

WEEK 5 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

We belong in God's family.

BIBLE

The Parable of the Lost Son:
Luke 15:11–32; 2 Corinthians 5:17–19

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Movie premieres are often exclusive, invite-only events, which means a lot of different people end up left out. This week, we'll hear Jesus tell a story about what a father's love for his lost son can show us about who God is. Jesus told this story to help all of us see that God is making space for people just like us—**we belong in God's family.**

LARGE GROUP TIME

Wow, it's our last show of the *Big Picture!* We've had a blast learning cool stuff from Jesus' stories. The Parable of the Sower showed us God helps us know what's true, the Parable of the Bags of God reminded us we can give back to God, the Parable of the Good Samaritan showed us God sends us helpers, and the Parable of the Fig Tree helped us know **God gives us second chances.**

But hey, here's the best part—we're not just feeling like a family. We are a family. Today's story is going to show us exactly that. Get ready for an awesome final parable that'll make us feel all warm and fuzzy about being part of this awesome family. *Roll film!*

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Red Carpet Welcome

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, create a red carpet for kids to walk. At the start of the line, prepare props, costumes, and accessories like sunglasses and necklaces for kids to glam it up and pose for the cameras, which are cell phone cameras used by your volunteers and small group leaders. Enable flash on the cell phone cameras to enhance the paparazzi effect. Play a red carpet background video like [this](#) with the music up.*
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Turn this into a photobooth so preteens can take selfies on the red carpet with the prepared props and their friends. Set up the camera app on a tablet to be in selfie mode with a timer, or download a photobooth app to use. Give them the option to text or email their pictures to themselves.*
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Encourage them to show off a simple move or dance and record them in slow motion like the [GlamBot](#) does on the red carpet. Ask kids if they want flash photography or not to be mindful of kids who may have visual sensitivities.*
- When a movie is ready to be released to the public, there are these big premiere parties where celebrities will show up on the red carpet to celebrate. This is the glitziest, most glamorous welcome you'll ever have

in Hollywood, but guess what—it's nowhere near as awesome as the welcome we will get when we come home to God!

ACTIVITY | Name That Movie

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, use the [printable](#) provided as slides or double-sided printed cards. Show each of the emoji clues of the movie title and have kids guess which movie it is. You could do this in teams or all together.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Give teams a movie title and a set amount of time to put together emojis, then have the group guess which movie it is. If possible, let them use a phone or tablet to put together emojis from the keyboard. Or print and cut out a bunch of emojis based on the printable provided or a printable [like this](#).
- There have been so many movies that were made throughout history. You may have heard of some of these family movies even if you haven't seen them. Can you help me name them?
- In many of these movies, we find families engaged in conflict. In today's Bible story, Jesus will show us that even when our real-life families might not always get along, one family always welcomes us.

QUESTION | Have you ever been away from your family?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have kids share any experiences they've had being lost or separated. It could be when they were away at camp or when they were actually lost at a store or other public place. Be mindful of the different family structures in your ministry as kids share.
- **Have you ever been away from your family?**
- **How did it feel when you were separated?**
- **How did it feel when you got back together again?**
- Being lost or separated is never fun. But it's always great to be reunited with our loved ones. Pay attention to a special family reunion in today's Bible story.

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Luke 15:11–32 (The Parable Of The Lost Son)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Set up your space like a movie set, with a director's chair, megaphone, and [clapper board](#) (or [make your own](#)). You will be a movie director every week and invite kids up to pantomime as you tell the story. Don't worry about it being sloppy or awkward—the whole point is for the director to tell the kids what to do during the storytelling. Feel free to ad-lib and make it funny. Use the clapper board to signal the "acting" sequence. This week, you will need one kid to be the father, one to be the older son and another to be the younger son.
 - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** As you talk about belonging this week, remember that kids with disabilities face discrimination and exclusion regularly. Train your volunteers to treat kids with disabilities and non-disabled kids equally to close the gap between them and to foster an environment that includes and welcomes all kids. Make sure kids with disabilities are given a choice to participate in all the activities and sit out if needed.
- First of all, a big round of applause to all of you. Production cannot happen without a crew, and you have all been an amazing part of it. I'm so honored to be your director. It's like we're family now!
- Today's our last day of moviemaking, and we're wrapping things up with one of the biggest parables that Jesus told. You haven't forgotten what a parable is, have you? Of course not. Parables are stories Jesus told to help people understand more about God.
- Let's get our actors center stage. For the rest of the crew, are you ready to provide some sound effects? Amazing. Let's get started.

- **This parable begins in Luke 15:11–12.**
 - The father stands between his two sons. Suddenly, the younger son holds out his hands to his dad. He wants money. The father planned to leave behind this money when he died so his sons would be able to take care of themselves. But the younger son wanted his money now. He stomps his foot impatiently.
 - The older brother has his arms crossed and looks angry. His younger brother is being so disrespectful.
 - The father gives his younger son the money. The younger son does a happy dance and runs away from his family.
 - **Crew, let's shake our heads and make some disapproving noises. Tsk. Tut. Hiss.**
- **The plot thickens in Luke 15:13–16.**
 - The younger son used up all his money super fast. Now, he had nothing left, and there was a famine, which meant there also was no food. He stumbled around, clutching his stomach because he was so hungry.
 - **Crew, can we give him some growling stomach sound effects?**
 - Finally, he found work feeding pigs. He was so hungry that even what the pigs had to eat looked delicious. He licked his lips as he gazed at the slop the pigs ate.
 - **Crew, let's provide some oinks.**
- **But then the younger son remembered something in Luke 15:17–19.**
 - **Crew, light bulb sound effect, please. Ding!**
 - The younger son fell to the ground and began weeping. He remembered how good he had it when he lived back home with his family. But he also remembered how poorly he had treated them. He knew he didn't deserve to be his father's son anymore, but maybe, just maybe, his father would let him work as a servant. Anything would be better than this. He wiped his eyes and stood up to follow this new plan.
- **What do you think the father did? Let's read Luke 15:20–24.**
 - It's time for a slow-motion replay. The father looks up and sees his son heading his way. He begins to run.
 - On the other side, the younger son is so worn out from hunger but he runs too.
 - The two of them meet in the middle and give each other a slow-motion hug.
 - **Crew, let's go with an "aww!" sound effect here.**
 - The son gets on his knees and says he's sorry for everything. The father picks him up by his hands and shakes his head. He's just happy his son is back! The two begin to dance.
 - **Crew, let's drop a hip-hop beat! Boots and cats and boots and cats! (Or sing, "Celebrate good times, come on!")**
- **But one person was not happy about the younger brother's return, as we'll see in Luke 15:28–32.**
 - The father notices the older son sulking in the corner. He stops dancing and goes to find out what's wrong.
 - The older son is resentful. He starts counting off on his fingers all the ways he's been such a good son. He's always helped out. He never disrespected his dad like his younger bro did. But he never got a party like this!
 - The father puts his hands on his older son's shoulders. He points to all the land and reminds him that all of this has always been his. He loves him very much, but he also loves his other son just as much. We have to be happy that he's come back to the family!
 - **Crew, let's give them some warm applause while these two hug it out! Bravo!**
- Jesus told this parable to let everyone know that he came to earth, not just for some people—like the most well-behaved ones or those who worked the hardest—but for *everyone*. Jesus wanted his listeners to know that everyone belonged to God's family.

BIG IDEA | We belong in God's family.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Use [the video provided](#) for this week to reveal this week's Big Idea, like you're announcing the winner of a movie award.
- The nominees for this week's Big Idea are:
 - God sends us helpers.
 - We belong in God's family.
 - God gives us second chances.
 - God helps us know what's true.
 - We can give back to God.
- And the Big Idea is...**We belong in God's family.**

VIDEO | A Clip From "Finding Nemo"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Show [this clip](#) of Nemo and Marlin's reunion from the movie "Finding Nemo." We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Show [this clip](#) from "Jingle Jangle" where a father and his estranged daughter begin to reconcile their relationship. Ask kids what they notice about the characters and how they might have been similar or different from the father and his son in Jesus' parable.
- Nemo had been upset with his dad, so in an act of defiance, he strayed too far from where he should have been. He gets scooped up by a diver and taken to a fish tank in Sydney, Australia. Marlin, Nemo's father, crossed the ocean—with the help of his new friend Dory—and braved all kinds of danger, like sharks and jellyfish, to find his lost son. When he hears his son's voice, Marlin runs, or um ... swims swiftly to be reunited with him.
- In the parable, Jesus told, the father waited and waited for his son to return. **Then one day, when he saw his son from a distance, what did he do?** He ran!
- For whatever reason, the younger son was upset with his family and chose to leave them behind. Kind of like how Nemo chose to disobey his dad. But when he was far from home, he realized he wanted to be back with his family.
- The father in the Bible story is like God. Even when some of God's children—us—choose to turn away and disobey at times, God doesn't give up on us. God patiently waits for us to come back to God. Not only that, but God celebrates it when we do!
- **We belong in God's family!**

ACTIVITY | We All Belong!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need masking tape to create a large circle or any other shape in your space on the ground. The shape must be big enough for everyone—including leaders—to stand inside together at one time. Have everyone start by standing outside of the circle. Describe some of the characteristics of your group (color of clothes, type of shoe, style of hair, first letter of name) until everyone ends up inside the circle.
 - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Preteens are becoming more self-conscious as they enter the developmental stage of discovering their individuality and identity, and they may start wondering if they truly belong anywhere. In line with this week's Big Idea, take time to affirm each preteen that who they are and who they are becoming will always be welcome in God's family.
- At the end of filming a movie, there is a big party celebrating what the whole crew has accomplished together. God has an even bigger celebration for us when we choose to be a part of God's family!
- This circle represents God's family. Currently, we are all standing outside the circle. **Jump inside the circle when you hear me say something that describes you.**
- **What would happen if I chose to leave the circle?** It might look like I'm not a part of the family, but in God's

eyes, I'll always belong. We don't belong in God's family because we look or dress a certain way or because we know more information about God. We belong because God loves us and makes us a part of God's family.

- Even if you make a mistake. Even if you sin against God and God's people. God is always holding space for you to come back, just like the father from Jesus' parable. And when we do return, God runs to meet us and celebrates us!
- **We belong in God's family!**

SCRIPTURE | 2 Corinthians 5:17–19

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage aloud or invite a volunteer to read.*
- God loves us so much that God won't count our sins against us, no matter what we've done, if we just come back.
- **Did you notice that all three verses in this passage mention Christ?** Jesus is the main character in this passage. Jesus is the one who makes it possible for us to come home to God. When we know and follow Jesus, he points us to where we belong... in God's family!
- Isn't this wonderful news—that we can be new creations because of Jesus? Can we start over if we mess up? That we don't have to dwell on who we were before—like, even yesterday—but have a brand new day every day with God?
- Jesus came to bring us back to God's family because **we belong in God's family!**

VIDEO | *Big Picture*, Episode 5

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).*

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

REFLECTION | Big Picture Storyboard

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a corkboard, black foam board, or any board, really. Provide large index cards and writing utensils for kids to use. Have kids write or draw according to the prompt, and then stick it on the board using pins or tape. Try grouping similar responses in the same area. Prepare multiple boards if you have a large group.*
- A storyboard is created before a movie goes into production so everyone can see the big picture. This ensures everyone is on the same page and knows what this movie is all about! Let's pause and storyboard what we learned today!
- Think back on the Parable of the Lost Son and write or draw one thing about the story that stuck out to you most. Afterward, put it up on the storyboard, and those of you who are willing can share with us why that part was most memorable for you.
- Okay, now that we have our big picture storyboard up and running, let's talk a little more about what this parable teaches us about God and our life with God.
 - **What does it mean to you that you belong in God's family?**
 - **Why would someone feel like maybe they don't belong in God's family?**
 - **According to the story Jesus told, what does God do when anyone chooses to turn to God?**
 - **What can we do to help more people remember they belong in God's family?**
- God's family isn't just made up of people who come to church with us every week. God invites everyone to know and follow Jesus, God's son, who points the way to God. **We belong in God's family** and can let more people in on this good news!

RESPONSE | Make It Reel

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Pass out a copy of the [printable](#) provided to each kid where kids will write or draw one action step for the week in the space provided. Feel free to send the printables home, or if you held on to them in previous weeks, help kids make “reels” by taping or gluing their weekly film strips together.
- It’s time to add to your life movie reel! What happens next? What can we do about what we learned today?
- **Write or draw some people you want to invite into God’s family. Pray for them this week and ask God to help you share God’s love with them.**
- We sometimes forget that the parable Jesus told was about two sons. The older son had always been around, helped out, and did everything right. He was unhappy that his younger brother got all that hoopla even though he messed up big time! The father reminded him, just as God reminds us that we should celebrate when anyone chooses to join or rejoin the family! **We—that means everyone—belong in God’s family.**

MEMORY VERSE | Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!
- **“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”**

PRAYER

- God, thank you for making us part of your family. Because of Jesus, we have family members all over the world forever. We pray that more and more people will come home to you and know that they also belong in your family. Amen.

SMALL GROUP TIME**DISCUSSION**

- **SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS**
 - **Why did the younger son go hungry?** *He spent all his money, there was a famine, and no one gave him anything to eat.*
 - **Why did the younger son plan to ask his dad if he could be a servant?** *He didn’t think he deserved to be his father’s son anymore.*
 - **What did the father do when his son returned home?** *He ran to him and threw a big celebration.*
 - **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What are some ways you think you’ve become a “new creation” since knowing Jesus? Or what are some ways you’d like to be?**
- **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**
 - **Which character do you understand the most—the younger brother or the older brother? Why?**
 - **What are some things people do to help you feel like you belong? How do you know you belong in God’s family?**
 - **What does it mean to be a family? Do family members always get along, or do they learn to get along with each other?**

ACTIVITY | Big Picture Reel

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, have kids add drawings on the [printable](#) about this month’s parables and the corresponding Big Ideas. Or have them focus on this week’s Big Idea only, and they can draw pictures of their family and friends in each frame. Cut out the film strips and tape them together. To make the reel, cut each kid a half toilet paper tube and attach a disposable paper coaster ([like this](#)) at either end using craft or

hot glue (or make your own circle out of black paper). You could even use empty ribbon spools ([like this](#)). Kids can attach one end of their film strip to the spool and wrap the rest around. Finish off with [white dot stickers](#) on the circles. See the worked example [here](#).

✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Have kids glue a [star cutout](#) (like the Hollywood Walk of Fame!) to a piece of paper. Help them write their name on their star and the Big Idea on their paper. Then, optionally, add their handprints to the paper.

- We got to see a little more of the big picture of who God is this month through the parables of Jesus. Let's remember them together!
 - The Parable of the Sower showed us **God helps us know what's true.**
 - The Parable of the Bags of Gold showed us **we can give back to God.**
 - The Parable of the Good Samaritan showed that **God sends us helpers.**
 - The Parable of the Fig Tree showed us **God gives us second chances.**
 - The Parable of the Lost Son showed us **we belong in God's family.**