

## God's Reconciliation.

For age 5-7s

All of the following activities are taken from [www.lightlive.org](http://www.lightlive.org) having typed into the search box *forgiveness* and then *Prodigal Son*.

### AIMS AND OUTCOMES

- to introduce the idea of forgiveness at an accessible level
- to help the children have fun

### Love and Forgiveness\_Luke 15:11–32

#### Role play

1. Divide the children into pairs. Say you are going to explain a situation to them where they need to act out forgiveness. Whisper the situations to them, such as: Molly spills paint on Angie's new T-shirt; Georgie breaks his brother's video game; India calls Adam a 'cry baby'.
2. Invite them to perform their role plays.
3. Ask the children if they think it is easy or hard to forgive or be forgiven. Tell them that today they will have a chance to think about God's forgiveness and to thank God him for it.

#### Bible story with actions

##### Prepare

- Set up two areas as far apart as possible. One should be 'home' with the money bag, binoculars and party items (hidden until later); the other area labelled 'a far country' with a bunch of inflated balloons decorated with faces.
- Ask another leader to play the part of the father.
- Download from the web the sound effects needed for the story, or prepare the children in advance to make the appropriate noises when you hold up a card.

##### Act and imagine

- Invite the children to sit in the 'home' area and show them Luke 15 in your Bible. Explain that you are going to tell a story that Jesus told.
- Read verses 11 and 12 and invite the father to share the money in the bag into two piles, one for each son.
- Read the first half of verse 13 then ask: 'How do you think the dad felt as his son went off? How would each of the sons have felt?'

*Play sound effect 1 – walking feet.*

- Encourage the children to walk from 'home' (*travelling up and down the room*) until they get to the 'far country', while the father stands and watches them leave. When they're seated, read verses 13b and 14a.
- Play with the balloons; explain that the son used all his money to have a good time with his new friends.

*Play sound effect 2 – noisy crowd.*

- Ask the children why they think the younger son used up his money like that. Encourage them to say whether or not they think it was a wise thing to do – let them express their opinions and do not try to influence them.

Read verse 14b. Explain that all his friends left him – burst the balloons one by one (be aware that some children may find this scary – you could cross out the faces on the balloons instead)!

*Play sound effect 3 – pigs. Read verses 15 and 16.*

- Ask: 'How did the son feel now?' Read verses 17–19 and comment on how they correspond with the children's suggestions. Ask if they think his dad will want him back, and whether he will make his son work like a servant.

Read verse 20a and ask the children to face the home area. (*The father looks through his binoculars.*) As you start walking back towards him, read verse 20b. (*The father smiles and holds his arms open in welcome as the children move towards him.*)

*Play sound effect 4 – running feet.*

- Once home, read verses 20b–24 and run up to the father (if there's any room left!).

*Play sound effect 5 – party music.*

- Produce the party items and have a good time celebrating! (Make sure the children understand the safe use of party poppers. Alternatively, only let adults use them. If you have party food, remember allergy and hygiene issues.)

Sit and think

Ask the children to sit and say how the dad felt when his younger son came home. Did they expect that? How would the son be feeling?

Explain that the story isn't finished yet. Read verses 25– 29,31,32.

- Ask how the older son felt. Was he right to say that it wasn't fair that his father still loved his brother? Be honest and say that this is probably how we would have felt too. But say that Jesus told this story because he wants us to be more like the dad who welcomed his son back.
- God wants us to share his joy – be as pleased as he is – when new people want to be a friend of Jesus and join his family.
- Give the children a few quiet moments to think about what they want to say to God.



### **Active praying**

Beforehand, place a toy pig and balloon inside a bag. Remind the children of the story or ask them to retell it for you.

Take out the pig and say it was only when he was looking after pigs that the son realised he needed to go back to his father and say sorry.

Pass the pig around and, as each child holds it, encourage them to think of something they need to say sorry for. Then say, 'Father God, we are sorry for the times when we have done wrong.'

Say that when the son returned home, his father welcomed him. Take out the balloon and pray together: 'Thank you, God, that you welcome us back when we say sorry.'

### **Extra ideas for the session, and beyond...**

#### **Oink game**

This game can be played after a straight reading of the story from an age appropriate bible. Explain that you are going to read the story again, but this time there will be mistakes in it. Challenge the children to stand up and shout 'oink!' every time they identify a mistake.

Script for 'Oink game'

There was once a man with three sons (*oink*). The oldest asked for his share of the property (*oink*) so the man gave all of his money to him (*oink*). The son moved in next door (*oink*) and saved all his money (*oink*). When he had no money left, his friends helped him (*oink*); they found him a job looking after sheep (*oink*). He had lots of cake to eat (*oink*), but he decided to go back home and ask his dad for some more money (*oink*). His father had forgotten all about him (*oink*), but he allowed him to stay, as long as he wore his old clothes (*oink*). They sat down and had tea (*oink*) and his big brother happily joined them (*oink*). The father didn't seem to like either of his sons much (*oink*).

Finish by saying: 'The good thing to remember is that when we make real mistakes, God still hates us (*oink*) and won't forgive us (*oink*).'. Encourage the children to supply the correct words for this sentence, and then say it all together.

**Radio Broadcast:** Help the children make up a radio broadcast about the story using the sound effects used in 'Bible story with actions'.

**Welcome!** Make welcome cards to give to new people at your church.

## Saying sorry prayers

- Remind the children that they are learning about God's forgiveness.
- Invite the children to close their eyes and think of something they have done recently that wasn't loving, good or kind. Encourage them to cup their hands and imagine they are holding the thing they want to say sorry to God for.
- If available, play a song such as 'I try to do what's good' from *Reach Up!* CD. Invite the children to say sorry to God silently, then to put their hands down imagining they have given the thing to God. Let them know that if they said sorry and meant it, God has forgiven them. Encourage them to say 'Thank you' to God for loving and forgiving them.

## Making gingerbread

Make sure no children have food allergies, the cooking area and all equipment is clean, and that children wash their hands before and after handling foodstuffs. Have the gingerbread dough ready-prepared or make it as part of the activity. (If cooking is not feasible for your group, adapt the activity using play dough.)

Say that today's Bible story is about a father who loved his son very much. Chat together about who loves us in the same way. When each child is thinking of at least one person, give them a lump of dough and suggest they make a gingerbread shape of that person. (If you have time, the children could make two each, one to give to the person and one for themselves. The recipe makes a workable dough, ideal for children to mould and shape.)

When the gingerbreads have been cooked and cooled, place each in a see-through bag and label it clearly. Display them on a table and remind the children that each one shows us a person who loves us.

Recipe:

### You will need:

- 500 g plain flour
- 10 g baking powder
- 10 g ground cinnamon
- 20 g ground ginger
- 100 g soft brown sugar
- 100 g margarine
- 4 large spoonfuls of golden syrup

**Equipment:** bowl, sieve, saucepan, wooden spoon, flat knife, baking sheets, cooling rack, clean-up and cover-up equipment, moderate oven and safety supervisor to use it. Make sure that hands, working surfaces and equipment are clean before you start.

### Method

- 1 Sift the flour, baking powder and spices into a bowl. (*Children.*)
- 2 Melt the sugar, margarine and syrup together in a saucepan; pour onto the flour mixture. (*Adult.*)



**3** Mix with a wooden spoon to make a dough.

**4** Tip onto a clean, floured work surface. Check that it is cool enough to handle safely.

*(Adult.)*

**5** Knead well. *(Children and adult.)*

**6** Divide dough into pieces. Give each child a piece to shape into a figure. *(Adult; then children.)*

**7** Bake gingerbread shapes on greased baking sheets at 350 °F/180 °C/Gas mark 4 for 10–15 minutes or until golden brown. Thicker shapes will take longer. Loosen shapes while still warm. Leave to cool. *(Adult.)*