



The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32 Lesson Plans

WRM Season 3 Session 1 : Storytelling, Arts & Crafts, Movement & Games

OVERVIEW SECTION

How to Read This Lesson Plan

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

How to Read This Lesson Plan (defines all components of the lesson plan)

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation (a reminder of why we do this)

Scripture(s) for the Session (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

Key Verses & Theology (background for teachers to ponder)

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

Preparation (including supplies needed)

Classroom Statement (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

Step-by-step process of the lesson (including the scripture to be read)

Suggested variations for age groups (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation:

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

Scripture(s) for the Session: Luke 15:11-32

Please READ this aloud in every class you teach. The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson**. When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

Key Verses & Theology: These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

12 So the father divided his property between the two sons and gave the younger son his inheritance/share.

The father in this story is representative of God. So when we look at what the characteristics of the father are, then that also helps us to think about what God's characteristics are, too. In this part of the story, we see that the father is generous. And we also see that the father does *not* try to stop the younger son from making a grave mistake. The father doesn't say, "You shouldn't be doing this." He doesn't say, "Why don't you wait a few years." He doesn't say, "No, you cannot be trusted." He doesn't say, "You'll get it when I die." Instead, the father gives his son an abundant gift with no strings attached. This is a great amount of trust the father displays. But what is the father trusting? The son? His own abundance of property? Or maybe himself – that he has done a fine job of parenting? Regardless of what he is trusting, there is a serenity and calmness and graciousness about the father that appears attractive, though at this part of the story, maybe also naïve.

21 Then the younger son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." The younger son had to experience life outside of his father's realm before he "comes to his senses" and returns home. Upon return, the son confesses what he has done wrong. And what is it that he confesses? That he has lived in a way that makes him no longer appear to be the father's son. Thinking back to Genesis and thinking about what image humankind is made in (God's), this is a very apt statement about who we become when we live outside of God's realm. Like the son who no longer fairly represents his father, when we live outside the Kingdom of God, we no longer fairly represent our Creator. We no longer reflect the goodness and abundance and trust and calmness that are the characteristics portrayed by the father in this story. And when we live like that, when the son lives like that, we do a disservice to ourselves and to God.

24 let us eat and celebrate for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found! But what is the father's response to his son, to this son who has misrepresented his image to the world? Surprisingly it is to rejoice! And celebrate! To welcome his son home with open arms. The father forgives and embraces. This is like how as parents we often respond, too. However, for the father, the "fear part" of the response is missing. For instance, if you somehow lose track of your child in a store and then find him/her again. You want to hug them AND scold them, right? Like, "Oh honey, there you are! Are you ok? I love you so much...." Give hug. Hold on. Then take a step back and... "WHAT WERE YOU THINKING? You scared me to death! Don't ever do that again!" But that part never happens in this story with the father. It is all celebration for the father.

31 Then the father said to [his older son], "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." But the fear part *does* happen with the older son. The older son is the one who is grouchy about the younger son's return. So what does the father do with the older son? He's just as gracious and generous and calm with him as he is with the younger son! He gently, lovingly and correctly points out to his older son that there's no reason to be upset. He then reminds his older son that the most important thing is that he's always with him. So going back to the characteristics of the father, the most amazing one is that of trust (an emotion that is opposite of fear). The father is so full of trust that he's never afraid. There's no room for fear. And if the sons (old and young) are always with him, then what do *they* need to fear? Nothing.

They just need to trust him. The older son doesn't, of course, and that's the problem. He's afraid that the younger son is going to get some of what belongs to him. And in this regard, by the end of the story, the younger son knows more than the older son.

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture: Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

Trust/Letting go – When we're afraid of losing something, we clamp down on that which we are afraid of losing. The father in this story does just the opposite. The father in the story lets go of his younger son and of his money/possessions in order to give it to his younger son. And then when the son comes back, the father doesn't have to scold his son with the "Told you so" speech. Instead, because he was able to let go of his son and avoid the dynamic of his son wrenching away, then there is not a burned bridge. The son can return. With God, the same dynamic is at play. God's not afraid of losing us. And so God lets us make bad decisions without us having to wrench ourselves away from God, making the return, if we choose, possible.

Money/Stuff/Possessions – It's very easy to believe that our things can save us. If only we could win the lottery. If only we could have a better paying job. If only we had that certain kind of computer/car/kitchen/college education that we always wanted, then life would be so much better. And even though our culture repeatedly tells us this idea, it simply is not true. Money and possessions do not save us from our own ways. In fact, money and possessions often enable our more self-destructive ways. This is what the younger son had to experience and see first-hand. And once he did, then he "came to his senses" and returned back to his father's realm.

Confession – A way to return to God's Kingdom is to admit (or *confess*) the ways that caused us to leave in the first place. The son confesses that he has "sinned" against heaven and against his father. The word, sin, here, means separation. The son chose separation, he lived in a way that was not in the image of his father. To come back to his father and to live his father's way is to confess that living outside of his father's image/way didn't work. It wasn't the better way.

Restoration – Even before the son confesses that his way doesn't work, he is welcomed back with open arms by his father. The confession by the younger son allows him to receive his father's warm welcome. Their relationship is restored not because the son confesses and the father forgives, but because the father has and always will love the son, and the son needs to confess how he kept his father's love at bay. With the younger son's attempt at separation confessed, then the younger son doesn't need try to stop his father's party for him. Instead, it's the older son who is trying to interfere with the restoration. And that is because there are ways that the older son has not confessed to (ways that he chooses) that cause separation from his father. But once he confesses and chooses to live in relationship instead of separation, then he too can enjoy a similar reception from his loving father, just like his younger brother did.

THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

Preparation

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching.
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Supplies Needed: acrylic paint; 15 or so plastic containers to hold the paint; paper bowls in order to make one color of paint accessible to more students; Q-tips; large 6' picture to be painted (see "Supply Preparation); smocks
- **Supply preparation (at least a week before the class begins):** The picture that the kids will paint needs to be drawn ahead of time. Any-sized piece of paper or type of paper can be used. The original was drawn on butcher paper that measured 30 inches wide and 72 inches long (2 1/2' x 6'). To transfer the picture at the end of this lesson plan to the butcher paper, print the picture out onto a transparency (if you have a digital projector that connects to your laptop, then you can skip that step). Tape the blank butcher paper on the wall. Using a projector, fit the image to the butcher page. Then trace the image, including the words. If your perfectionist-self is feeling motivated, you can then paint the image with neutral or pastel colors that will help the pointillism work appear fuller and brighter. In the room where you'll be painting the picture, you'll want the picture on a surface where it can lay flat. You'll have to tape and weigh down the paper with books at the edges because butcher paper curls on its ends and edges.
- **Post-supply work:** After the session is done, there are some finishing touches you'll have to do. If the kids didn't do it, you'll want to create the black lines that you see in the painting that create more "pop" to the drawing. You'll also want to make sure that the letters are readable – if not, you'll have to touch them up. Finally, to hang the painting, you'll need some form of wood to glue to the top and bottom of the backside of the painting. We used a 2" wide lattice that was less than a 1/4" thick. The wood on top will provide a place put in two eyehooks (10 to 12" inches in from the outside edge) that'll allow you to thread wire or string through. The wood on the bottom creates a weight that keeps the paper mostly straight.

Classroom Statement

This Arts & Crafts class consists of reading the Prodigal Son scripture story, and then, using the painting technique of pointillism, creating a reminder of God's abundance for the congregation.

Step-by-Step Process of Lesson

Shepherd comes in with students

SHEPHERD ASKS "Question of the Day."

INTRODUCE yourself

Hi, my name is ____ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

PRAY Short and simple is perfect. For example:

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

TELL

- The parable we're about to read is called "The Prodigal Son." Prodigal means "really really wasteful."
- A parable is a story. Jesus told parables to help people think about a certain idea.
- The younger son is the Prodigal Son.
- During this session in the other two classrooms, you'll discuss and focus on the younger son of the story we're about to read.
- But there's an older son in the story, too. And we're going to focus on him and his father a little bit.
- The older brother doesn't show up until the last bit of the story. So listen to what his younger brother does so that you can tell me what the older son is upset about.

READ Luke 15:11-32

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 inheritance/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 sense 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 his elder son was in the field; and when he 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 he 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."

ASK (answers in parentheses)

- What did the younger son do that was so wasteful? (He spent his entire inheritance)
- When the younger son comes back, what does the dad do? (the dad hugs him and throws him a party)
- And why would the older son be upset about this? (because he never left and he never wasted money and his father never threw a party for him)
- Does that make sense to you?
- Do your brothers or sisters seem to get away with things that you aren't allowed to get away with?
- Does that seem unfair to you? Why?
- So what does the dad tell his older son after he complains? (verse 31 "You are always with me and all that is mine is yours." In other words, "You've got more than enough")

TELL

- In this parable how the father acts is supposed to help us think about how God acts towards us.
- So one of the things that the father does is offer a lot of things (money, a fatted calf, a party) and a lot of love.
- What are some things that we can name that God has given us? (mom and dad, cats, dogs, food, life, nature, the ability to learn, move, laugh, etc)
- That's a lot, isn't it? And enough, isn't it?
- But aren't there still other things that you want? Like a video game or tickets to a concert, or to see a certain movie or own a certain cell phone, ipod, etc?
- And when we're wanting more than what we already have, then we're feeling like the older brother did.
- When we have enough, it can be easy to forget that we have enough.
- It's much easier to think that we need more, right?
- For today, for our craft activity, we're going to, with the help of the other classes, make a painting that will serve as a reminder for us and all of the congregation that God has given us enough.
- After we're done, it'll hang in the sanctuary for awhile, and then it'll hang in the _____.

EXPLAIN art activity

- On this large piece of paper (approximately 2 ½ feet wide by about 6 feet long), we have a picture of a family walking towards a very pretty landscape with some words from the story that we just read.
- We're going to color in these words and pictures by using Q-tips to dot the paint on to the pictures.

- This technique of dotting with paint is called pointillism
- Here's a picture that uses pointillism:



- First thing everyone needs to do is get a smock on.
- And then I'll assign two or three of you to an area to fill in with certain colors
- You start out with the darkest color and you'll dip your q-tip into the paint and then you'll dab five or six dots on the paper along the border of the item you are painting– not quite on top of each other – then you'll put your q-tip in the paint again and repeat your actions, working your way to the inside of the object. The closer to the inside you get, the further away your dots should be from each other.
- Then you take another q-tip and use a lighter, mid-tone color. Put these dots in the spaces between the darker spots.
- Finally, you'll finish with another q-tip and with the lightest color, dabbing on top of the darker colors, but with less dots.
- For example, if the shirt is red, you will use darker red dots at the edges and in the creases first.
- Then you can work with the main red color and then add any highlights last.
- The painting of areas should incorporate a variety of colors with the main color being primary.
- For example: you might paint dark reds, add a few dots here and there with other darker colors and then use the primary red for 80% of the area and then add highlights with lighter colors.
- See the sample and actual picture for visual help with the colors.

DO Pointillism Activity

NOTES to Teacher:

- Spread the children out so that they have room to work -- space them around the table.
- If a group completes an area, have them throw out the Q-tips they are using and put the paint back in the main paint tub (clean up) BEFORE giving them another area to work on.
- The first class should work on the background and then what ever they can complete of some of the figures.
- The older kids/class should do the more detailed parts (if possible.)
- Allow about 5 minutes for clean up and hand washing. Encourage them to clean up and rinse out the painting cup for reuse.

CLEAN UP

Suggested Variations for age groups

For the K-1st graders and maybe even the 2nd-3rd graders, you might consider asking the 6th & 7th graders (along with their teachers) to come in and assist. Use those students and adults as you think best: To support what the younger kids are doing, or if there's very few of the younger kids, give the 6 & 7th graders an area to complete. The reason for this is because often times when doing these paintings, the kids don't actually get it done and the majority of it is done by adults. We want to try and avoid that as much as possible.

Then the father said
"You are always with me
and all that is mine is yours"
Luke 15:31

