

Teaching Plan - Coming back to God (the parable of the lost son)

Aim - To show that God is a loving God who is always ready to welcome us into his family.



Welcome



Read Luke 15: 11-24



Drama

Need; a narrator. Father, son, friends (mime to narration)

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.

The son went away to the city. He had fine clothes, 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.)

Some people are likely to think that looking after pigs is a great job so emphasize 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.)

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!

(Father runs towards son.)

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!



Talk - Jesus told this story to remind us that God loves us so much and wants us to be in his family - he is sad when we forget about him and do our own thing. But God is very happy when we come back to him and say sorry - God says welcome back to my family we have missed you.

Testimony - ask someone (beforehand!) in the group to talk about a time when they felt far away from God and how they came back to him and how they feel now.

This might be done by a member of the team but then leave lots of time for others to talk about how they felt.



Prayer Time

Give everyone a piece of black ribbon/paper - this is like the things we do that are wrong. Ask people to say sorry to God quietly and then go and put down the black ribbon and pick up shiny stone/ribbon. Have shiny stones beside a cross (**Explain beforehand that the black ribbon represents us when we have sinned but when we say sorry God forgives us and sees us as the lovely person He made us to be.**)



Craft Time

Prepare in advance: Rectangular shaped card; circle for face (with nose and mouth); hand shapes; printed words (sorry, believe, obey God); printed verse of your choice.

Extra materials: glue, wool, wood shavings or something similar for hair and packet of googly eyes.

Glue all the parts on front and back as shown on the pictures below. Demonstrate the hands coming together in a hug to show how God welcomes us back and loves us.



Closing Activity

(Need a ball of string or wool)

Pass/throw the string to each person so that everyone is connected - if the group is small can do it in a circle and say "I thank God for (person's name you pass to)". Each person keeps hold of the string to show we are all part of God's family and part of the group.



Possible songs

Your love is a perfect love (Prospects)
The Father himself loves you (Prospects)
Abba Father (need to explain Abba)
This is the day that the Lord has made

I have made no mention of the older son in this session but of course could be included at this stage or you could develop the parable more fully at the next session.