

SUPPLIES: Prodigal Son Supplement Handout for each student OR tv/laptop to show Supplement Handout to students (preferred); 12 small items (for example: pencil, small ball, a quarter, bar of soap, a watch, stapler, a Lego figure, a CD, guitar pick, a fork, dice, a sock); a tray to put those items on; a sheet/cloth to cover the tray.

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- For the opening question, I'm going to ask you a question and then we'll go around the circle and say our names and then our answer to the question.
- I'll ask the question and then I'll answer first, ok?
- Here's the opening question: What is your first memory? What is the very first thing you can remember about life?
- (go around the circle)
- During this summer, we're going to be talking about parables. Parables are stories that can help us better understand an idea. For instance, I could tell you that you have to just try harder. Or, I could tell you the story of the "little engine that could" that shows us what trying harder might look like.
- The story we're going to hear now is about two sons and a father. Let's listen for what happens.

READ Luke 15:11-32 *The Prodigal Son*

11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So the father divided his property between the two sons and gave the younger son his share. 13 A few days later the younger son packed, took his inheritance and traveled to a distant country. There, he squandered his property in wasteful living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in great need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The son would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating because no one gave him anything. 17 Then he came to his senses and he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger?! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this

son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is now found!' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now the father's elder son was in the field; and when the son came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. 27 The servant replied, "Your brother has come back, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because your brother has returned safe and sound.' 28 Then the older son became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But the son answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with wasteful spending, you killed the fatted calf for him!" 31 Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was gone, dead it seemed, but now he has returned, as if from the dead; he was lost and has been found."

TELL

- In these parable, Jesus is telling us what the Kingdom of God looks like.
- The Kingdom of God is wherever we let God be king.
- So if we let God be king in our lives right now, then we are in the Kingdom of God.
- This parable that we heard today reminds us that sometimes it is difficult to see and be aware of the Kingdom of God.
- Both sons are part of the father's estate. They have plenty of food and shelter. The father is kind and patient and loving. And yet, what do they do? The younger son leaves and the older son complains.
- The younger son, though, starts to understand what he had once he doesn't have it anymore. This is how it goes for us, too. Sometimes we don't know what we have until we've lost it.

EXPLAIN Awareness Activity

- Let's play a memory game –
- I have twelve items, here, on a tray
- As a class, look very closely at these 12 items – I'll give you one minute to do so.
- Now that your minute is up, I'm putting a cloth over the tray and putting the tray under the table (or taking it outside the classroom)
- I am going to remove 4 objects from the tray and rearrange the other items.
- Ok, I've done that and now I present to you the tray again.
- At this point, you are to identify the 4 objects that are missing.
- As a class, you have to agree on the 4 items. (They can usually correctly remember two or three of them)
- Now that you've listed 4 things, I'm going to put tray under the table/cloth/out of the room again and put the four items back on it and rearrange the other items. Now, I'm bringing the tray back.
- Can you identify the four items that have reappeared.

EXPLAIN Second Activity

- Sometimes it's the things that are missing that help us to see the whole picture, for example, even though the following pictures are not complete, can you tell me what they are?

DO pages 1 - 3 on handout supplement

TELL

- The older son couldn't see what was right in front of him.
- He couldn't see the abundance and goodness that living with his father offered him.
- Sometimes this happens for us too.
- We can't see what's in front of us.
- We're going to do some activities now that demonstrate how we sometimes have difficulty seeing obvious things that are right in front of us.

DO Page 4 on Handout Supplement

TELL

- Most people will say "Paris in the Spring".
- But of course, what's in the triangle is "Paris in the the Spring."
- People tend to make this error even without seeing the introductory heading.
- Sometimes, it's hard to see what's right in front of us.
- Let's do another activity:

DO How Many 'F's' on page 5 & 6 on Handout Supplement

Ask for a volunteer to come up and count how many 'F's' are in the box on *Handout Supplement Page 5*.

Note: If the student counts less than 8 tell them there are still more f's to be found - encourage the student to bring another student to the puzzle to help count the 'f's.' Repeat this until you have everyone up there. If the whole class can't see it, then give them the hint.

Answer: The letter f appears eight times in the box.

HINT: Look for the word "of"

Once they figure it out, ask for a volunteer to come up and count how many 'F's' are in the box on *Handout Supplement Page 6*.

Finished files are the result of years of scientific study combined with the experience of years.

Answer: 6. Did you find all six?

hint: look for the “of’s”

TELL

- Sometimes we don’t see things because we’re used to seeing what we’re looking at.
- Other times we don’t see things because we’re too busy looking at other things.
- Part of the reason the older son couldn’t see his father’s abundance was because he thought he had worked for it.
- He was confusing what was being offered to him with what he had earned.
- This next activity helps us to think about how one closely related thing can distract us from seeing the other thing.
- In this next activity, we need to separate out the color and the word of the color.

DO word color trick

Read out (at normal pace) the *color* of each word, NOT the word itself, without making a mistake.

Red Yellow Blue Green Yellow Red Green Blue Green Red Blue Yellow Yellow Green Red
Blue Yellow Blue Red Green Yellow Green Red Blue Red Green Blue Green Green Yellow

HINT: If you want to beat the trick, squint your eyes to blur the words (Thanks Dave Skinner)

Answer: red, yellow, blue, green, yellow, red, green, blue, yellow, blue, red, green, red, blue, yellow, green, blue, yellow, green, red, red, blue, yellow, green, green, blue, yellow, red, white, black

TELL

It can be easy to not see what God gives us when we let God be king in our lives.

CLOSING PRAYER