



WEEK  
**FOUR**  
FEB 2026

SMALL GROUP

**TODDLER**

### 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:** Shake your Sillies Out (Hand out Streamers)

### 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 ribbons 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 one worship song 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.)

### BIG IDEA AND BIBLE VERSE

**Large Group Leader:** 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 tell our Bible story.

Today’s true Bible story is going to teach us that Jesus wants me to forgive.



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## LARGE GROUP

### **BIG IDEA AND BIBLE VERSE (CONTINUED)**

“**Forgive** (brush hands together as if wiping them clean),  
**just as the Lord** (point up)  
**forgave you.**” (brush hands together again)  
**Colossians 3:13** (extend hands like you’re holding a book).

**Slide:** Show the “The Lost Son Returns” slide

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

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Ahead of time, place the story objects around the room. Make sure they are visible from the seating area. When it’s time to spy an object, give clues such as color, shape, and what it’s used for. Retrieve the object once it has been spied by the children.

**Large Group Leader:** Let’s play “I Spy.” I spy with my little eye something... (Give clues about the **play money**.) In the Bible, Jesus told a story about a man who had two sons. (Choose a child to play the role of the younger son.) The younger son said to his dad, “I want your money!” (Prompt son to repeat line.) So the dad divided all of his money and belongings between the two sons. (Give son half of the play money.)

Let’s do another “I Spy.” I spy with my little eye something... (Give clues about the **suitcase**.) A short time later, the son packed up all of his things and left home for a country far, far away. (Hand suitcase to son.) Let’s stand up and pretend like we’re all walking to a faraway country. (March in place with children while chanting the following lines.) We’re walking, we’re walking, we’re walking to the country. We’re walking, we’re walking, we’re walking to the country. We’re walking, we’re walking, we’re walking to the country. And stop! (Have children sit down.) When the son got there, he spent all of his money on silly things. (Take money away from son.)

It’s time for another “I Spy.” I spy with my little eye something... (Give clues about the **apple** or other piece of food.) Then the whole country ran low on food. The son didn’t have anything to eat – not even one tiny apple. (Hold up apple.) So he went to work feeding pigs. Even the pigs had more food to eat than he did. The son was so hungry. Can you all show me what you look like when you’re really hungry? (Children look hungry.) He even thought about eating the pig food. (Hold up bowl of dog food to the son.) Would you ever think about eating pig food like this? (Children respond.) The son did. That’s how hungry he was!

I spy with my little eye something... (Give clues about the **toy house**.) The son thought to himself, “Even my dad’s servants have more food than me. (Hold up toy house.) I’ll go back home and beg him to forgive me. Maybe he’ll let me be a servant in his house.” So he got up and walked back home.

I spy with my little eye something... (Give clues about the **robe**.) When the dad saw his son coming, he ran to him and gave him a big hug. (Give son a hug.) The son said, “I’m sorry, Dad! I’ve done something bad. Please let me be your servant.” But the dad didn’t want another servant – he wanted his son back! The dad said, “My son was lost, but now he is found.” The dad forgave his son and had his servants put a special robe on him. (Put robe on son.) Then he threw his son a big party with lots and lots of food.



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## LARGE GROUP

### PRAYER

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

**Large Group Leader:** 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.

### MUSIC AND CLOSING

(Encourage the children to stand up. Lead them in a worship song of your choice.)

**Music:** Play one worship song

**Release Kids** for 15 minutes of play

### PLAY TIME ACTIVITY I Feed the Pig

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

**Supplies:** Pig Picture (1 per group), cardboard box (1 per group), goldfish cracker Cutouts (2–3 per child)

**Preparation:** Cut a hole or square into the side of a cardboard box (about 4 inches in diameter). Print the “Pig Picture” on cardstock paper, then cut a mouth hole as indicated on the picture. Tape the pig to the side of the cardboard box so the mouth hole lines up with the hole in the box.

**Directions:** Place the box with the pig taped to it across the room. Tell the children to stay seated on the ground and stay very, very quiet. Choose one child to “feed the pig.” Give the child two to three pieces of pig food (aka goldfish crackers). They may move across the room in whatever way they would like (walk, hop, crawl, spin, etc.). Upon reaching the pig, have them drop the crackers through the hole in the pig’s mouth, then return to the group and say, “I’m sorry.” When the child returns to the group, have the other children jump to their feet and shout, “Hooray!” Repeat until each child has had a turn feeding the pig.

**Say:** In today’s Bible story, the dad was so happy when the son returned home. God is kind of like the dad, and we’re kind of like the son. When we do bad things, we can always return to God and say, “I’m sorry.” That makes God so, so happy! He forgives us and shouts “Hooray!”

**Question:** Do you need to say “I’m sorry” to God for something? In other words, have you done anything bad that you want to tell God about?



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## SMALL GROUP

### ACTIVITY | **Lost and Found**

**Supplies:** Several different animals

**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:** Place several animals around the room, have each child take a turn finding the animal you name.

**Say:** *We have lost the (Elephant)*, when the child returns with the animal Shout *Now he is found.*

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

### 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 son left home."* Have kids repeat: *"He left."*

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

- Ask: *"What happened next?"*
- Help them answer: *"He spent all his money."* Repeat: *"All gone!"*

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

- Ask: *"What happened after that?"*
- Help them answer: *"He was sad."* Repeat: *"So sad."*

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

- Ask: *"What did the servant do?"*
- Help them answer: *"He went back home."* Repeat: *"Go home!"*

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

- Ask: *"How did the story end?"*
- Help them answer: *"Dad was happy!"* Repeat (big smiles): *"So happy!"*

**WRAP-UP:**

Have them open arms wide and say: *"God is happy when we come back!"* Repeat it 2-3 times.



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## SMALL GROUP

### **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 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.



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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.