loves them. You as a teacher should show them love; if you do not, they will not want to be in your class. It is important that they begin to understand the spiritual implications of God’s love.

The love of God demands a response. Throughout today’s story, they will see how this love can cause us to make decisions and take action in response. Read John 3:16 to reinforce the theme of sacrificial love that God shows for mankind.

TEACH THE LESSON

Carefully study Luke 15:11-24 before the session so you will be able to tell the story in your own words.

In today’s lesson, emphasize the unconditional love of God. Remember there are various types of love: “filial” (brotherly love for siblings and friends); “eros” (erotic or sexual love); and “agape” (the sacrificial love of God). John is known as “the beloved disciple.” He says that God is “agape” love, not that he knows how to love or that he has the capacity to love, but John defines God as love.

The parable of the prodigal son is a clear example of the unconditional love of God, a love that expects nothing in return, that is not what we deserve, but though we do not deserve it, God continues to love us. He is holy, he is faithful, and he is love.

Do not forget to include songs in your class. For this lesson, you can sing a chorus like “Jesus Loves Me.” Consider substituting “Jesus” with “God.” Remember that songs should include movements. If you want, you can write the song in a heart cutout with writing on both sides.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Help your children with a quick review of the characteristics of God that they have learned in this unit thus far. Allow them to explain in their own words what they have learned. This will help you to plan your next lesson, the last one in this unit. If you find a deficiency in any of these concepts, take note and prepare a review of the unit for the next lesson.

Children must understand that the love of God is available to them. This lesson should also give them a sense of how dangerous it is to separate ourselves from the Lord, as the consequences can cost us our lives.

Emphasize the security that God's love provides us. Explain that God does not look at a person's age, but loves us all the same.

The loving father

(Book to fold.) You will need four student activity sheets for each child, scissors, and a stapler. (If you are making copies of the worksheets, be sure to copy the front and back on the same sheet of paper (SAS #139-A to SAS #139-B and SAS #139-C to SAS #139-D) or glue the two copies together. If you do not, the book will not come out correctly.) Make an example of the book before the session to learn the procedure and to serve as a helpful example for your children. Perhaps you may want to prepare samples for each of these 5 steps. **Step 1:** Be sure SAS #139-A and SAS #139-B are aligned and printed back to back. Also, be sure SAS #139-C and SAS #139-D are aligned and printed back to back. **Step 2:** Cut out each of the 8 squares (boxes), numbered 1 through 8. **Step 3:** Stack the boxes from 1 to 8. **Step 4:** Fold each page in half along the center line. This should show pages numbered from 1 to 16. The un-numbered pages reveal the words of Psalm 86:5. **Step 5:** One staple midway, along the center line should hold the book together.

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #139-A, #139-B, #139-C and #139-D. Help the children put their books together. Make sure that the pages are in the right order before you staple them. You may want to choose assistants to help your children. Ensure that they know how to complete the task. Use this book to review the Bible story. When finished, allow your children to take their books home to share with their family and friends.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Using the train that you have used throughout the unit, remove it from the wall and hide the different train cars around the classroom or under the chairs/ benches (you should do this before the children arrive).

When the time comes for scripture memory, call your children' attention to the fact that the train is missing; then, ask for help finding it. As pieces begin to appear, have each child who finds a train car stand at the front of the classroom with their piece. Then tell them to put the train in order. Repeat the verse multiple times.

WRAP-UP

Pray

End in prayer. Ask children to form a circle and join hands. Ask if they have any prayer requests and include them in you prayer.

Encourage

Ask the children to review what they have learned up until now. Help them to remember what they need to take home. Thank each child for helping.

Invite

Briefly give a preview of what is coming up in the next session, trying to make a connection and spark interest in the children so they do not miss it. Announce that the next session is the last lesson of this unit.