

WEEK 5 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

We belong in
God's family.

BIBLE

The Parable of the Lost Son:
Luke 15:11–32

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.**

WELCOME TIME

ACTIVITY | Red Carpet Welcome

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, create a red carpet using red butcher paper or paper tablecloths for kids to walk on. Secure it well to prevent tripping. At the start of the line, prepare props, costumes, and accessories like sunglasses and necklaces for kids to glam up and pose for the cameras (cell phone cameras used by your volunteers). Enable flash on the cell phone cameras to enhance the paparazzi effect.
 - ✳ **TODDLER HACK:** It's best practice to keep your phone out of sight whenever possible so you can focus on the kids. They require your full attention, both because they want to play with you and you need to watch out for their safety. Bring it out briefly to take fun and cute pictures with them, but stow it away afterward.
- Movies have movie stars in them. Movie stars walk the red carpet to have their picture taken before the opening of a movie. Let's all pretend to be movie stars and walk our red carpet!

ACTIVITY | Find The Lost Friend

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, hide a stuffed animal somewhere in the room before kids arrive. Gather the kids and let them know the stuffed animal is lost. Ask them to help you find the animal, and have everyone help look. Once the stuffed animal is found, celebrate that the stuffed animal isn't lost anymore. Play as many rounds as time allows, celebrating after each round.
- Thank you for helping me find our lost friend! Today's Bible story is all about someone who was lost but was found again.

STORY TIME

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

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Teach this passage by reading from a preschool-friendly Bible translation, Bible storybook,

or using the talking points provided below. Set up the space like a movie theater, with kids seated in rows facing you. Play an old-fashioned movie countdown (similar to [this](#)) before you begin teaching. For today's story, use a large action figure to represent the lost son and move the toy around as you teach.

- It's time for the *Big Picture!* **Who likes watching movies?** Me too! Movies are a fun way to tell a story. Jesus, God's son, sometimes told stories called "parables." Parables helped people learn true and important things about God.
- Today's *Big Picture* parable is about a family. There was the father, the older son, and the younger son.
 - **How many of you are the oldest kid in your family?**
 - **Who is the youngest kid in your family?**
 - **Are any of you the middle or only kid in your family?**
- Every family is different. In this family, the younger son was not happy. He wanted to leave the family. His dad planned on giving his sons all his money when they grew older. The younger son said he wanted his money right now! That's not very kind.
 - **What do you think the dad did?**
 - The dad gave the younger son the money.
- So the younger son took off! He left and went to a far-off land.
 - **Guess what he did with all that money?**
 - He spent all of it! He spent every single penny and had nothing left.
- He was all alone, with no family or friends around, with no money or food. He was very sad and hungry. He later took a job taking care of pigs.
 - **What do pigs sound like?**
 - **What do pigs smell like?**
 - Yes, that sounds like a pretty stinky job! But even the pigs had more food than he did.
- The younger son knew he had made a mistake. He decided he would go back home, but he felt ashamed. He thought he had been a bad son. So he was going to go back home and ask his dad if he could just work there.
- But his dad had been waiting for him every day. He saw his son walking down the road.
 - **What do you think the dad did when he saw his younger son?**
 - He ran and hugged and kissed him. He was so happy his son was back. He even threw a big party to celebrate.
- The older son did not think that was fair. Why did his younger brother get a party when he messed up? But his dad told him that both he and his brother were a part of his family. And family should always be glad that one of them who was lost was found again.
- Jesus told this parable to show how much God loves all of us. God loves each and every one of us and wants us to know that we are always welcome in God's family.

BIG IDEA | We belong in God's family.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Write one word of the Big Idea on separate sheets of yellow paper. Crumple up each of those papers along with blank sheets, and place them in a large popcorn bucket (like [this](#)). Invite kids to come to the front, one at a time, and pull out a "popcorn" from the bucket. For added fun, throw the "popcorn" in the air and have kids scramble to grab one. Give them a chance to smooth out the paper. If their paper contains a word, read it out loud for them. Once all the words are found, put them in order and have kids repeat after you while learning the motions below.
- Our poppin' new Big Idea for today is ...
 - **We** (Both arms held out in front of you with hands facing up.)
 - **belong** (Bring both hands towards you, touching your shoulders.)
 - **in God's** (Point up.)
 - **family** (Cross arms over your chest, like giving yourself a hug.)

VIDEO | *Big Picture*, Episode 5

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

ACTIVITY | We All Belong!

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, create a large circle or square on the ground using painter's tape. 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. Then ask the questions below. Prepare some fun music to dance to at the end.
 - ✂ **TODDLER HACK:** Provide a bucket full of plastic toy pigs and shredded brown paper. Retell the Bible story as the toddlers play.
- This circle represents God's family. Right now, we are all standing outside the circle.
 - **Jump inside the circle if you are wearing green.**
 - **Jump inside the circle if you are wearing glasses.**
 - **Jump inside the circle if you are wearing black socks.**
- Hmm, not all of us are in the circle representing God's family. **Is that right? Just because I'm not wearing green glasses, or black socks, am I not in God's family?** Of course not.
 - **If you love Jesus, jump into the circle!**
 - See, we are all a part of God's family! And nothing you do will take away God's love for you.
- God celebrates every time someone chooses to be a part of God's family. Let's dance and celebrate! **We belong in God's family!**

PRAYER

- God, thank you for making us part of your family. Because of Jesus, we have family members all over the world, forever. We all belong in God's family. Amen.

SHARING TIME

SNACK | Movie Popcorn

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For snacks this month, serve popcorn in popcorn bags or small brown paper bags with different mix-ins or flavors—M&Ms, goldfish crackers, raisins, marshmallows, cereal, cheese flavoring, cheese puffs, and more. You can provide a variety each week for kids to choose from or focus on one each week. As kids enjoy their movie snack, you may choose to show a fun clip like this [scene](#) from "Finding Nemo," [this retelling](#) of today's Bible story, or something similar.
 - ✂ **TODDLER HACK:** Popcorn is a choking hazard for toddlers. Offer toddlers some oat cereal as an alternative. You can serve them in boxes like [these](#) for fun.
- **Have you ever lost something and found it again? What did that feel like?**
- In the movie *Finding Nemo*, Marlin and his son, Nemo, get into a big argument right before they lose each other.
 - Marlin and his new friend Dory travel the whole ocean to find him. They faced dangers like sharks, jellyfish, and hungry pelicans.
 - When Marlin finally finds Nemo, he doesn't care about anything else—he is just so happy Nemo is alive and found again!
- God loves us even more than Marlin loved Nemo. We are all God's children, and **we belong in God's family.**

ACTIVITY | Circle Time

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have the kids sit in a circle. Give the kids beside you a high five. Have them give the kids

beside them a high five and have it go around the circle. Next, let kids know you are going to ask a question. If they answer it, they can choose the next movement to pass around the circle, such as double high fives, shaking hands, hugs, or fist bumps.

- **How many sons did the father in Jesus' parable have?** *Two*
- **What did the younger son ask for before leaving home?** *Money*
- **What happened to the younger son while he was away?** *He spent all his money. He got a job feeding pigs.*
- **When the dad saw his lost son coming home, what did he do?** *He ran to him, hugged and kissed him, and celebrated his return with a party.*
- **Does God celebrate us when we join God's family?** *Yes!*
- **Who belongs in God's family? We belong in God's family!**

ACTIVITY | I Belong Craft

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, print the [printable](#) on cardstock paper and cut each page in half. Give one half-sheet to each kid. Have them fill out their name on the blank and cut along the outer lines. Have them draw a self-portrait in the circle part, then decorate it with googly eyes, yarn, stickers, and crayons or markers. Fold a piece of construction paper in half, and trace one of their hands. Cut while folded to create two hand cutouts. Glue or tape the hands to either side of the rectangle (thumbs on top). Once dry, roll or fold the hands toward the center to form a "hug" See worked example [here](#).
- What a fun way to remember that God loves us so much. That's why **we belong in God's family.**

MEMORY VERSE | Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Help kids learn this month's memory verse by setting the words (including the Scripture reference) to the tune of "Jesus Loves The Little Children." You can also have kids repeat the verse after you in small chunks, say it using silly voices, or create simple hand motions for keywords.
- **"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."**

PLAY TIME

ACTIVITY | Coloring Page

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Print and distribute [the coloring page](#) along with crayons or markers. You can review today's Bible story, Big Idea, and memory verse as the kids color.

ACTIVITY | Movie Star Dress-Up

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Have fun dress-up items and clothes available for kids to try on and pretend to be movie stars, such as sunglasses, necklaces, bling, fedoras, boas, coats, purses, and the like. You can recycle the items from the "Red Carpet Welcome" activity above.

✂ **TODDLER HACK:** Since toddlers can't put on dress-up clothes themselves, offer them loads of fun hats and silly sunglasses to try on. Toddlers will love looking at themselves in the mirror, so make sure you provide a mirror in your space or use selfie mode on your phone camera.

ACTIVITY | Belong Mural

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Lay out a large piece of butcher paper on a table or on the ground. Write the Big Idea in the middle of the paper. Have [colors of the world](#) crayons that kids can use to draw pictures of all the people everywhere—including themselves—who belong in God's family.

✂ **TODDLER HACK:** Toddlers are not able to draw quite yet, but they can mix colors together using dot markers or finger paints.