



**A three part programme  
for 3-11 year olds exploring  
parables in Luke 15**

**Mustard  Seeds**

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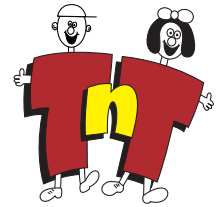
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Our comprehensive range of printed material covers the entire 18 month to 18 year age range. It is used right around the world in over 27 countries and has been translated in part or in whole into twelve different languages.

We have conducted live children's ministry training in churches and theological colleges in South Africa, Singapore, Dubai, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Germany, Norway, Hong Kong, Australia and throughout the United Kingdom.

**Mustard Seeds** is our new range of electronic material and will ultimately be a comprehensive four year syllabus for 3 to 11 year olds.

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**We firmly believe** that the Bible is God's word to mankind and that it contains everything we need to know in order to be reconciled with God through faith in Jesus Christ and live in a way that is pleasing to him. Therefore, we believe it is vital to teach the Bible accurately to children, being careful to teach each passage's true meaning in an age-appropriate manner, rather than selecting a 'children's message' from a Biblical passage.

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# LOST

## Week 1 The Lost Sheep

pg. 6

*Luke 15:1-7*

Aim : To teach that God rejoices whenever someone is saved and that we should be happy with him.

## Week 2 The Lost Coin

pg. 19

*Luke 15:1-3, 8-10*

Aim : To teach that God cares about every sinner and rejoices when they repent.

## Week 3 The Lost Son

pg. 30

*Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*

Aim : To teach that God always lovingly welcomes sinners who repent into his kingdom, no matter how they have treated him.

### Series Aims

- To understand that God longs for sinners to repent and be saved.
- To understand that God relentlessly searches for the lost because he cares for them.
- To understand that God rejoices whenever someone is saved and that we should rejoice too.

### Series Context

Jesus told these three parables in response to the accusations of the Jewish leaders. They had grumbled against him because he welcomed sinners and ate with tax collectors (Luke 5:30; 15:1-2). They could not understand why someone who claimed to be from God would associate with people who had clearly broken God's law. These parables answer the leaders' self-righteous questions with one great truth: Jesus welcomed sinners because God longs for them to be saved and rejoices when they turn back to him.

### Series Overview

This series examines the three parables that Jesus used to reply to his critics in Luke 15. In each case something that was lost is found by the one to whom they belong and two groups of people respond:

1. **God in heaven** – in all three parables God's reaction is rejoicing. In fact he is more pleased when just one sinner repents than he is even with those who are already saved (weeks 1 and 2). This will always be true no matter what an

individual has done in their life or how far they have turned away from him – it is a cause for extravagant celebration (week 3).

2. **People on earth** – again, in all three parables the natural response of those who love God should be to celebrate too (weeks 1 and 2). If we are unable to rejoice with God there is something wrong with our hearts. This was true of the Jewish leaders and it was true of the older son who thought of his father as a slave-driver and disowned his brother. Their grumbling against Jesus and absence of joy revealed their attitude towards God and his people (weeks 1, 2 and 3).

These parables are a source of great comfort as we see God's clear love for us and for those who are lost. However, they are also a warning and require us to examine our own hearts. As Christians our attitude towards outsiders should be the same as God's – we should long for all people to be saved; care enough to join with God in his work of seeking the lost; and rejoice with him when even one person repents and believes the good news.

### Memory Verse

*"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."* **Luke 15:7** [NIV]

## Memory Verse Ideas

**Scrambler:** Before the lesson write each word of the memory verse onto a separate piece of paper or [use pictures instead of words for very young children](#). If the verse contains more words than there are children in the class write a couple of words on each sheet of paper.

Choose a number of children to stand in a line at the front of the class and each hold one piece of paper in order. The rest of the class read the memory verse aloud together with you. When you have read through the verse a few times gather some of the pieces of paper, shuffle them together and give them back to the children at the front in a different order. The rest of the class can help you to rearrange the children in the line so that the verse reads correctly again.

If there are not enough children in the class to play this game simply place the pieces of paper on the ground instead of getting the children to hold them up.

**Separator:** Before the lesson tape or glue a number of sheets of paper together to form one long strip. Write out the memory verse as one long word without any gaps between letters.

The children can tear the paper or draw a thick line to separate the words and work out the memory verse e.g. "Jesusaidlamthelightoftheworld" would become "Jesus / said / I / am / the / light / of / the / world".

If you have a large group you could make two of these strips of paper and get the children to race in teams to complete the memory verse.

**Human Scrabble:** Assign a word of the memory verse to each child. If there are more words than children in your group assign more than one word to some of the children. Make sure they know their words. Get them to arrange themselves in order. Start at one end and get them to say their word(s) out loud.

After each round get the last child to move to the first position and take ownership of the first child's word who then gets the second child's word, and so on. Repeat as time (and enthusiasm) allows.

**Popping Words:** Divide the memory verse up into words or short phrases and write these on strips of paper. Place each paper strip into a balloon and inflate the balloon. Divide the group into teams and have one set of different coloured balloons for each team. The children take turns to collect and pop a balloon from the other side of the room. They bring the strip of paper back to the group to arrange in the correct order. The first team to correctly assemble the verse and recite it out loud wins.

## Using This Resource

This programme is designed to be adaptable. It can be used for a mixed 3-11s group or more age-specific groups.

[Text in blue is generally applicable to younger children \(3-7 years\); green text is aimed at older children \(7-11 years\);](#) and black text is applicable to all-age groups, at the leader's discretion.

Leaders are encouraged to engage with the study material in a devotional manner, seeking to apply God's word to their own lives before attempting to teach others.

We trust that you will be blessed as you do that. We also hope that once you have done that, your application of God's word to the children you teach will be more deliberate and relevant.

**Note:** All page numbers in this document are hyperlinked – simply click on the number to jump to that page.

## Craft Symbols

We make use of the following symbols for the craft activities:



Apply glue here



Cut along this solid line



Cut out this shaded area



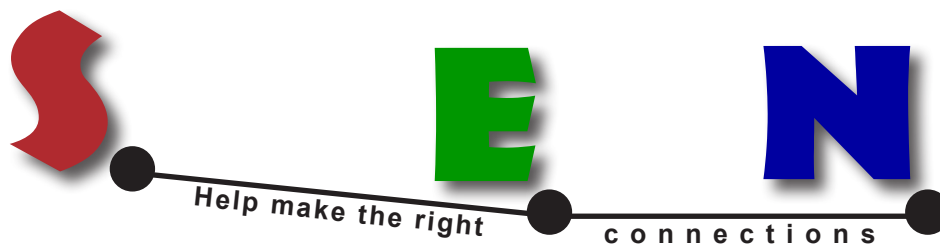
Fold outwards along this dashed line



Fold inwards along this dashed line



Staple here



A child with special educational needs (SEN) may provide some challenges to your group. It is therefore essential that you are well prepared for your lessons and that you have carefully thought about how to include all the children. You may need to make some changes to your existing programme to make it accessible for everyone.

A key principle to consider is that, as with all children in your church, each child is an individual and will have different needs, strengths and weaknesses. It is important that you get to know the children you teach as well as possible and that you make an effort to build a relationship with them.

In terms of the lesson itself, you may need to consider the following:

- A child with SEN may need to have an additional adult to support them.
- Consider the environment in which you teach and try to eliminate potential distractions. Where you are seated and where the children are seated, the temperature of the room and noise levels all affect the sense of calm and orderliness of the class.
- Think about the class size and ratio of adults to children.
- It may be appropriate, at times, for a troubled or disruptive child to be accompanied by an adult and to be moved away from the group to a quiet area. Here they can engage in something related to the lesson which is calming and quiet.
- Use clear and child appropriate language.
- When giving instructions; tell them to the whole group, demonstrate, then check that the child with SEN understands what needs to happen.
- Balance the amount of open ended and closed questions you ask.
- Be careful of rhetorical questions; the child with SEN will want to answer them.
- If a child wants to ask too many questions, which may distract from the lesson, tell them that for now we are going to listen and that later you will come back to their questions. **Make sure that you do spend some individual time with the child going through their questions.** You may find that by the time you go back to them, their questions have either been answered or forgotten

or they are not that important anymore.

- Break up your lesson into different sections; short, sharp sections work best as this keeps children engaged and therefore able to manage their behaviour.
- Children with SEN like structure and routines; you may like to start the session with the same song or greeting time or keep the structure the same each week. For example; start with a song, a recap from last week, a short introduction to the new lesson, a song, the Bible story, a craft, the application and then a game for consolidation and further application.
- Use repetition (chants or songs with simple tunes to teach main Bible truths).
- Use lots of different kinds of aids to teach your lesson (movement, pictures, multimedia, props, music, textures, drama, etc.). Consider different learning styles.
- Use simple pictures (too much detail can be distracting).
- Think about how much reading and writing you are expecting the children to do; too much may cause the child with SEN to become anxious and distressed about failing.
- On worksheets, consider making them accessible by asking children to draw some of the answers, rather than write them. If there is a lot of writing or reading required, pair up the SEN child with an adult or with a more able peer. You can also write the answers on a board for them to copy down.
- Children with SEN may find it more difficult to think about application as this requires them to put themselves into a situation which is, at times, hard to do.
- For a child who is non-verbal, find out what their communication is from parents and try to use these as much as possible in your lessons and interaction (Makaton or BSL signing, eye gazes, communication switch boxes, symbols, photos, pictures, objects of reference, etc).

–Toni Edmonds-Smith  
Special Needs Teacher

# The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:1-7

**Big Idea** : Jesus told a parable about a man finding his lost sheep to teach that God rejoices over every sinner who repents.

**Aim** : To teach that God rejoices whenever someone is saved and that we should be happy with him.



## Leader's Study Notes

Read Luke 15:1-7 noting who should be rejoicing when one lost sheep is found.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

This is the first of three parables that Jesus told to the Pharisees and teachers of the law in response to their accusations. Jesus had already explained the reason for his fellowship with 'sinners' – he had come as a doctor for sick people, to bring sinners to repentance (5:31-32). Now Jesus focuses on an even greater reason: God himself is pleased when lost souls are saved.

15:1-3 The Pharisees were angry with Jesus for associating with 'wicked' people. They believed that this was unacceptable for a Jew, even to teach others about God! Jesus responded to his critics in the form of a parable.

15:4 Not every shepherd would consider it worthwhile to leave 99 sheep and go after one lost sheep, but God is an exceptionally good shepherd. His priority, and therefore Jesus' priority, is to seek lost sheep and to bring them back into the fold.

15:5-7 God does not rescue sinners reluctantly; instead he rejoices when just one is saved! He is more pleased when an individual repents than he is even with those who are already safe.

The implication is that because God rejoices the Pharisees should also be rejoicing with him and with Jesus. This is why Jesus spent his time with outcasts, tax collectors and 'sinners'.

## Reflect

- Can you think of someone you know who recently became a Christian? What was your reaction when you found out? Did you and your church consider it a cause for celebration?
- Is the joy you feel when one sinner is saved reflected in the time you spend in evangelism? Is God's priority of seeking and saving the lost reflected in your church?
- Thank God that he relentlessly seeks those who are lost and rejoices when sinners are saved. Ask him to help you share his priority and in his joy.

## Series Intro Idea

**Option 1: Lost Stories.** Encourage the children to think of a time when they lost something or were lost themselves. Choose a few children to share their story – you may need to start by sharing your own! How did they feel? Was it found? How did this happen? Who went looking for them/the lost item?

Explain that you are starting a series today on three stories Jesus told about lost things and how they can be found.

**Option 2: Lost and Found.** Before the lesson label a box with a sign that says 'Lost and Found' and fill it with a number of everyday items which different people might own e.g. a cuddly toy, a football, a doll, an apron, a briefcase, some car keys.

Place the box on a table in front of the children and explain that you've found some lost property. Take the items out of the box one at a time and ask the children to guess who might own something like that. Do they think it belongs to a baby or an adult? Could it belong to a girl or a boy? Mum or dad? Someone who likes cooking? Someone who can drive? etc.

We can guess some things about the owner, but we can't know everything until they come and find the item and take it home. Explain that you are starting a series today on three stories Jesus told about lost things – on how they can be found and who finds them.

## Session Outline



You could use one of the Series Intro Ideas on the left of this page. This will help to give the context for this lesson and the series as a whole.



### Introductory Idea

**Introduces this week's lesson.**

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



### Teaching Plan

**The core of the session.**

The action of the Bible text is explained in an age appropriate and engaging way.



### Game Idea

**Not essential.**

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



### Discuss and Apply

**Not to be missed!**

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



### Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



### Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. **For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable.** **For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.**



### Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



## Introductory Idea

**Option 1: Reasons to Rejoice.** Before the lesson gather a range of pictures of different celebrations/parties that the children are likely to recognise e.g. a wedding; a birthday party; a baby shower; new year's eve; Christmas; Chinese New Year; graduation; an anniversary.

Place the pictures on a board or wall so that all the children can see. Are they able to guess what is being celebrated in each picture? What is the reason for the party? Can the children think of any other reasons that people celebrate? Today's true story from the Bible is about a man who threw a big party because of something that had made him very happy. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

**Option 2: Celebration Time.** Before the lesson prepare the room for a celebration – you could put decorations around the classroom and paper hats on the chairs. Play some party music in the background and have some biscuits or snacks to give the children.

When the children come in explain that you are having a party today and give a reason for the celebration – it could be someone's birthday or you could simply say that you wanted to celebrate that they all came along. If you have time you could even play a short party game.

Talk about how there are lots of reasons to celebrate things in life. Today's true story from the Bible is about a man who threw a big party because of something that had made him very happy. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

### Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true story from the Bible to discover the answers to the following questions:

- Why did the man celebrate?  
[*He had found his lost sheep (15:5-6)*]
- Who else celebrated with him?  
[*His friends and neighbours (15:6)*]
- What makes God very happy/celebrate?  
[*One sinner who repents (15:7)*]



## Teaching Plan

The context of this parable is important, but children may struggle to understand the difference between the true story recorded about Jesus (15:1-3) and the story Jesus tells (15:4-7). You will need to make it clear what Jesus had been doing, how the Pharisees felt about this and how Jesus responded by telling them this parable. Print and cut out the visual aids on pages 12 and 13 to help you.

Start by talking about groups of people in your culture that the children will know of who are seen as outcasts – people who don't belong and aren't welcome for whatever reason e.g. the school bully, a thief, a homeless man. You will need to include pictures of some of these examples and place them on a board or wall as you go. Try to make your examples real to the children by asking them whether they would like to have these people come for dinner. Place the picture of Jesus next to the outcasts and explain that these were the kinds of people that Jesus spent his time with, that he welcomed them and even ate dinner with them.

Place the picture of the Pharisee on the other side of Jesus. Briefly explain what a Pharisee is, what they thought of themselves and what they thought about these 'sinners'. You may need to remind the children that sin is the way that we treat God which causes us to think, feel, say and do wrong things. We have all sinned against God like this, but the Pharisees thought that they were better at doing what God wanted than the outcasts. They were angry that Jesus was spending all his time with these 'sinners' instead of with 'good' people like them so Jesus told them a parable to teach those who were listening why he was doing this.

Remind the children that a parable is a story with a hidden meaning and then outline the story using the visual aids provided. You could also cut out a large speech bubble shape and place this above Jesus. Move the pictures around within the speech bubble as you tell the parable to help the children see that this was a story that Jesus was telling.

Finish by telling the children that God is just like the man who found the lost sheep. He rejoices (is happy) every time one sinner says sorry for the way they have treated him and trusts in Jesus. We should be happy when this happens and celebrate with God too!

**For older children – tell the story about Jesus as above and then read through the parable together. You can place the pictures in the speech bubble as you go and then use some of the questions below to help the children think more carefully about the meaning of the parable:**

- Why were the Pharisees angry with Jesus? What did they think about themselves? What did they think about the tax collectors and 'sinners'?
- Why did Jesus tell this parable? Who was listening to him?
- Who went to look for the lost sheep? Who is the man in this parable like?
- Who is the lost sheep in the parable like? Could it find its way back by itself?
- What did the man do when he found his lost sheep? Who else joined him? Who are the friends and neighbours in this parable?



## Game Idea

### Option 1: For younger children – Sheep Hunt.

Before the lesson make a small cotton wool sheep like the one described in Activity B (you could also use a small toy sheep). You will also need several paper or plastic cups that are big enough for the sheep to fit inside and pictures of rocks/trees/bushes to stick onto the upturned cups.

Have the children sit in a semicircle around you on the floor or at a table. Place the upturned cups with the rocks, bushes and trees in front of you.

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible there was a man with 100 sheep, but one of them had got lost. Can the children help you find the lost sheep? Hide the sheep under one of the cups and move them around. Ask one child in the group where they think he is hiding and let them guess which cup the sheep is under. If they guess correctly say, "Hooray! Let's celebrate (be happy) together because my lost sheep has been found!" Encourage the children to cheer with you. If they don't manage to guess correctly the first time, move the cups again and let them have another turn. You could play several rounds of this game, giving each child in your group a turn to guess.

Remind the children that when the man found his lost sheep all his friends and neighbours were happy too and they celebrated together. God is happy, just like the man, whenever someone turns to Jesus and trusts in him. We should be happy too and celebrate with God.

**Option 2: Team Rescue.** Before the lesson print page 14 onto paper (one copy for every eight children) and cut as marked. Mark a square on the floor at each end of the room using rope/masking tape/strips of cardboard to be the sheep pens.

Have the children sit in a line at one end of the room behind a sheep pen and place all the sheep in the other pen on the opposite side. Explain that they have one minute to collect all the sheep and return them to their pen (you may need to vary the time depending on the size of your class). The child at the front of the line must run to the opposite side of the room, collect one sheep only and return it to the other sheep pen near their teammates. The next child in the line may then take their turn, running as quickly as they can. The game continues in this way until all the sheep are collected or until the time runs out. This is the easiest round so make sure you do give the children plenty of time to complete the challenge!

Play a second round and this time introduce a few obstacles. You could place a bench in the middle of the room for them to climb over or a 'muddy puddle' that they must jump over. Encourage those who are not racing to cheer for their teammates whenever they return with a sheep. If you have time play a final round, introducing another obstacle. You want the children to beat the clock, but for it to be close so

don't make it too hard! You can add to the tension by calling out how much time they have left and counting down when their time is almost up.

Talk about how the children felt as they were waiting for their turn. Did they cheer for their teammates? Why/why not? Were they happy when someone else made it back quickly? Why were they happy when it wasn't even their turn? Did they all celebrate together at the end?

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible Jesus told a parable about a man who found his lost sheep. The man was happy and so were his friends and neighbours – they celebrated together. Jesus said that God is happy, just like the man, whenever someone repents and trusts in Jesus. We should be happy when someone else trusts in Jesus too and celebrate together with God.

### Option 3: For older children – Sore Winners.

Before the lesson draft a list of various individual and team challenges e.g. passing a ball 'over and under' in teams; running in relay; running to the other side of the room and performing five star jumps.

Divide the group into two teams and have them sit in their teams at one end of the room. The children have a number of opportunities to earn points for their team by carrying out the challenges you have prepared. Award ten points to the winning team in each round, keeping track of the scores on a board or sheet of paper so the children can see them. However, each time after adding points to the winning team's score, award five points to the losing team for their effort. The winning team should grumble a bit about this, but encourage them to continue with the different challenges.

When the last challenge is complete add up the scores and then match them by awarding the losing team however many points for effort they need to draw with the winning team. Again, the winning team will likely complain about this so use it as a discussion point. How did they feel when you gave the losing team points even though they hadn't won? Why were they not happy about this? Did they deserve those points? Why/why not? Would they have been happier if only their team had won? You could point out that you gave both teams extra points they didn't deserve throughout the game.

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible the Pharisees were angry with Jesus because he welcomed 'sinners'. The Pharisees thought that only they deserved to be welcomed, not the sinners, so Jesus told them a parable to teach that God is very happy when sinners repent and trust in him. The Pharisees should have been happy too!



## Discuss and Apply

The context of this parable is critical to understanding its meaning. Jesus was speaking against the Pharisees who assumed that they were part of God's kingdom because of their morality. They also assumed that the 'sinners' were not part of God's kingdom and it seems that they made not effort to get them to be a part of God's kingdom. Jesus was offering forgiveness to all; the sinners who knew they needed it and the Pharisees who didn't know they needed it. The Pharisees should have been happy that sinners were repenting, but they weren't.

**For younger children** – you will need to help them to understand that not everyone loves Jesus and wants to follow him as their king as they will assume that everyone does. This is true for bad people and even good people because everyone needs Jesus to be forgiven. No-one is perfectly good, not even the Pharisees!

Jesus told this story about the lost sheep to show how happy God is when people turn to Jesus and trust in him. Explain that one of the things that God wants people who love him to do is to tell others about Jesus. This should be something that we are excited to do because we know that it makes God very happy when people turn to Jesus and trust in him. God is even happy when people we might not like turn to him so we should be happy too. Younger children might find it hard to identify people they know who do not follow Jesus. Help them to understand that inviting people to know and love Jesus is a wonderful thing to do because it please God very much.

**For older children** – discuss as above for younger children. Ask them to tell you who each character in the story represents (the man, the lost sheep, the neighbours and friends) and then use some of the questions below to help them think about how the passage applies to them:

- Why did the man go to look for the lost sheep? Do you think it was worth leaving 99 sheep to try to find only one?
- Did the man need to go and find the sheep? How long did he look for the sheep?
- What does this show us about what God is like? What is his priority? What was Jesus' priority? What should our priority therefore be?
- How should this affect the things we pray for? How should this change the way we spend our time?
- Why were the neighbours and friends also happy? How is this different to the way the Pharisees responded? Which of these two attitudes is more like your own?
- Are there any people you choose not to share the gospel with because you don't want them to be saved or don't think that they can be saved? How does this story challenge that kind of thinking?



## Prayer Idea

Print page 14 onto paper or card (one copy for every eight children) and cut as marked. Give one sheep to each child in your group and ask them to briefly recap the parable that Jesus told. Remind them that God is like the man and that we are all like lost sheep. God is happy whenever one lost person repents and trusts in Jesus. Can they write the name of someone they know who doesn't love Jesus yet on the sheep and pray that God would save (find) them?



## Activity

**For 3-7s** – choose either Activity A (page 15) or Activity B (page 16).

**Activity A** – Print page 15 onto paper or card (one copy for every two children). Each child will also require two wooden clothes pegs.

**Before the lesson** cut out the two sheep faces then fold as shown and cut out two sheep bodies at a time. These do not need to be cut too accurately!

**The children** colour in their sheep. You could also provide them with cotton wool to paste onto the sheep. This will need to be a very thin layer so that the sheep is not unbalanced. Help them to paste the face in place as marked and clip the pegs as shown in the picture below.



You could then play a game with the sheep. Ask the children to place their sheep in the middle of the circle. Get them to close their eyes while you take one of the sheep and hide it somewhere in the room. When the children open their eyes see if they can work out which sheep is missing. Get the whole group to leave their sheep behind to search for the lost one. Rejoice when it's found and remind the children that God rejoices every time someone turns back to him and trusts in Jesus.

**Activity B** – Make a 'hidden sheep box'. Print page 16 onto paper or card (one copy for every child). Each child will also require one small cotton wool ball.

**Before the lesson** cut along all the bold lines and pre-fold as marked to produce a tray (with the Bible text inside), a box sleeve (with a landscape on the

outside) and a sheep face. To save time in the lesson you could assemble the tray for each child.

**The children** decorate the box sleeve. Help them to fold and glue the sleeve as marked and glue the sheep face to a cotton wool ball. Place the sheep inside the tray and insert the tray into the sleeve as in the picture below.



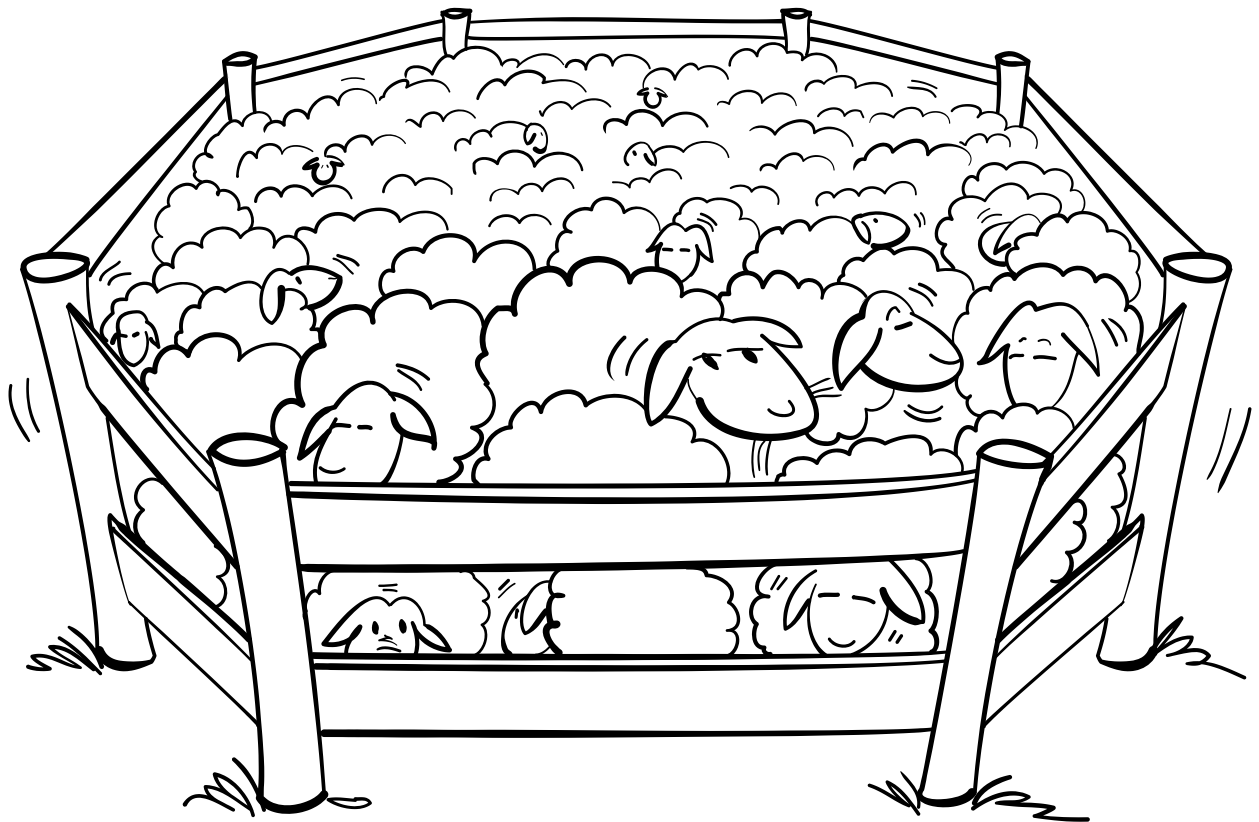
Remind the children that the shepherd left 99 sheep to find the one that was lost. Where might he have searched for the sheep? Behind trees? Behind rocks? Over the hills? Push the tray out to reveal the sheep. He rejoiced when he found his lost sheep. God rejoices when people turn to him and trust in Jesus.

**For 7-11s** – print either Activity Sheet C (page 17) or Activity Sheet D (page 18) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.

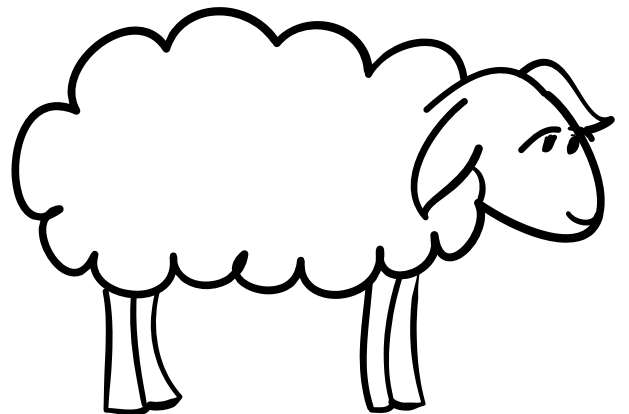
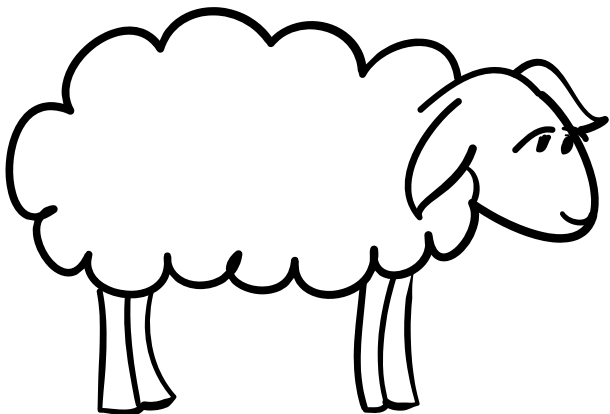
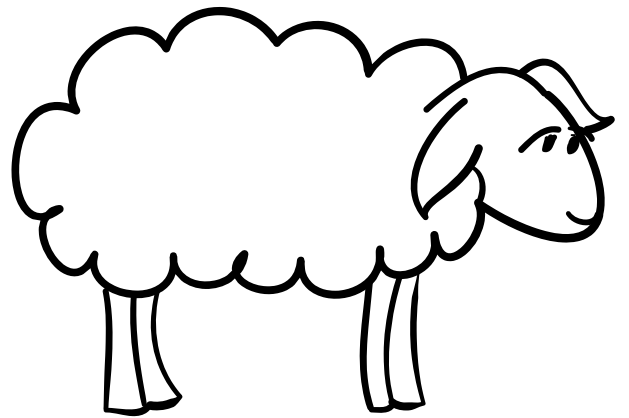
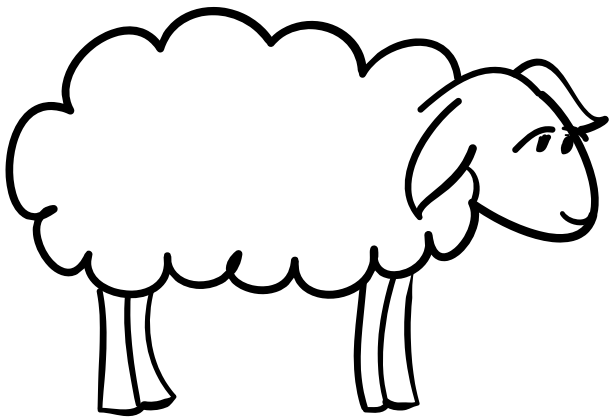
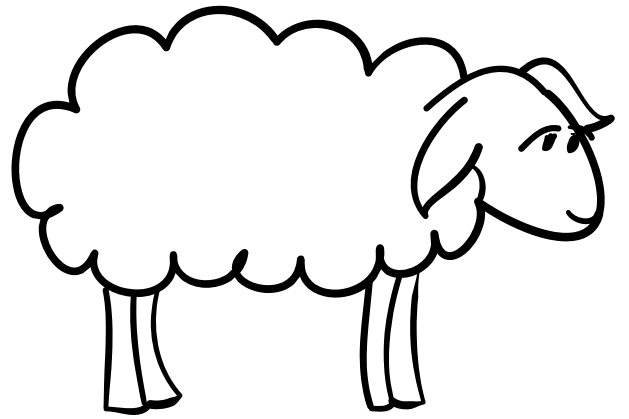
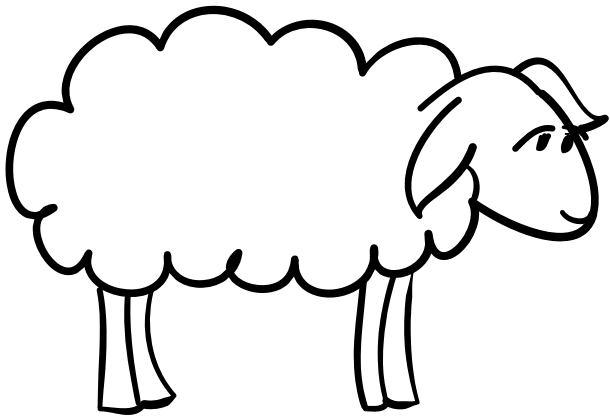
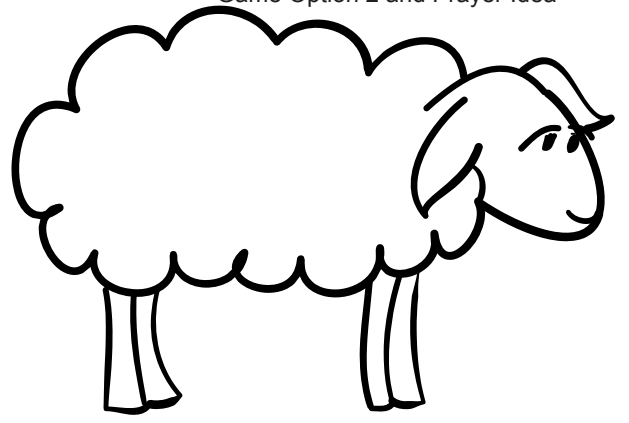
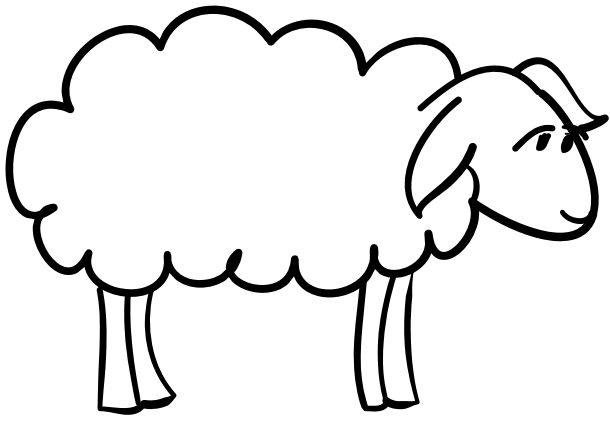


## Memory Verse

*"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."* **Luke 15:7** [NIV]

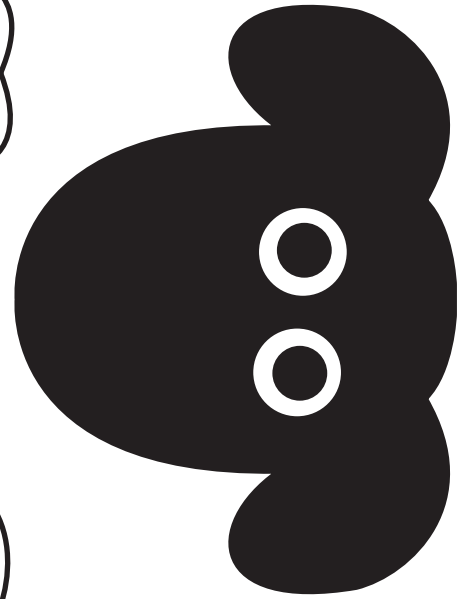






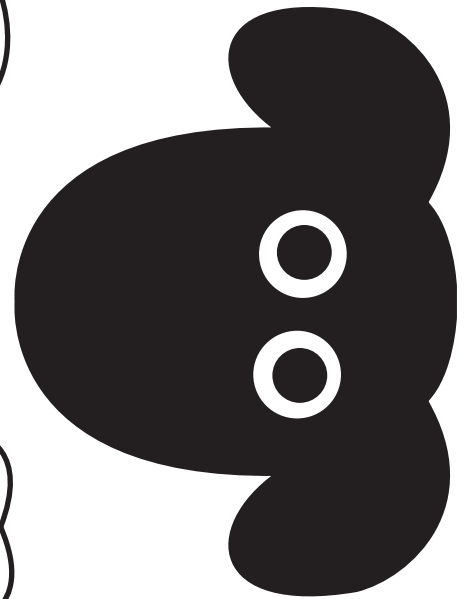
“Rejoice with me; I have  
found my lost sheep.”

Luke 15:6b



“Rejoice with me; I have  
found my lost sheep.”

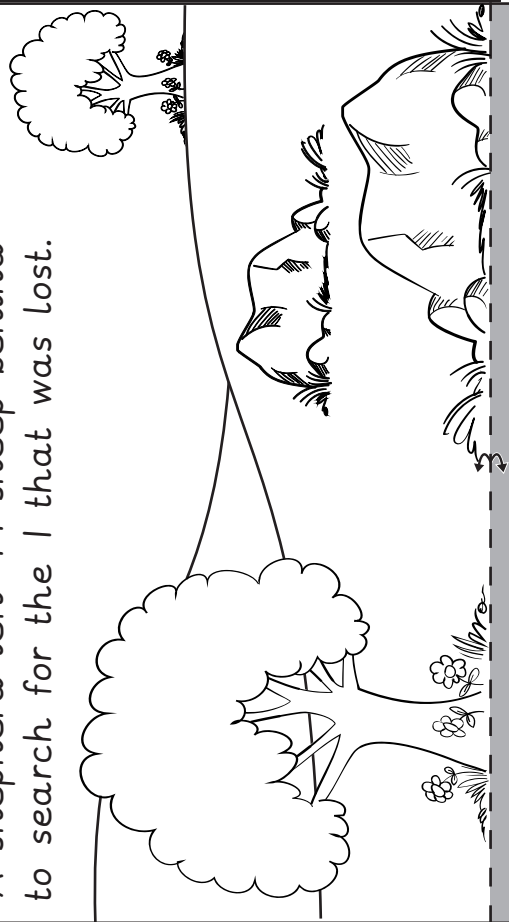
Luke 15:6b



“Rejoice with me; I have  
found my lost sheep.”  
Luke 15:6b



A shepherd left 99 sheep behind  
to search for the 1 that was lost.



# The Lost Sheep

The true story can be found in Luke 15:1-7



## Discover

Why were the Pharisees grumbling against Jesus? (15:1-2) Tick the correct answer.

- He healed people on the Sabbath                       He had lost their sheep  
 He welcomed and ate with sinners

How did Jesus respond? (15:3) He told them this p \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ .



Were the Pharisees right to be angry with Jesus? Had he done anything wrong?  
What is a parable?

Think?  
Spot



How many sheep did the man have? (15:4) Complete the sum below.

\_\_\_ missing + \_\_\_ in the field = 100 sheep

What did the man do? (15:4-6) Number the sentences below in the correct order.

- \_\_\_ Rejoiced with his friends and neighbours.  
\_\_\_ Carried the lost sheep home.  
\_\_\_ Left the other sheep in the field.  
\_\_\_ Went after the lost sheep until he found it.



## Discuss

In this parable, who is like the sheep? Who is like the man?

Who went looking for the sheep? Why? How long did they look?

What does this show about what God is like? How does he feel towards sinners? What is his priority? What is Jesus' priority?

Do you think the Pharisees understood this? Why/why not?

Why were the neighbours and friends happy too? How is this different to the Pharisees' response? How should we respond when people we know become Christians? Why?

# The Lost Sheep

The true story can be found in Luke 15:1-7



## Discover

Why were the Pharisees grumbling against Jesus? (15:1-2)

---

How did Jesus respond? (15:3) \_\_\_\_\_



Were the Pharisees right to be angry with Jesus? Had he done anything wrong?  
What is a parable?

Think?  
Spot



How many sheep did the man have? (15:4) Complete the sum below.

\_\_\_ missing + \_\_\_ in the field = \_\_\_ sheep

What did the man do? (15:4-6) Number the sentences below in the correct order.

- \_\_\_ Rejoiced with his friends and neighbours.
- \_\_\_ Carried the lost sheep home.
- \_\_\_ Left the other sheep in the field.
- \_\_\_ Went after the lost sheep until he found it.



## Discuss

In this parable, who is like the sheep? Who is like the man?

Who went looking for the sheep? Why? How long did they look?

What does this show about what God is like? How does he feel towards sinners? What is his priority? What is Jesus' priority?

What should our priority be? How will that affect our actions, words and prayers?

Do you think the Pharisees understood this? Why/why not?

Why were the neighbours and friends happy too? How is this different to the Pharisees' response? How should we respond when people we know become Christians? Why?

## The Lost Coin

Luke 15:1-3, 8-10

**Big Idea** : Jesus told a parable about a woman searching for a lost coin to teach that God cares about sinners and longs for them to be saved.

**Aim** : To teach that God cares about every sinner and rejoices when they repent.

### The Story So Far

**Week 1:**

- Jesus told a parable about a man finding his lost sheep to teach that God rejoices over every sinner who repents.



### Leader's Study Notes

Read Luke 15:1-3 and 8-10 noting the value of the lost item.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

This is the second of three parables that Jesus told to the Pharisees and teachers of the law in response to their accusations. Jesus had already explained the reason for his fellowship with 'sinners' – he had come as a doctor for sick people, to bring sinners to repentance (5:31-32). Now Jesus focuses on an even greater reason: God himself is pleased when lost souls are saved because he cares for them.

- 15:1-3 The Pharisees were angry with Jesus for associating with 'wicked' people. They believed that this was unacceptable for a Jew, even to teach others about God! Jesus responded to his critics in the form of a parable.
- 15:8 Just one silver coin was the equivalent of a day's wages. These coins were therefore very valuable and it is only natural that the woman would be anxious to find the lost one.
- 15:9-10 As with the first parable Jesus told, the implication is that God rejoices over every individual sinner who repents and that God's people share in his happiness.

### Reflect

- What does this parable show about the way God seeks sinners? Why does he do this? Is this the way you think about your own conversion?
- Do you approach evangelism with the same love, care and concern that God does? Does this show in your reaction when you hear of someone being saved?
- Give thanks that God cares about sinners enough to seek and save them. Ask him to help you to love and care for the lost in the same way.

## Session Outline



### Review

Review the previous lesson using the questions provided as well as any of the visual aids that were used for the previous lesson. This is helpful for children who may have missed that session.



### Introductory Idea

**Introduces this week's lesson.**  
Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



### Teaching Plan

**The core of the session.**  
The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



### Game Idea

**Not essential.**  
Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



### Discuss and Apply

**Not to be missed!**  
This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



### Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



### Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. **For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.**



### Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



## Review

Review the previous lesson using the following questions:

- Why did the man celebrate?  
[*He had found his lost sheep (15:5-6)*]
- Who else celebrated with him?  
[*His friends and neighbours (15:6)*]
- What makes God very happy/celebrate?  
[*One sinner who repents (15:7)*]



## Introductory Idea

**Option 1: Higher or Lower?** Before the lesson gather a range of items or pictures of items of different value. Make sure that you include a few surprisingly cheap and expensive items. Label the bottom of the items with their value to help you remember how much each is worth then place them together in a box or bag. You could also have a small prize ready for the winner of this game.

Get two volunteers to stand at the front of the class either side of a table. Choose who will go first and place one of the items from your bag onto the table to start. Tell them the value of the item and then place a second item next to it on the table.

The child whose turn it is must guess whether the second item is of more or less value than the first by saying 'higher' or 'lower'. If they guess correctly they continue their turn; tell them the value of the second item; place the first on the floor under the table; and take a third item from the bag, placing it on the table next to the second.

They can then guess whether the third item is 'higher or lower' than the second. If, however, the child guesses incorrectly the other child takes their turn instead. Continue the game in this way. The child who guesses the value of the last item correctly wins the prize.

Talk about how hard it was to know the value of some items. Were there any that were really obvious? Which did they think was the most expensive? Today's true story from the Bible is about a woman who owned something very valuable, but lost it. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

**Option 2: Missing Treasure.** Before the lesson place a range of about twenty small items on a tray (with very young children you will need to use fewer items.) These should be everyday items such as a pencil or scrap of paper, but make sure that one item is exceptionally valuable to the children. This could simply be a banknote or something else that stands out. Cover the tray with a tea towel and place it on a table.

Choose two volunteers and explain that you are going to give them thirty seconds to remember as

many items under the cloth as they can. You will then remove one of the items and they must try to figure out which is missing. The first child to do so wins that round.

Start by removing a dull item and see how long it takes the children to realise what has been taken. Then after a few more rounds remove the valuable item. This will be more obvious to the children who should notice it is missing. Talk about why it took them longer to realise the other items were missing than it did with the valuable item. When something is so valuable we tend to notice! Today's true story from the Bible is about a woman who owned something very valuable; when she lost it she noticed that it was missing. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

### Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true story from the Bible to discover the answers to the following questions:

- What had the woman lost?  
[*A silver coin* (15:8)]
- What did she do when she realised?  
[*Swept her house and searched carefully* (15:8)]
- What did she do when she found it?  
[*Rejoiced with her friends and neighbours* (15:9)]



## Teaching Plan

Begin by briefly reminding the children who Jesus was telling this parable to and why – the Pharisees were angry that Jesus was spending his time with sinners and welcoming them (15:1-3). Can the children tell you what it means to be a sinner? Explain that every single one of us has sinned against God by rejecting his rule and trying to run our own lives. When we treat God in this way we think, feel, say and do wrong things.

Tell the parable and act it out as you go. You could start by showing the children a pile of coins (pieces of cardboard wrapped in foil are fine!), keeping one back. Count out the nine remaining coins and explain that one is missing. What do they think you should do? When you 'find' the lost coin encourage the children to celebrate with you. Finish by explaining that God is just like the woman who lost her coin – he cares about sinners, searches for them and is happy whenever one person turns back to him and trusts in Jesus.

**For older children – go through the context of this parable as above and then read the passage aloud. You could get the children to act it out together or in two groups and then use some of the questions below to help them think about the meaning of the parable:**

- Why did Jesus tell this parable? Who was listening to him?

- What did the woman do when she realised the coin was missing? Why did she do this? Who is the woman in this parable like?
- What is the coin a picture of in this parable? Who does it represent?
- What did the woman do when she found her lost coin? Why was she so happy? What is it that makes God happy according to this parable?



## Game Idea

**Option 1: For younger children – Silver Searchers.** Before the lesson paste a sheet of foil over the front and back of a piece of cardboard. Cut out ten circles to be ten silver coins. Hide the coins around the room for the children to find. When one of them finds a coin they must shout, "Be happy with me, I've found my lost coin!" Once all ten coins have been found count them to see who has found the most. You could play a few rounds of the game in this way.

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible a woman had ten coins, but lost one of them. She searched her house very carefully and when she found it she was very happy. All her friends and neighbours were happy too. God is happy, just like the woman, whenever someone repents and trusts in Jesus because he cares for them.

**Option 2:** Before the lesson draft a list of various items that you would usually find in the room you use when the children arrive e.g. a paperclip; a pencil; one shoe; a bracelet; a Bible. You can also add a few extra items that wouldn't normally be there and hide them around the room in advance so that they are harder to find e.g. a toothbrush; a mobile phone; a teddy bear.

Divide the group into two teams and have them sit in their circles. If you have a large group you may need to split into more teams of five to ten children. The children take it in turns going around the circle to be the 'runner'; only one child in each team is allowed to leave the circle at any one time. Those children will need to hunt for the 'lost' item which you call out and bring it to you before anyone else. Other team members may help only by pointing or describing an item's location. The first child to bring you the lost item wins a point for their team. Keep track of the score on a piece of paper or board. Continue the game in this way until each child in each team has had at least one turn.

Talk about how the children searched for the lost item – were some things harder to find than others? Did they need their teammates to help? Did they have any particular method? Why did they want to find the items so much? Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible a woman had ten coins, but lost one of them. She searched her house very carefully and when she found it she celebrated with

all her friends and neighbours. God is happy, just like the woman, whenever someone repents and trusts in Jesus because he cares for them.

**Option 3: For older children – Buried Treasure.** Fill a small bowl/jelly mould with flour and pack it down as tightly as possible. Push a small coin into the top of the flour and make sure that it is well covered and hidden. If you have a large class you will need to divide the group into teams and have a bowl of flour for each team.

At the start of the game place a plate over the top of the flour-filled bowl, turn the whole thing over and gently remove the bowl. The flour will keep its shape and stand up. Finally, place a small sweet/coin/token on top of the flour tower. Have the children sit in a circle around the flour tower and give one child a spoon/blunt knife. The children take it in turns to carefully cut away a section of the flour tower to search for the coin hidden inside. The winner receives a small prize, but if the sweet/token/coin on the top of the tower falls down they must retrieve it using only their teeth. This can be messy so if you are playing indoors you may need to lay a sheet/towel down first! Be aware of any food allergies.

Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible a woman had ten coins, but lost one of them. She searched her house very carefully and when she found it she celebrated with all her friends and neighbours. God is happy, just like the woman, whenever someone repents and trusts in Jesus because he cares for them.



## Discuss and Apply

The previous lesson focused on the joy that God finds in the repentant sinner, this parable highlights the value of the lost soul to God and the effort he goes to to find them. The woman valued the coin enough to search intently for it; in the same way, God searches for those who are lost because he cares for them. People often speak about their search for God, but Jesus clearly teaches that it is God's initiative and his concerted effort which brings those who are lost back.

Help the children to understand that God loves the people that he has made very much and he longs that they would not be lost forever. Every time someone hears about Jesus God is calling to them so that they can turn to him and be found.

Explore some of the things that we might do to show that we also love those who are lost in the same way that God does. Do we pray for them? Do we speak to them about Jesus? Are we kind and loving towards them in the way that we speak and act?

**For older children** – discuss as above and then help them to think further about this parable by looking up some of the following verses:

*Romans 3:10-12:*

- Why does God need to search for the lost? Can we find him on our own? Why/why not?
- Why does God choose to search for the lost? What value do we have? Is there anything good in us?

*2 Peter 3:9*

- Who does God want to seek and save? Can this be true if not everyone is a Christian? Why isn't everyone a Christian if this is what God wants?
- Jesus promised that he would return to judge the world. Why has he not done this yet? What does his delay mean for those who are still lost?

*Luke 19:10*

- How did God 'seek' the lost? Who did he send? What did it cost him? How does this prove that he values sinners?



## Prayer Idea

Before the lesson paste aluminum foil onto a sheet of corrugated card and cut out a circle (approximately 5cm in diameter) for each child. Give each child one of these coins and a blunt pencil. Ask them to think about one person they know who needs to be found by God. They can then use the pencil to gently inscribe the person's name on their coin. Encourage the children to pray for each of the people they named and ask that God would seek and save them. They can take the coin home as a daily reminder to pray for that person.



## Activity

**For 3-7s** – choose either Activity A (pages 25 and 26) or Activity B (page 27).

**Activity A** – Print page 25 (one copy for each child) and page 26 (one copy for every four children) onto paper.

**Before the lesson** use a craft blade to cut along the bold line around the bottom of the broom on page 25. Cut along the bold lines on page 26. Use Blu-tack to attach nine identical coins to the template. You will only require one template per class.

**The children** colour in the picture. Help them one at a time to position their picture over the coin template by aligning their page with the top of the template. They rub across the area around the picture with the side of a crayon to produce a coin rubbing of the nine coins.

Help them to place one of the pieces of paper from the bottom of page 26 over a coin so that the rubbing will appear in the white area. This is then placed behind the broom flap using glue as marked.

Count off the nine coins with the children and then lift the flap of the broom to find the tenth coin.

Remind the children that the woman was so happy to find her lost coin that she called all her friends and neighbours to celebrate. Remind them that God is also happy when people turn to him and trust in Jesus.

**Activity B** – Make a coin purse. Print page 27 onto paper for each child. Each child will also require a short length of string/wool.

**Before the lesson** use a craft blade to cut along the bold wavy line at the mouth of the purse then fold the page and cut as marked.

**The children** colour in the purse and the coin. Help them to glue along the open edges of the page with the purse and fold to create a pocket. Apply glue to the back of the coin and place one end of the string in the middle. Fold the strip of paper to produce a double-sided coin with the text on the back. Cut out the coin, being careful not to cut the string, and then staple the other end of the string to the top of the purse as marked.



Show the children how to deposit the lost coin into the purse.

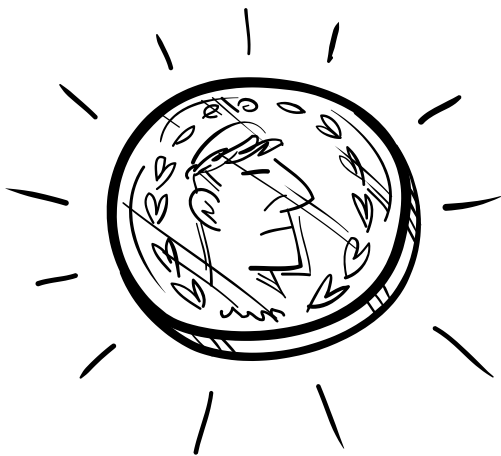
Remind the children that the woman was so happy to find her lost coin that she called all her friends and neighbours to celebrate. Remind them that God is also happy when people turn to him and trust in Jesus.

**For 7-11s** – print either Activity Sheet C (page 28) or Activity Sheet D (page 29) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



## Memory Verse

*"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."* **Luke 15:7** [NIV]

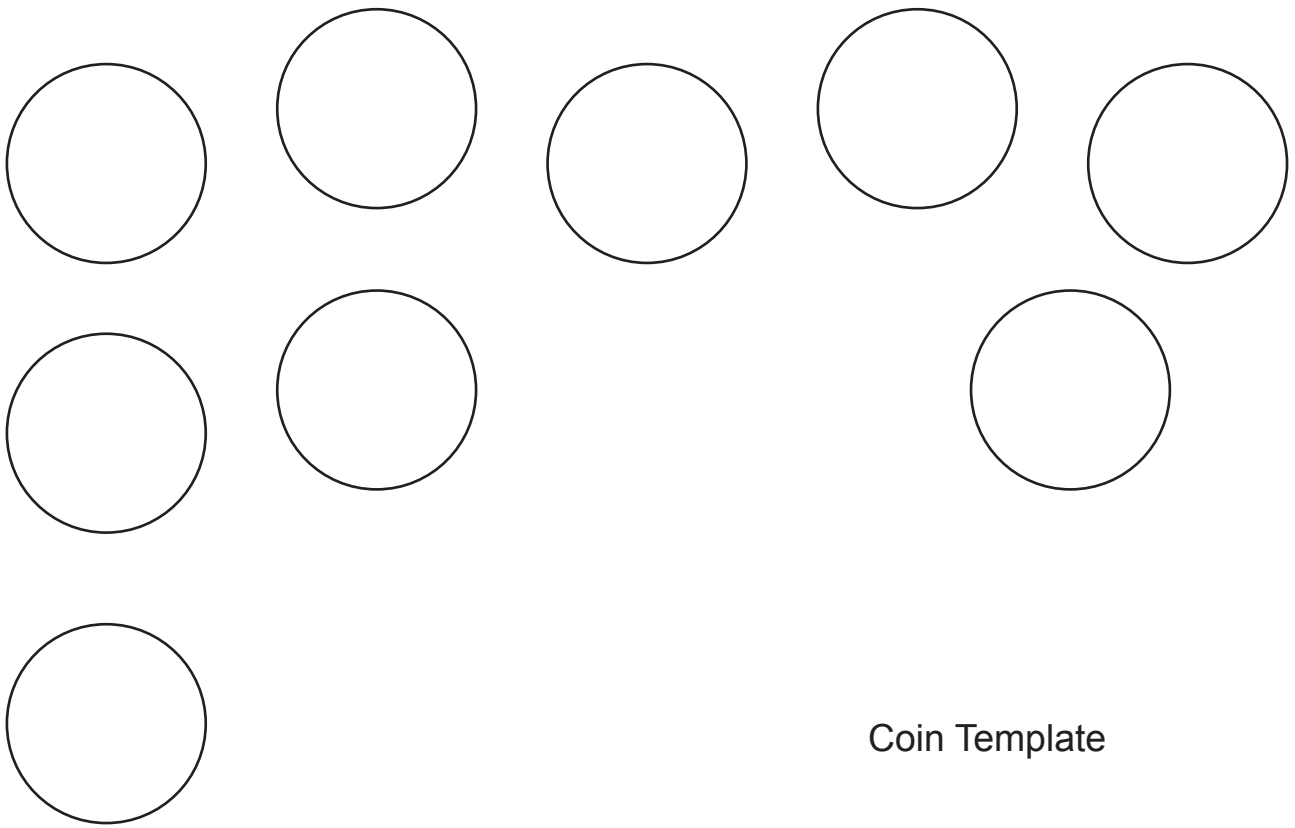


A woman lost 1 of her 10 coins so she carefully swept her house.

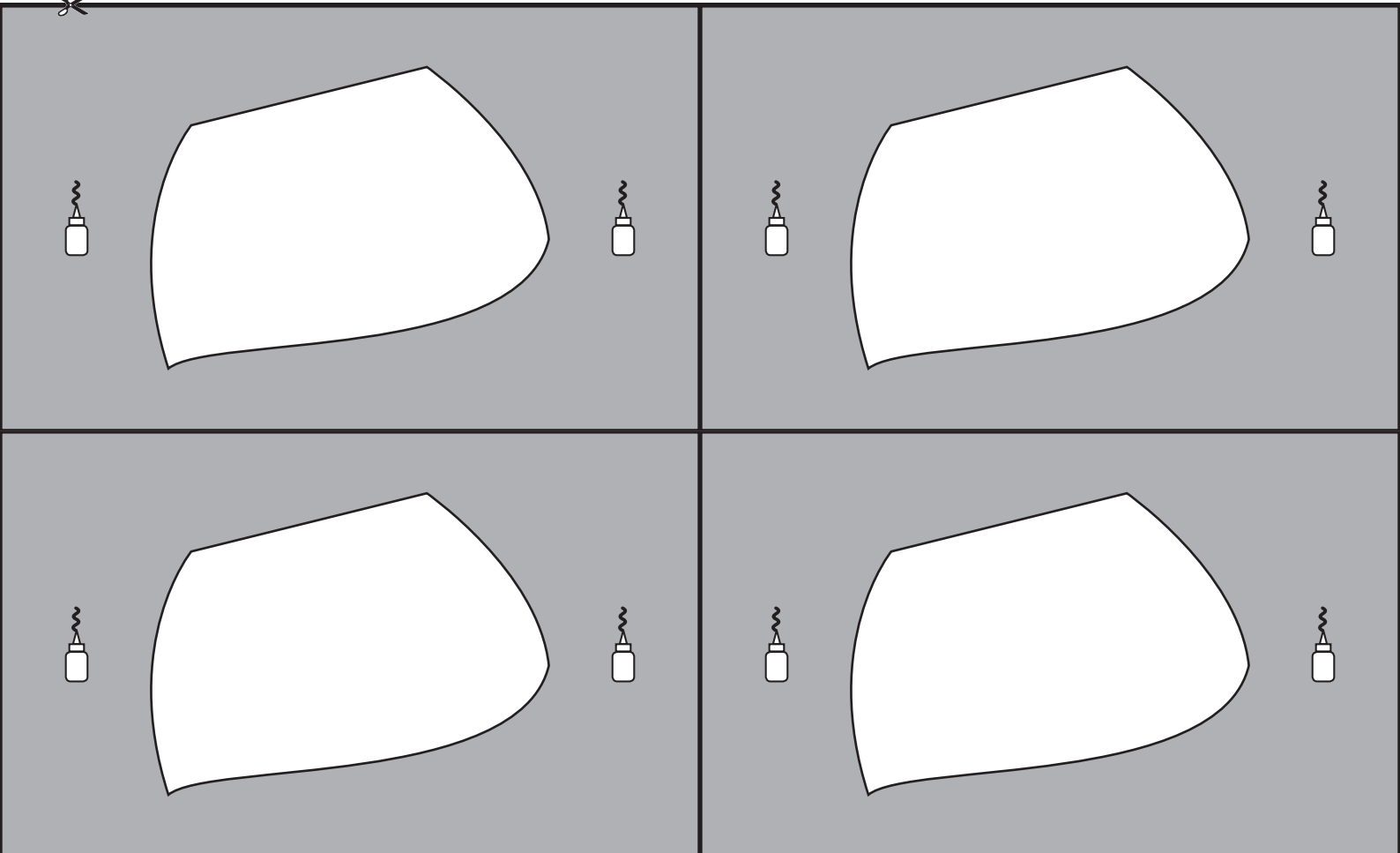


When she found it she called her friends and said,  
“Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.”

Luke 15:9b



Coin Template

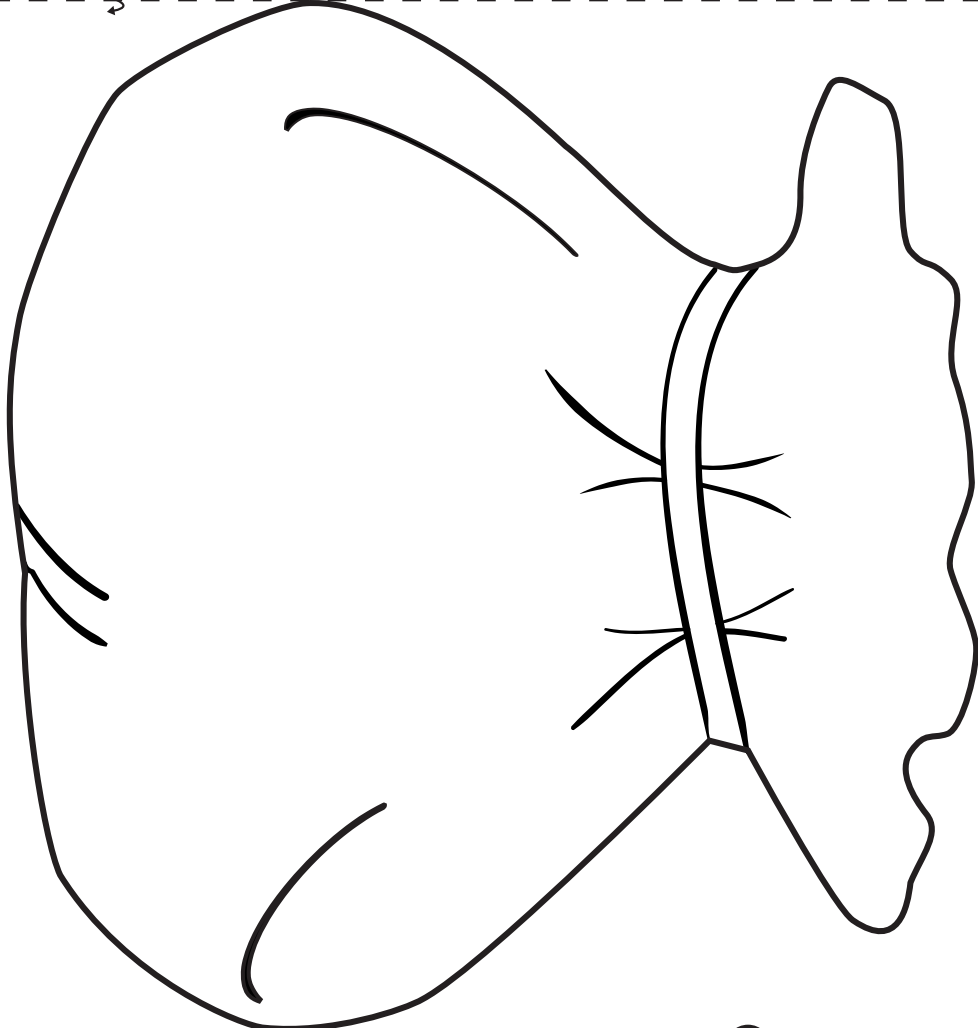




"Rejoice  
with me; I  
have found my  
lost coin."  
Luke 15:9b



A woman lost 1  
of her 10 coins so  
she carefully swept  
her house.



# The Lost Coin

The true story can be found in Luke 15:1-3, 8-10

## Discover

What had the woman lost? (15:7) Draw a picture in the space below.

What did the woman do? (15:8) Tick all the correct answers.

- Swept her house       Searched carefully       Gave up after a while  
 Put the rest in her purse       Lit a lamp



Why did the woman search so carefully?  
What does this tell you about the value  
of the coin?

Think?  
Spot

What happened when she found her lost coin? (15:9) Circle the correct words.

She called her **family** / **friends** and **pets** / **neighbours** together and said,

" **Rejoice** / **sing** with me! I have found my lost coin."



## Discuss?

In this parable, who is the woman like? Who is like the coin?

Why does God search for the lost? Is it possible to 'find' God without him looking for us?

Who does God want to seek and save? How has he done this?  
Who did he send? What did it cost him? How does this show  
that he values sinners?

# The Lost Coin

The true story can be found in Luke 15:1-3, 8-10



## Discover

What had the woman lost? (15:7) \_\_\_\_\_

How many did she have left? (15:7) \_\_\_\_\_

What did the woman do? (15:8) Tick all the correct answers.

- Swept her house       Searched carefully       Gave up after a while  
 Put the rest in her purse       Lit a lamp



Why did the woman search so carefully?  
What does this tell you about the value  
of the coin?

**Think?**  
**Spot**

What happened when she found her lost coin? (15:9)

She called her \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ together and said,

"\_\_\_\_\_ with me! I have found my lost coin."

## DISCUSS?

In this parable, who is the woman like? Who is like the coin?

Why does God search for the lost? Is it possible to 'find' God without him looking for us?

Who does God want to seek and save? Can this be true if not everyone is a Christian?

How has he done this? Who did he send? What did it cost him? How does this show that he values sinners?

## The Lost Son

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

**Big Idea** : Jesus told a parable about two sons – one who turned away from his father, but repented and one who stayed at home, but did not love his father or brother.

**Aim** : To teach that God always lovingly welcomes sinners who repent into his kingdom, no matter how they have treated him.

### The Story So Far

#### Week 1:

- Jesus told a parable about a man finding his lost sheep to teach that God rejoices over every sinner who repents.

#### Week 2:

- Jesus told a parable about a woman searching for a lost coin to teach that God cares about sinners and longs for them to be saved.



### Leader's Study Notes

Read Luke 15:1-3 and 11-32 noting each of the sons' attitudes towards their father.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

This is the last and most detailed of the three parables that Jesus told to the Pharisees and teachers of the law in response to their accusations. Jesus had already explained the reason for his fellowship with 'sinners' – he had come as a doctor for sick people, to bring sinners to repentance (5:31-32). Now Jesus focuses on an even greater reason: God himself is pleased when lost souls are saved.

- 15:1-3 The Pharisees were angry with Jesus for associating with 'wicked' people. They believed that this was unacceptable for a Jew, even to teach others about God! Jesus responded to his critics in the form of a parable.
- 15:11-12 Property could be distributed during the father's lifetime, but it was more commonly done in a will upon his death. In essence, the younger son was wishing his father dead and demanding something that was not due to him. Rather than rebuking his son, the father generously distributed the property between his sons.
- 15:13-16 The younger son sold his share of the property, left home and wasted his

inheritance in immoral living (cf. 15:30). He had nothing left by the time the famine struck and the only work he could find was a lowly job feeding pigs. This would have been especially repulsive for Jews as pigs were unclean animals (cf. Leviticus 11:7-8).

- 15:17-20a His desperate need brought him to his senses and to genuine repentance – he had not only been reckless with his life, he was also an unworthy son. He was determined to live instead as a servant to his father and to seek his forgiveness.
- 15:20b-24 The father must have been looking out for his son's return and would not even let him finish his apology. Instead of rebuking his son, he insisted upon welcoming him home with honour and celebrating his return with a great feast.
- 15:25-30 The older son, who had stayed at home, was out working in the field. When he heard what had happened he refused to come in and join the celebration. Incredibly, his father went out to his son and personally invited him inside.
- The older son's response is revealing: he saw himself as a slave to the father, working hard to earn a reward. The father's free kindness to his younger brother made him angry; he could not even bring himself to identify with his brother and instead called him 'this son of yours'.
- 15:31-32 The father was just as patient with his older son as with the younger. He reminded the son that he did not need to work for a reward or for his love – everything the father owned he shared with his children. The younger son's return was a natural cause for celebration because it was as if he had returned from the dead and come home to his father.

Unlike the previous two parables there is no seeking of the son. The main theme is God's lavish love for those who are lost – both outcasts like the younger son and those 'at home' like the older son. The parable also highlights the Pharisees' lack of a real relationship with God despite their sincere law-keeping. The question of whether the older son also repented remains: there was still an opportunity for him to join in the celebration, just as there was for Jesus' listeners, the Pharisees (15:1-3).

### Reflect

- Have you ever known someone who received something they didn't deserve? How did this make you feel at first? Why?
- Can you think of a time when you received something that you didn't deserve? How did this make you feel towards the giver? Why? How is this different to earning a reward?
- Thank God that he offers forgiveness to all those who truly repent and trust in Jesus. Pray that he would help you to be gracious with others as well, even when they don't deserve it.

## Session Outline



### Review

Review the previous lesson using the questions provided as well as any of the visual aids that were used for the previous lesson. This is helpful for children who may have missed that session.



### Introductory Idea

**Introduces this week's lesson.**

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



### Teaching Plan

**The core of the session.**

The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



### Game Idea

**Not essential.**

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



### Discuss and Apply

**Not to be missed!**

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



### Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



### Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. **For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable.** **For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.**



### Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.



## Review

Review the previous lesson using the following questions:

- What had the woman lost?  
[*A silver coin (15:8)*]
- What did she do when she realised?  
[*Swept her house and searched carefully (15:8)*]
- What did she do when she found it?  
[*Rejoiced with her friends and neighbours (15:9)*]



## Introductory Idea

**Option 1: Crime Rate.** Before the lesson draft a list of ten 'crimes' that vary in seriousness. These could simply be irritating habits such as biting your nails or cracking your knuckles, but they could also include things like cheating in an exam, calling a friend names or stealing. **With younger children in particular you will need pictures to represent each of these 'crimes'.**

Place the crimes/pictures on a board or wall and get the children to help you arrange them in order according to how bad they think each one is. Start with the smallest crime and work up to the worst. Why are some of these things worse than others? Who are they against? Which of these crimes would you need to ask forgiveness for? Should all of them be forgiven? Today's true story from the Bible is about a son who had done something very unkind to his father and needed to ask for forgiveness. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

**Option 2:** Ask the children to think about times when they needed to be forgiven. Write some of their suggestions on a board or piece of paper for them to see and after each one ask them who needed to forgive them. Are they always certain that they will be forgiven? Can they think of any other things people do sometimes which they need to say sorry for? Who do they need to ask to forgive them? Today's true story from the Bible is about a son who had done something very unkind to his father and needed to ask for forgiveness. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

### Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true story from the Bible to discover the answers to the following questions:

- Why did the son need to ask for forgiveness?  
[*He demanded his inheritance, left home and wasted the money (15:12-13)*]
- How did his father respond?  
[*Welcomed him home and celebrated (15:20, 22-24)*]
- Who was unhappy about this?  
[*His older brother (15:28)*]



## Teaching Plan

Begin by reminding the children that Jesus told this parable because the Pharisees were angry with him; they didn't like Jesus spending time with 'sinners' and welcoming them (15:1-3). Can the children remember what it means to be a sinner?

There is geographic movement in this parable so you could tell the story using models. This will help the children to see how the younger son turned away from his father and how he needed to turn around and come home. Print the pictures provided on page 35 and glue them to toilet roll tubes cut into rings to make them stand or use toy figures/Lego men to be the father and two sons.

Make a house out of a small cardboard box and place it next to a sheet of green paper to be the field. Place another sheet of green paper a short distance away to be the foreign country and place some twigs in a small square to be the pigsty. You could use plastic animals or some pink sweets to be the pigs in the pigsty.

Move the figures as you tell the story, but keep the older son in the field outside. Try to build tension in the story by asking questions at key points: how would the father have felt when his son left home? Was this a kind thing to do? How do they think the father would react when the younger son came home? Why?

Finish by explaining that God is just like the father: he loves us and wants all of us to live with him forever. He is happy and welcomes everyone who says sorry and puts their trust in Jesus into his kingdom.

Alternatively, you could simply tell the story dramatically using two different hats as props. Wear a more formal hat when you speak about the father or quote what the father says; wear a baseball cap with the peak facing forwards to represent the older son; and turn the baseball cap back-to-front to be the rebellious younger son. You don't need to explain which is which, the children will understand as you tell the story.

**For older children – tell the story using the models or the different hats as above. You could then divide the group into two and get them to compare the older and younger son by answering the questions below. Write 'younger son' at the top of a large sheet of paper and 'older son' on another. Give one sheet of paper to each group for them to write down their answers. (You may need to make it clear to the first group that the questions relate to the younger son before he repented.)**

- What had the father done for this son? How had he treated him? Did he deserve to be treated this way?
- How did this son treat his father? What did he think about him? How can you tell? What was wrong with this?
- How did the father react? Did he stop loving his son?

- How did the son respond to his father's kindness? What did he need to do?

Feed back as a group on each of the sons. Be sure to make it clear that both of them had treated the father badly and needed to say sorry, but that the father still loved them and was willing to forgive them when they repented.



## Game Idea

**Option 1: For younger children.** Have the children spread out around the room ready to follow your commands. When you call out a phrase they will need to carry out the action that goes with it. Suggested phrases and actions are below:

“Leaving home” – run to the opposite side of the room to you;

“Feeding pigs” – move about on all fours and make pig noises;

“Saying sorry” – plead on their knees;

“Welcome home” – hug one another.

Go slowly to start with and perform the actions with them. You can make it harder as the game progresses by calling out multiple phrases at a time. Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible the younger son left home and wasted his father's money; when he ran out of money and food he had to work feeding pigs; he was sorry for what he had done; and the father welcomed him home because he loved him. God is like the father who welcomes everyone who is truly sorry into his kingdom.

**Option 2:** Play a version of the game 'stuck in the mud'. You will need one child to be the catcher, the rest of the children must run away and avoid being caught. If the catcher tags a child that child must stand still with their legs and arms apart and wait for another child to free them. To be freed they must exchange phrases with another child: they say, “I'm sorry!” and the other child hugs them and says, “Welcome home!” The catcher must try to tag all the children so that no-one is left to free them.

Continue the game in this way, perhaps changing the catcher when they get tired or choosing another child to help them catch everyone. Remind the children that in today's true story from the Bible the younger son left home and wasted his father's money; when he ran out he was stuck feeding pigs and was sorry for what he had done, but the father welcomed him home because he loved him. God is like the father who welcomes everyone who is truly sorry into his kingdom.

**Option 3: For older children – Card Run.** Before the lesson remove the aces, jokers, picture cards, clubs and all hearts except for one from a deck of playing cards. You will also need to remove one card (either diamonds or spades) with the same number as the heart you included. This will leave you with

two complete number runs made up of two suits and a heart.

Keep the heart card to one side and shuffle the deck. Place the heart card at the very bottom of the deck and place the deck on a chair at one end of the room. Divide the group into two teams and have them line up at the opposite end of the room in their teams.

The first child in each team runs to the pile of cards, takes the top card and then runs back to their team. They place the card on the floor in front of their team. The next child in each team may then run and draw another card. If that card is the same number as a previous card they must hand it to the opposing team. The next child may then run to the pile of cards and draw another while their teammates arrange the cards they have in numerical order from two to ten. They do not all need to be the same suit! The game continues in this way until all the cards are used up.

The children will naturally think that the first team to complete their run have won. Ask the teams to look through their run and see if they have a heart card. Declare this group the winner (it should be the team that finished last)! Remind them that in today's true story from the Bible the older son was working hard for his father while the younger son wasted his father's money, but the older son didn't really love the father. He treated him like a slavemaster – he didn't work because he loved him. The Pharisees also treated God like this – they kept God's law because they wanted to look good, not because they loved him and had a real relationship with him.

If you don't have the space to run around then you could play this game around a table. Have the teams sit on opposite sides of the table. The teams take it in turns to draw the top card from the deck. As above, if it's a card they already have then they give it to the other team. Play must continue until all the cards are gone.



## Discuss and Apply

This parable is different to the previous two that Jesus told in two ways:

1. There is no searching for the lost, instead the father watches and waits.
2. There is a greater emphasis on the need for real repentance.

The focus point for this discussion should be the father's joy and willingness to welcome all those who truly repent no matter what they have done. **With younger children it will be enough to talk about the younger son only.** Can the children remember who God is like in this story? Explain that we are all like the younger son – we have all sinned against God in the things that we say, think, feel and do. We have disobeyed his good rules and lived as if we don't need him. Give some examples of when we might do this to help the children understand how they are

also like the younger son. Just like the younger son, we need to say sorry to God for the wrong things we say, think, feel and do against him and other people.

Reassure the children that, just like the father, God will also welcome anyone who says sorry into his kingdom. We can be absolutely certain that he will forgive us no matter what we have done because he loves us and sent his son, Jesus, to pay for our sin by dying on the cross.

**For older children** – discuss as above then consider the ways in which the older brother had treated his father and how he also needed to repent. You could use some of the following questions to help your discussion:

- What can we learn about God from this parable? Is there anything that God won't forgive? Is there anyone who is too sinful for God to forgive? Does this mean we can keep on sinning once we have been forgiven? What will real repentance look like? Do we become lost every time we sin again?
- In what ways can we be like the younger son? Do you love the things that God gives you, but ignore God? Have you 'come to your senses' and said sorry for the way you treat him?
- Who is the older son in this story like? How had he treated his father? Why do you think he stayed at home? What was his motivation? Do you think the father was willing to forgive him?
- How did he treat his brother? Why do you think he did this? How is this similar to what the Pharisees were doing in 15:1-2?
- In what ways can we also be like the older son? How does this show in the way we treat God? How does this show in the way we treat others? What did the older son need to do?
- Who are you most like in this story: the younger son before he repented; the younger son after he had come home; or the older son who stayed at home, but refused to go in to the party? How does this parable challenge you? How is it an encouragement?



## Prayer Idea

This is an ideal passage to ask the children if they have ever felt the need to turn back to God, perhaps for the first time ever. Assure them that although our sin angers God Jesus turned that anger aside when he died on the cross. God therefore welcomes anyone who returns to him and he does so with open arms.

Ask the children to think about the two sons in the story. Which are they most like – the younger rebel who needed to return or the older one who always did what was right, but never really loved his father? Encourage them to say something to God in response to the lesson.



## Activity

**For 3-7s** – choose either Activity A (page 36) or Activity B (pages 37 and 38).

**Activity A** – Print page 36 onto paper for each child.

**The children** colour in the doors and the father. Help them to fold the page in half first so that the pictures are back to back. Then fold the doors back over so that they cover the father.

Remind the children that the son was expecting his father to be angry with him, but to let him work as a slave. Instead the father ran to meet him and threw his arms around him. Open the doors to reveal the welcoming father. Remind the children that in the same way God welcomes those who turn back to him.

**Activity B** – Print page 37 onto paper (one copy for every two children) and page 38 onto paper or card (one copy or card for every six children). Each child will also require one lollipop stick and a paper cup.

**Before the lesson** cut out the cup sleeves on page 37 and cut along the bold lines on page 38. Also pierce a hole in the bottom of each cup.

**The children** colour in the picture and the cup sleeve. They can draw pigs behind the fence too.

Help them to fold and glue the picture of the son around a lollipop stick. They will also need help gluing the sleeve around the cup. Push the stick through the bottom of the cup and pull down to partially hide the son in the pigsty.

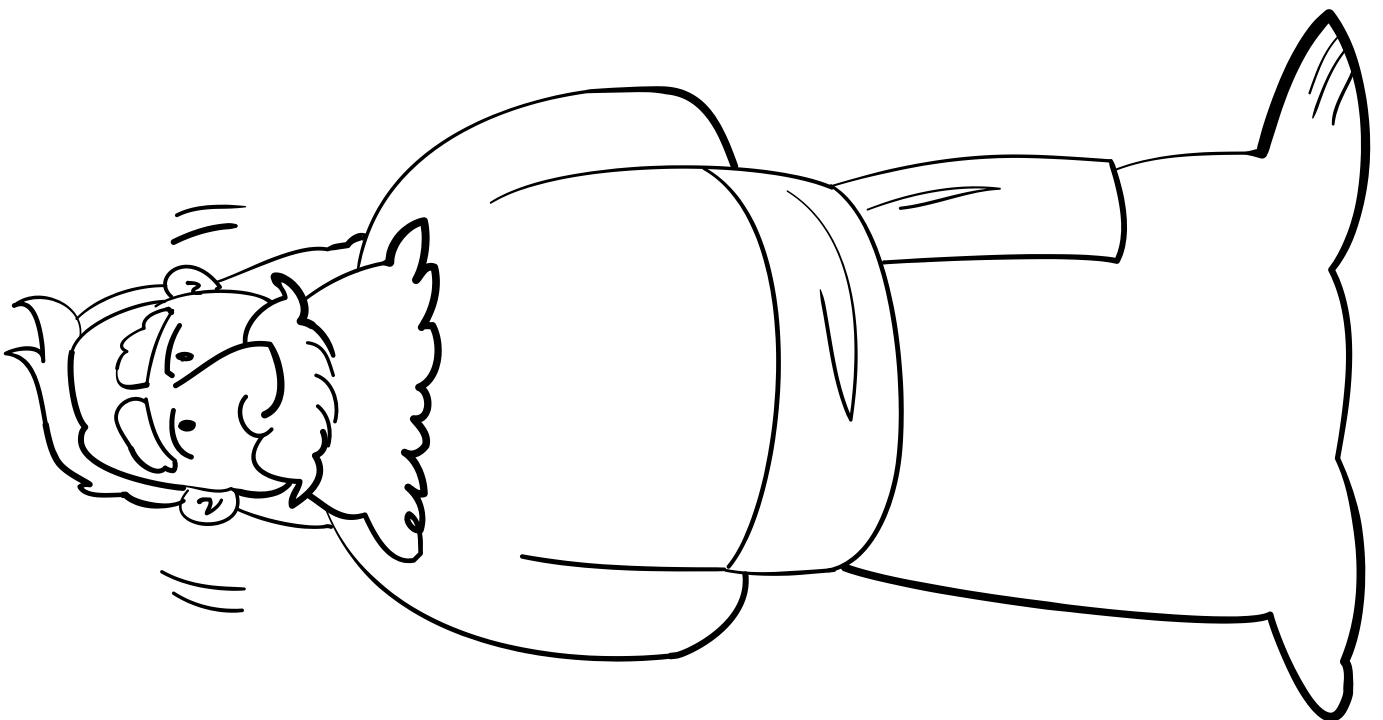
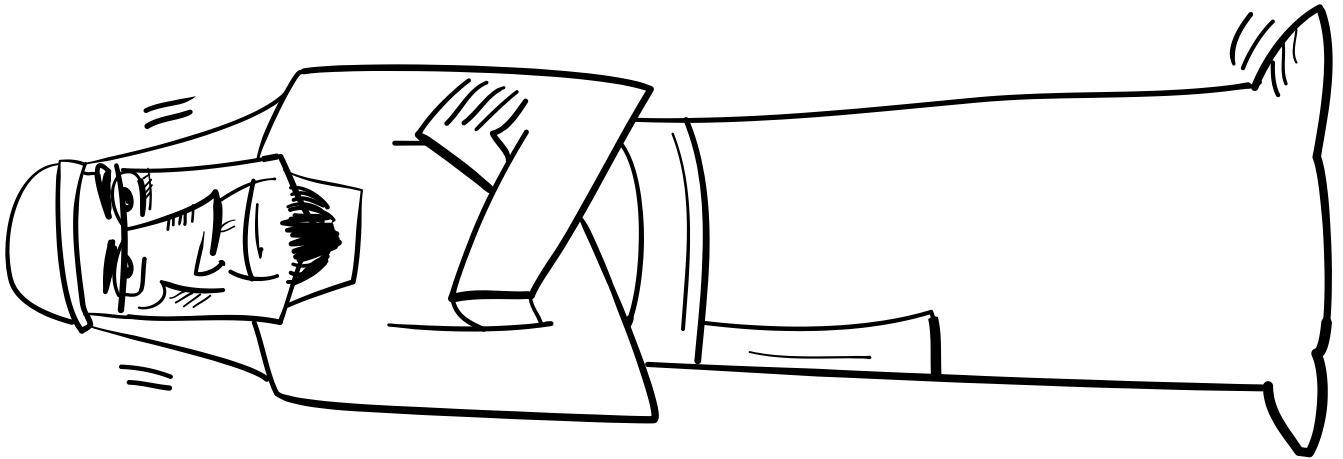
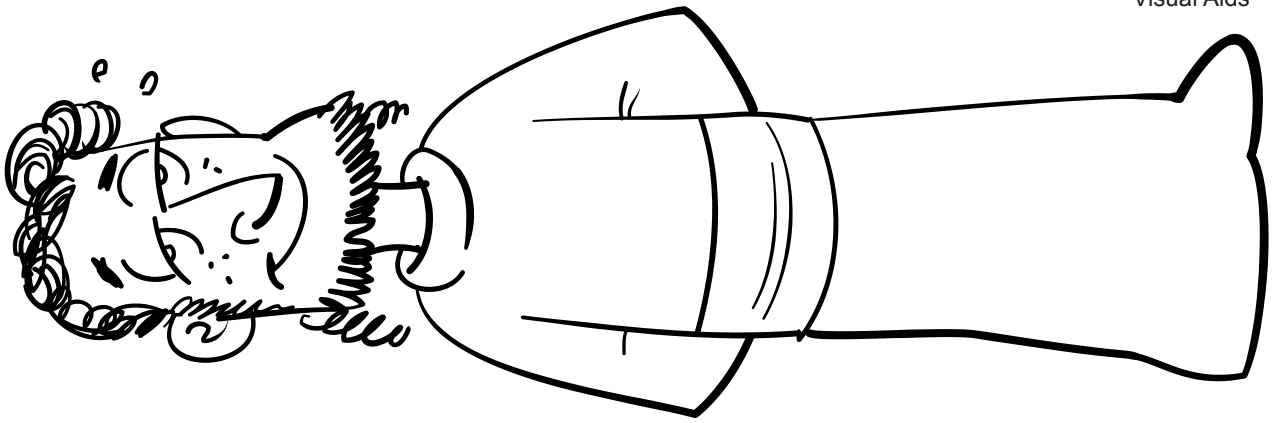
Push the stick upwards to show the son coming to his senses. Remind the children that the son realised how silly he had been and how badly he had treated his father. He decided to go home to say sorry. He thought that his father would be angry, but instead he welcomed him and celebrated.

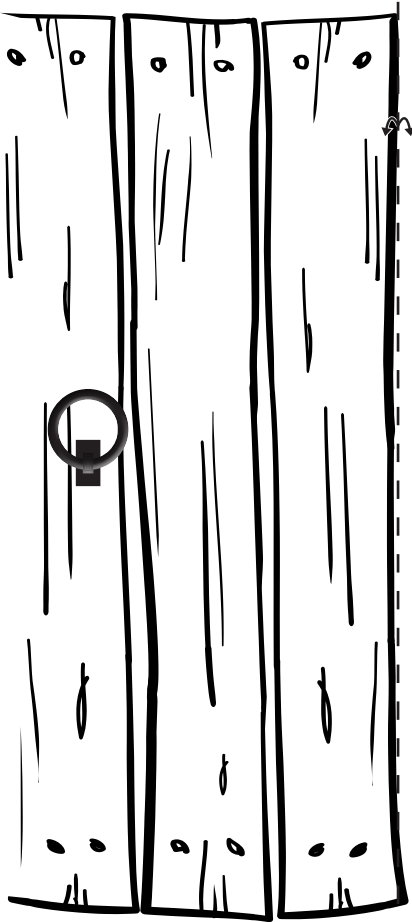
**For 7-11s** – print either Activity Sheet C (page 39) or Activity Sheet D (page 40) onto paper for each child. Choose whichever is appropriate for your children and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



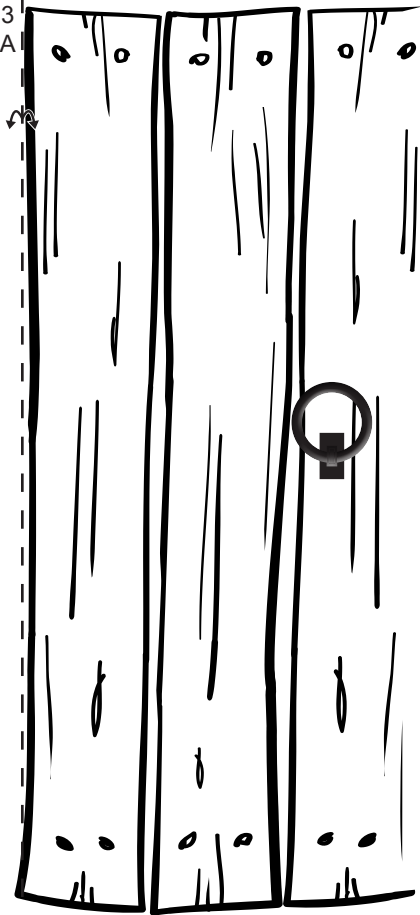
## Memory Verse

*"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."* **Luke 15:7** [NIV]



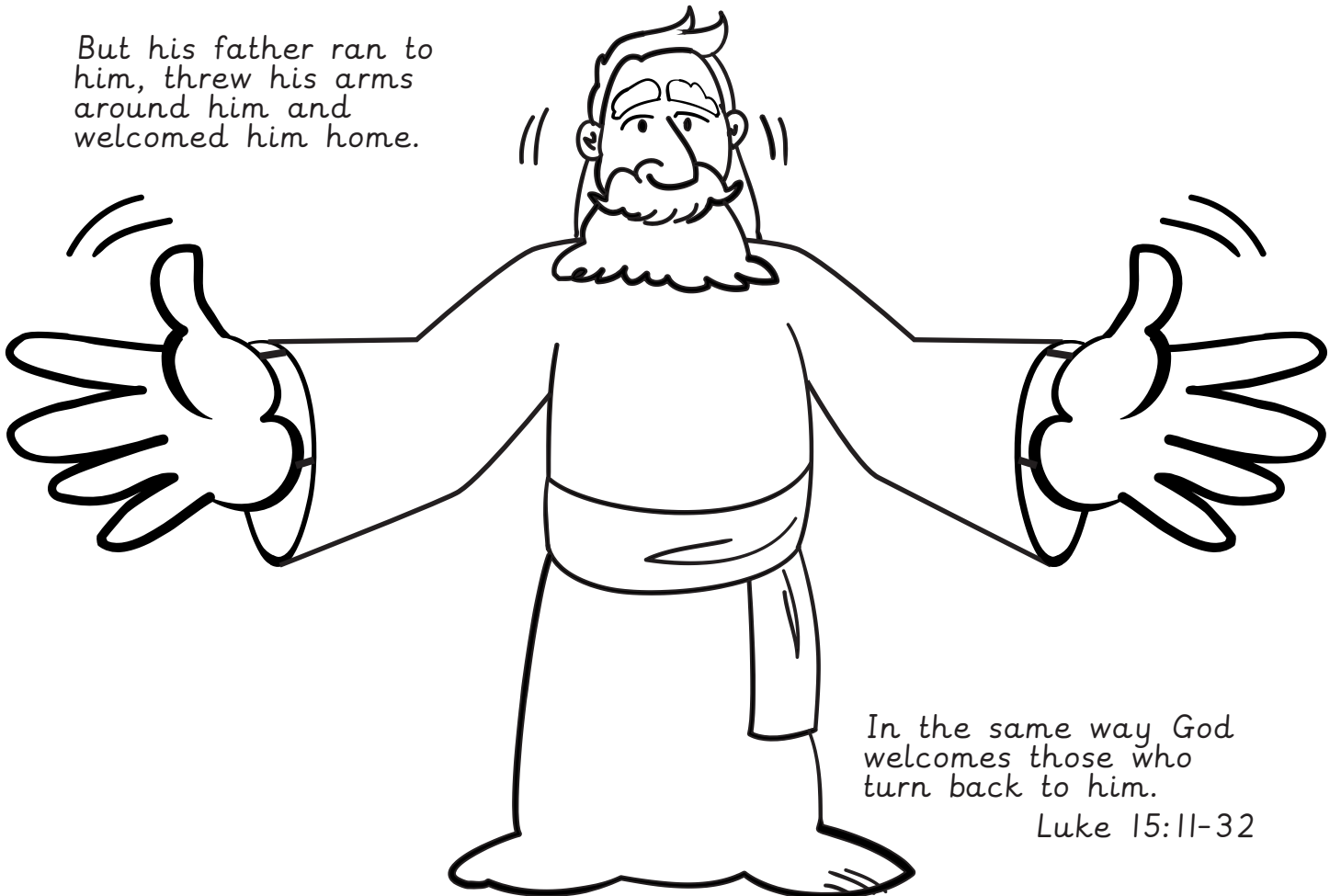


When a son who  
had left home  
and wasted his  
father's money...



...returned home  
he thought his  
father would be  
angry.

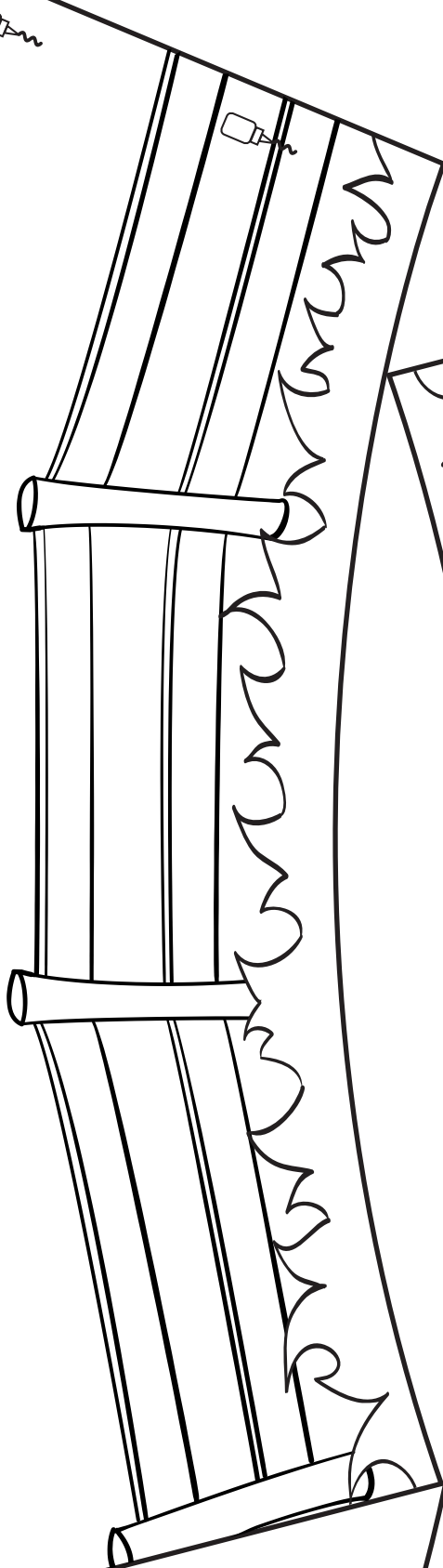
But his father ran to  
him, threw his arms  
around him and  
welcomed him home.



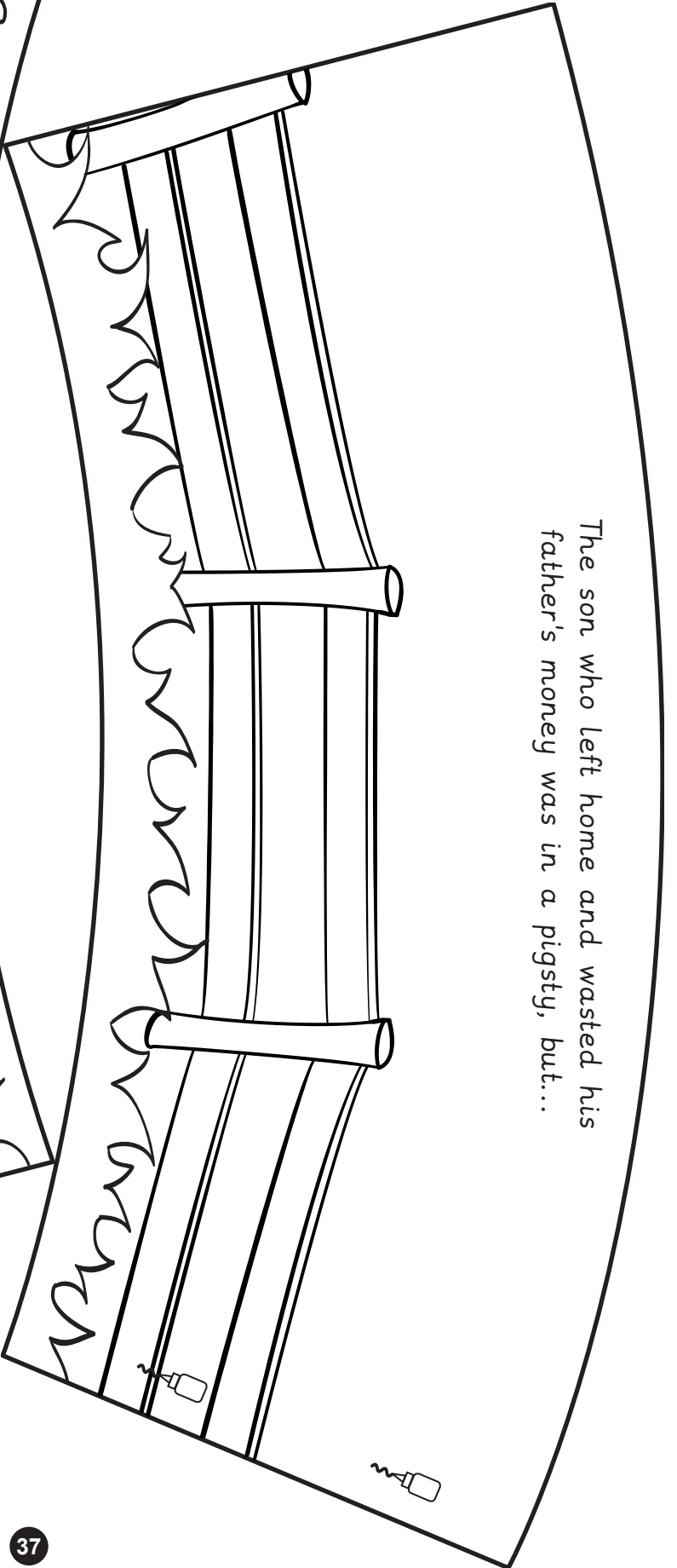
In the same way God  
welcomes those who  
turn back to him.

Luke 15:11-32

The son who left home and wasted his  
father's money was in a pigsty, but...



The son who left home and wasted his  
father's money was in a pigsty, but...





...when he came to his senses he went home to his father who welcomed him.

Luke 15:11-32



...when he came to his senses he went home to his father who welcomed him.

Luke 15:11-32



...when he came to his senses he went home to his father who welcomed him.

Luke 15:11-32



...when he came to his senses he went home to his father who welcomed him.

Luke 15:11-32



...when he came to his senses he went home to his father who welcomed him.

Luke 15:11-32



...when he came to his senses he went home to his father who welcomed him.

Luke 15:11-32

# The Lost Son

The true story can be found in Luke 15:1-3, 11-32



## Discover

Look up the verses and decide who the statements are about by writing Y (younger son), O (older son) or Y+O (both sons) in the spaces below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ asked for money and left home (15:12-13).
- \_\_\_\_\_ stayed at home and worked hard (15:25, 29).
- \_\_\_\_\_ wasted the father's money (15:13-14, 30).
- \_\_\_\_\_ loved money and possessions more than the father (15:12-13, 29).
- \_\_\_\_\_ said sorry to the father and was forgiven (15:21-23).



## Think Spot

What was similar about the two sons?  
 What was different? Which of these things do you think is most important?

What had the father done for his sons?

### Younger Son (15:12, 20, 23-24)

1. Shared his p \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
2. R \_ \_ \_ to him and kissed him
3. Celebrated when he came h \_ \_ \_ \_

### Older Son (15:12, 28, 32)

1. Shared his p \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
2. Went o \_ \_ \_ and invited him in
3. Shared e \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ he had with him



## Discuss

In this parable, who is the father like?  
 What can we learn about him from this story?  
 Who is the younger son like? Who is the older son like?  
 Who needed to say sorry to the father? Why?  
 Who are you most like in this story: the younger or older son?  
 Have you said sorry for the way you treat God and been forgiven?

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- \_\_\_ said sorry to the father and was forgiven (15:21-23).



## Think? Spot

What was similar about the two sons?  
What was different? Which of these things do you think is most important?

What had the father done for his sons? Read the verses to fill in the boxes below.

**Younger Son** (15:12, 20, 23-24)

**Older Son** (15:12, 28, 32)



## DISCUSS?

In this parable, who is the father like? What can we learn about him from this story? Is anyone too sinful to be forgiven?  
Who is the younger son like? Who is the older son like?  
Who needed to say sorry to the father? Why?  
Who are you most like in this story: the younger or older son? In what ways?  
Have you said sorry for the way you treat God and been forgiven?  
How does this parable challenge you? How is it an encouragement?