



## God's Reconciliation.

Under 5s

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

### Bible story with puppets

Luke 15:11-24

Resources

- Make 2 hand puppets out of paper bags or socks, one should have a happy face the other a sad face.
- Practise using the puppets, so you can change expressions quickly and get the right face towards the children.

How to:

Say, 'This is a story that Jesus told.' Introduce the puppets and use them to act out the story. There was once a dad and his son.

One day, the son said, 'I want some money. Now!'

Sad: Dad was unhappy. He loved his son, but he knew his son would not listen to him. So Dad gave his son the money.

Happy: 'Great!' said the son. 'I'll go to town and have fun with my friends.' He spent lots of money. He had big parties. The son said, 'This is fun. I'll do it again!'

Sad: But soon he had no money left. 'What can I do?' he said.

He had no money, no friends and no food. He got a job on a pig farm and he was so hungry, he tried eating the pigs' food.

He was very sad. At last he said, 'I'll go home and say "sorry" to Dad.'

When he got there, what do you think happened? Dad saw him coming!

Happy: Dad was so happy! He loved his son very much! Dad ran to meet his son and hugged him.

Sad: The son said, 'Sorry, Dad.'

Happy: But his dad hugged him even more and said, 'I thought you were lost, but now you're home!' And they had the best party ever!

- See how many sad and happy things you can remember, and show the appropriate puppet faces.



## Story game

- 1 Stand in a circle and sing the song, to the tune of 'The mulberry bush'. Invite one child (Child 1) to stand in the middle to act the part of the father.

This is the father, who loves his son,  
Loves his son, loves his son,  
This is the father, who loves his son,  
In the story that Jesus told.  
*(Child 1 chooses someone to be the son.)*

This is the son, who does what he wants...  
*(Child 2 skips around outside the circle.)*  
This is the son, who's sorry now...  
*(Child 2 walks slowly back into the circle.)*

This is the father, who welcomes his son...  
*(Child 1 and Child 2 hug.)*

- 2 Remind the children that Jesus told this story to help people know what God is like. In the Bible story, the father loved his son very much. This is like God: God loves us very much.

## Acting the Bible story

- 1 Before the session, mark a path between 'home' and 'city', chalked on the floor or outlined with masking tape.
- 2 Start with everyone at 'home'. All take the part of the son. Leave one leader at 'home' to be the father. Pause between each verse to give everyone time to follow the instructions (given in italics).

There once was a hard-working father  
Who worked on his farm with his sons.  
But one son was fed up with working –  
He wanted to have lots of fun.  
He said, 'Dad, I want all my money.  
I'm going to leave right away.'  
His father was sad, for he loved him,  
And wished that his young son would stay.  
*(Stride briskly to the city.)*

The son went away to the city;  
Had fine clothes and parties and friends.  
*(Mime having a party.)*  
But nobody wanted to know him,

When his money had come to an end.  
*(All turn their backs.)*  
He needed some help; he was hungry,  
But nobody wanted to know.  
He got a job down on a pig farm –  
There seemed nowhere else he could go.  
*(All sit down and pretend to be sad.)*

- 3 The children are likely to think that looking after pigs is a great job, so emphasise how the young man was hungry, uncomfortable and without friends. What could he do next? This is what he did:

'I'm going to go home to my father,'  
The young man decided at last.  
'I'll tell him that I'm very sorry.  
He might give me a job if I ask.'  
*(Walk slowly back home.)*

- 4 Think about what the father might have been doing all this time. Did he miss his son? Did he want to see him again? Yes!

Now, back home, his father was waiting,  
(He'd been waiting and watching each day),  
Longing and loving and hoping,  
From the time that his son went away.  
Then one day his long wait was over –  
He saw a thin figure he knew!  
He ran to his son and he hugged him!  
*(Leader runs towards group.)*

The son hugged his father back, too!  
*(Everyone walks brightly back home.)*

At the farm there was such a great party –  
Such music and dancing around –  
And the happiest man was the father,  
For his son who was lost, had been found!

- 5 Remind the children that this was a story that Jesus told, so people would know that God loved them. We can know that too! Dance along to some bright and cheerful music ('Audio music') because God loves us!



## Extra Ideas

### 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.)*



### **Free play with dolls and cuddly toys**

Luke 15:11-32

1 Introduce the theme of God's love by saying that everyone needs to be loved. Show an old toy of your own, pointing out how worn and scruffy it is. Be positive: it's like this because it has been loved!

2 Encourage the children to play with the group toys, giving them names, keeping them warm, cuddling and caring for them.

3 Extend this play activity by letting children 'adopt' a toy and look after it throughout the session. Or look together for toys that have been 'lost' (around the room or outside); find them and take care of them.

4 Observe the play and, when appropriate, make comments to reinforce the children's caring attitudes and behaviour, either with the toys or with other children as they play alongside each other.

### **A much-loved tale**

Luke 15:11-32

1 The classic story of Dave, Bella and Dogger echoes themes in today's Bible story. The much-loved toy Dogger is nearly lost for ever, until Bella does 'something very kind' to get him back for her brother.

2 For younger children, you may need to condense the words but many will be able to understand Dave's distress at the loss of his favourite toy – and everyone will enjoy the happy ending!

3 Tell the story to large or small groups of children (a 'big book' edition is available), showing them the pictures as you go. Leave the book out afterwards for children to explore the detailed illustrations.

4 You may wish to let the message of the story speak for itself. Alternatively, you could use the book to prompt discussion, chatting about what happens in the story, comparing it with the children's own experiences and thinking about how much God loves us.

### **Play hide and seek**