



I Spy

The Lost Son Returns

BIG IDEA: Jesus wants me to forgive.

BIBLE BASIS: Luke 15:11-24

KEY VERSE: “With people, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26 (NirV)

SCHEDULE

2S & 3S CLASSES

ARRIVAL & PLAYTIME

10:30-10:55

2S & 3S LARGE GROUP

10:55-11:10

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

11:10-12:00

PRE-K & K CLASSES

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

10:30-11:15

PRE-K & KINDER LARGE GROUP

11:15-11:40

REVIEW ACTIVITIES

11:40-12:00

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LEADER DEVOTIONAL

The parable of the Loving Father and the Prodigal Son is an excellent section of Scripture to read if you want to understand how much God loves us despite our tendencies to wander away from His perfect love and toward s“l”n. No — that’s not a misspelling! You see, I’ve found that s“l”n is the result of an “I” attitude. It’s the attitude of “I want to do what I want to do, when I want to do it.” The prodigal son suffered from it, and so do we.

I don’t know exactly how old the youngest son was — probably in his early 20s — but he decided that he wanted his freedom from the confines of his family. Normally, he would need to wait until his father died and then he would inherit 1/3 of his father’s estate, but that could be years away. Not wanting to be delayed by a technicality, he asked his dad for an advance on his money. Basically, he was telling his dad that he wanted him dead so that he could have his share of the estate NOW!

It’s interesting to me that the dad didn’t try to talk his son out of his request. The father gave his son the freedom to make his own decision and to live with the consequences of that decision. That’s actually the way that God relates to all of us. He says, “I love you, I want the best for you, I have given you my Operations Manual to live your life by, but you’re the one who has to make the decision to follow Me or not.” In the case of the prodigal son, he chose “not.”

Unfortunately for him, the freedom he sought and obtained wasn’t what he thought it would be. Freedom from his father only brought heartache, personal failure, spiritual emptiness, and an inner longing for something to fill the vacuum in his life. I can identify with this young man. I’ve sought after that same kind of freedom. The freedom to do what I want, when I want, regardless of what the Father wishes. And just like the younger son, I’ve found that there are consequences to that kind of “freedom.”

Fortunately, our Father is full of grace. And when we decide with a sincere heart that we want the true freedom that comes with abiding in Him, He runs to us with arms wide open and embraces us with an unimaginable forgiveness. It’s so good to be home!

Bob Norwood
GO! Contributor



SMALL GROUP SKILL BUILDING

How to Prepare Like a Champ for Small Group

Picture this scene: Moments before children’s church is scheduled to begin, a leader stands in the corner of the room with their face buried in some papers labeled “Small Group Lesson.” They seem oblivious to the kids moving quickly and loudly all around them. A bead of sweat rolls down their face. The clock ticks loudly as they read at a fevered pace. Have you seen this leader? *Are you* this leader? There’s no judgment here! We get it — life is often *really* busy and finding the time to volunteer, much less prepare, can be tough. But by investing just a small amount of time into preparation, you can go from being a good leader to a great one. Here’s how:

Read your lesson ahead of time. You saw that one coming, didn’t you? When the kids arrive, it’s game time. When you’ve read the lesson ahead of time, the kids get your full attention from the moment they walk in. When small group begins, you’ll be able to lead much more effectively if you’re not trying to figure the lesson out for yourself at the same time you’re explaining it to your group.

Familiarize yourself with the materials. Many of the small group activities in the GO! curriculum have materials that go with it. When you read the lesson at home, you might have a picture of what the materials look like, but double check to make sure what you imagined matches reality when you arrive at church.

Prepare your own heart. The best way to lead the kids in your group is through example. Consider reading the Bible story ahead of time and asking yourself how it applies to your own life. Spend some time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to show you how you need to change in light of this story.



☆ PLAY TIME ACTIVITY

Along with your other play time activities, present the following activity to children as they first arrive in the preschool room. Choose a leader to facilitate the activity. The activity is designed to introduce kids to the Bible story and Big Idea for the day.

PARTY HAT

Supplies: Paper (1 piece per child), stapler or roll of tape (1 per group), markers, crayons, stickers, etc.

Directions: Give each child a piece of paper and tell them to color and decorate it for a party. While they're creating, ask the question below. When finished, help the children roll the paper into a cone-shaped party hat and staple or tape it together. Allow the children to wear their hat.

Question: Making party hats is so much fun! What else do you like to do at parties?

Say: In our true Bible story for today, there's a dad who throws a BIG party for his son. We're going to find out why in just a little bit. We're also going to learn that Jesus wants us to forgive.

BALLOON VOLLEYBALL (Bible Memorization Activity)

Supplies: Chairs (2 per group), string (8 feet per group), balloon (1 per group)

Preparation: Place two chairs about 7 to 8 feet apart. Tie a string between the two chairs. The string should be about 2–3 feet above the ground. This will serve as a makeshift volleyball net.

Today's Bible verse:

*“With people (point to all the children),
this is impossible (two thumbs down and shake head “no”).
But with God (point up),
all things are possible (two thumbs up and shake head “yes”).”
Matthew 19:26 (extend hands like you're holding a book).*

Directions: Practice the above verse with the children a few times. When ready, divide the children into two teams and have each team sit facing each other on opposite sides of the string. Toss the inflated balloon to one team and have them bop it over the string to the other team. (It may take more than one bop to get the balloon over the string. That's okay.) Each time someone on either team bops the balloon, have all of the children say one word from the Bible verse (hand motions are not necessary). Continue bopping the balloon back and forth until the entire verse has been recited. If the balloon touches the ground before the verse is finished, pick it up and start over from the beginning.

2s & 3s – Large Group at 10:55
Pre-K & K – Large Group at 11:15



★ SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

After the Large Group story time is over, help the children transition into the small group activity time. There are multiple activity options designed to help kids remember the Bible story and Big Idea, discover personal application, and respond to God through art, prayer, and Bible reading. Offer as many activities as your time and space allows.

LOST AND FOUND (Application Activity)

Supplies: Stuffed animal (1 per group)

Say: The Bible says that when we do bad things, it's like we wander away from God, kind of like the son in today's true Bible story. But just like the father in the story, God looks for us. And when He finds us, He's so, so happy! Let's play a game that helps us remember how God looks for us.

Directions: Choose a child to close their eyes while you hide a stuffed animal somewhere in the room. When ready, have the child open their eyes and begin searching. You and the other children can direct the search by saying, "Hot" if the child is getting closer, or, "Cold" if the child is getting further away. When the child finds the animal and returns with it, have the whole group shout, "He once was lost, but now he's found!" Repeat until each child has had a turn.

Question: Why do you think God looks for us when we wander away from Him?

ANIMAL CROSSING (Bible Story Review Activity)

Supplies: Animal Number signs (1 set per group)

Preparation: Print out the provided Animal Number signs and tape them to the walls around the room.

Directions: Each sign will have an animal and a number on it. Move with the children to the first sign as if you were that animal. For example, move like a hippo to sign #1. When you reach the sign, ask the children what happened first in the Bible story. Try to limit the children to sharing only the beginning of the story. Next, move with the children to the second sign like the animal indicated and ask what happened second in the story. Continue moving to the different numbers until the entire story has been told.

7.4 Small Group Lesson | 2s & 3s



I'M SORRY (Response to God Activity)

Supplies: GO! Home Guide (printed on back of coloring sheet, 1 per child), crayons

Directions: Give each child a GO! Home Guide and some crayons or markers. The sheet will have a space for children to draw. Tell the children to draw a happy face. When finished, ask the children to show their drawing to the rest of the group.

Say: When we say "I'm sorry" to God, this is what He looks like. He is so, so happy. Just like the father in our Bible story, God forgives us and celebrates when we return to Him. Let's say a prayer and tell God "I'm sorry" for the bad choices we've made.

Prayer: Begin by asking if any of the children would like to pray. Allow any children who want to pray the opportunity to do so. When they're finished, close the prayer by thanking God for His forgiveness.

Question: What was your favorite part of today's Bible story? Why did you like that part?

Question: If you were the dad, what would you have said to your son when he came back?

When you hear the first names be called, that is when the last song has started. Go ahead and finish up your activity and get the kids ready to go. This is a great time to turn on Topher Time with the iPad on the TV, so they can watch while kids are getting picked up, and the room stays clean. 😊