



WEEK
FOUR
FEB 2026

SMALL GROUP

PRESCHOOL

BIG IDEA

Jesus wants me to forgive.

BIBLE

The Lost Son Returns

Luke 15:11-24

MEMORY VERSE

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

SCHEDULE: PLAY TIME ACTIVITIES **15-20 minutes** LARGE GROUP LESSON **20-25 minutes**
SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES: **25-35 minutes** (15 minute rotations)

LARGE GROUP

Slide: Show "I Spy" title graphic

Music: (Optional) Play upbeat music (song in preservice) as children enter the storytelling area

WELCOME & WORSHIP

INSTRUCTIONS: As children enter the story time area, give them a high-energy welcome – smile, wave, give high fives, and tell them you're glad to see them. For added energy during the transition, play a fun song that the children are familiar with. Invite the kids to worship with you. There are instruments and ribbons under the desk for you to use anytime. Please remind them:

- Worship is a way to show God how much you love Him and to thank Him for all He has done.
- Worship makes God happy. God loves it when we sing and pray to Him
- Please stand during worship and use inside walking feet only.

Music: play worship songs and lead the kids in singing

After the songs, help the children sit down by saying the following rhyme with them:

Topher the Gopher 1, 2, 3. (Clap on each number.)

Digs a hole right under me. (Make a motion as if digging with a shovel.)

Slowly I start sinking down. (Twist your body back and forth, lower and lower to the ground.)

Until I'm sitting on the ground. (Sit down on ground or chair.)

BIBLE STORY | **The Lost Son Returns, Luke 15:11-24**

INSTRUCTIONS: Pass out the fruit snacks after the Bible Story Rules video, **remind them to hold their trash till the end of the story.**

Say, before the Video:

- Hello, my friends! I spy with my little eye...some kids with two hands. Who do you think it is? (Children respond.) That's right – it's you! If you're happy to be here, clap your hands one time. (Children clap once.) If you're happy to be here, clap your hands two times. (Children clap twice.) I'm happy to be here too, and I can't wait to hear our Bible story.



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LARGE GROUP

BIBLE STORY | **The Lost Son Returns Continued**

STORY TIME RULES

- Before we get started, though, I think we should go over our three story time rules.

Video: Play “Topher the Gopher Story Time Rules” video

BE KIND

BE SAFE.

HAVE FUN

Video: Play “Topher Time” video (Bible Story)

PRAYER

“Open shut them, open shut them, give your hands a clap. Open shut them, open shut them, place your hands in your lap”

- Let’s say a prayer together and thank God for loving and forgiving us. (Encourage kids to repeat the following prayer after you.)
- Dear God, You love me so, so much. Thank You for forgiving me. Please help me forgive others. I love You, God! Amen.

SMALL GROUP

ACTIVITY I **I’m Forgiven Dance Party**

- In the story that Jesus told, the son did something bad – (hold up some play money) he took his dad’s money, he left home, and he spent it all on silly things. When the son came back home, was the dad angry or did he forgive his son? (Children respond.) You’re right – he forgave his son!
- You see, we’re kind of like the son and the dad is kind of like God. When we do bad things, we can always go back to God. If we say, “**I’m sorry**” to God, He always says, “**I forgive you.**” Then it’s like God throws a big party for us. You know what – that gives me an idea. Let’s have an “**I’m Forgiven Dance Party!**” When you hear the music play, let’s dance. When the music stops, let’s freeze, then shout, “**Hip, hip, hooray! I’m forgiven!**” (Play upbeat music. Pause occasionally, shout, and then play music again.)
- When we sin or do bad things, God says, “**I forgive you.**” And because God forgives us, Jesus wants us to forgive others.



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ACTIVITY | **Animal Crossing (Bible Story Review)**

SUPPLIES: Animal Number signs

PREPARATION: Tape Animal Number signs around the room.

INSTRUCTIONS:: 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. Continue moving to the different numbers until the entire story has been told.

SAY: "We're going to retell our Bible story while moving like animals! When we get to each animal sign, we'll remember one part of the story." (Move together as a group to each sign.)

🐘 Sign #1 - Move like: a hippo (big, slow steps)

- Ask: "What happened first in our Bible story?"
- Help them answer: A father had two sons. The younger son wanted his money. He left home.

🐢 Sign #2 – Turtle - Move like: a turtle (very slow, tiny steps)

- Ask: "What happened next?"
- Help them answer: The son spent all his money. He had nothing left. He was hungry and sad.

🦓 Sign #3 – Zebra - Move like: a zebra (march or trot)

- Ask: "What happened after that?"
- Help them answer: He had to feed pigs. He felt sorry. He decided to go back home.

🦁 Sign #4 – Lion - Move like: a lion (quiet roar, big steps)

- Ask: "What did the father do?"
- Help them answer: The father saw him coming. He ran to him. He hugged him.

🐊 Sign #5 – Alligator - Move like: an alligator (chomp hands, low walk)

- Ask: "How did the story end?"
- Help them answer: The father forgave him. They had a big celebration. The son was home again.

WRAP-UP:

Ask: "When we make wrong choices and come back to God, how does God feel?"

Say together: "God is happy!"



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CRAFT ACTIVITY | 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 today, the dad throws a BIG party for his son. Do you remember why? We also learned that Jesus wants us to forgive.

ACTIVITY | Memory Verse

SUPPLIES: Bible

INSTRUCTIONS: Remind the kids where the verse comes from, the Bible. Practice the memory verse with the children a few times. Allow the children to try and say the verse on their own. Give each child a sticker for trying.

MEMORY 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).



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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



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LARGE & SMALL GROUP SKILL BUILDING

How to Prepare Like a Champ for Large & 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.