



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## LESSON 29

### **A SON AND HIS FATHER: THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON**

#### **Summary of Today's Story**

The parable of the prodigal son is a response to the question: Who deserves God's love?

A man's younger son takes his half of the inheritance and whittles it away in "riotous living," then returns to his father in shame and embarrassment. He hopes to be treated like one of the servants, not any better; he just wants to return to the home and be given shelter and food. But the father welcomes him generously and lovingly.

Meanwhile, the older son is jealous, resentful that the younger son's bad behavior has been ignored, if not forgiven, by the father. Doesn't *he*, the younger son who has been obedient and faithful, deserve that treatment more?

#### **Where You'll Find Today's Story**

##### **In the Bible**

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

**Luke 15:11-32**

##### **In Children's Bibles**

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

##### **In Our Sunday Lectionary**

Today's story is told in church on the following Sunday:

Year C: Fourth Sunday in Lent

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## Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

Jesus' tale shows clearly that God's expansive and

unconditional love is given even to the one who deserts him. This love Jesus contrasts with the resentment that the elder brother shows upon seeing the father welcome the prodigal back home.

So to the question "Who deserves God's love?" Jesus answers, "All of us."

The younger son is not so much evil as irresponsible and self-centered. He thinks he doesn't need his family. There's nothing wrong with moving away from Mom and Dad. And the inheritance isn't the point either. Dad willingly gives it away. It isn't even the young man's carousing and lavish—if temporary—lifestyle and spending sprees. These are the secular problems that will land him in serious financial trouble, aside from the spiritual abyss that comes with it.

In fact, the point isn't even the son. The son is actually just an exaggerated archetype of all of us earthly sinners. Who has not ever been a prodigal child, spending too much money on something we really craved—a fancy toy? a gorgeous sweater? a new car? Who has not ever thought ourselves independent beings, wanting to separate from our parents, wanting to live our own lives? Who has not been self-serving, spendthrift, rebellious—even just a little?

Or are we the "good child" who, underneath our perfect obedience, resents that we are not rewarded more for our goodness? Have we ever been jealous of the fun that our "bad" brother or sister has had—even if they had to pay the penalty? Why do good things happen to bad people? Why does *he* get the fatted calf—you never gave *me* a fancy party like that!" Does God the Father play favorites?

So the focus is not one or the other son. It's the father who spreads his generosity almost indiscriminately—a prodigal father. The vexing issue for us and our earthly sense of fairness is that God does *not* play favorites. God plays *forgiveness*.



## The Episcopal Thread

In the service of a Reconciliation of a Penitent (private confession) in the Prayer Book, the penitent begins the confession by acknowledging all that

God has done for him or her. And then the person says, "But I have squandered the inheritance of your saints, and have wandered far in a land that is waste" (p. 450).

At the end of this time, the priest says, "...for you were lost, and now are found; you were dead, and now are alive in Christ Jesus our Lord" (p. 451), repeating what the father said to his prodigal son upon his return from his "land that is waste."

We all want to belong to a community. A "land that is waste" is a place—physically, mentally, spiritually—without community. It is a place that offers nothing for the soul.

One of the distinctive aspects of the Episcopal Church is that it recognizes the importance of community—of our common life, on earth and in the church. Each church congregation is not an autonomous place of worship. It works with the support, collaboration, prayers and common mission of the other Episcopal congregations in the diocese, of the diocese to which it belongs and of the Episcopal Church itself. The Episcopal Church also puts great importance on communion and community with other Anglican churches around the world.

What the prodigal son discovered upon his return is what Episcopalians learn in the faith. We learn that there is love and welcome in the community of faith. There is mercy and forgiveness from the church. And there is even, when we are hungry, a hot meal waiting for us—prepared by Episcopalians who know that serving others is as intrinsic a part of their faith as it is an intrinsic part of God's love.



## Gathering

As the children enter the room, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today's lesson. Or for general ideas, see the Appendix (also downloadable), or you might consider one of the following options.

This time may be simply one for children to say hello and to look around the room and see what interests them. You may have put up some new pictures on the walls or some new props or individual activities or story figures.

If there's an activity from a previous lesson that they have not yet finished, invite them to continue working on it.

Older children may want to reconnect with each other, a brief "social time" in which they catch up on happenings among them. If there is a newcomer, be sure that he or she is welcomed into the group and not excluded.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer.

- God of love, we thank you for this day to be with each other and with you. Bless our time together, as we hear a story that teaches us how much you love us. We pray in Jesus' name. *Amen.*



## Telling the Story

Read today's story aloud from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or tell the story in your own words.

The story of the prodigal son, his older brother and his father has such familiar emotional dimensions that it may easily be told in contemporary form. Once you have done a traditional reading of this story, you might retell it with modern examples (substituting, for example, a lobster bake for the "fatted calf"). Even the children can probably think of many ways in which the prodigal son spent the millions that his father gave to him. And when the son came back in rags, his jeans torn and his jacket filthy, does the father greet him with new clothes, a laptop with Facebook so that they can keep in touch, and a management position in the family business?

Let the children hear the story without analyzing it for them or discussing it. For now, simply let the story sink into their minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it and explore its message.



## Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your room.

### Materials:

- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or 1 large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional:* flowers (real, artificial or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read a verse or two of today's scripture from a Bible so that the children connect the story they heard with the Bible, which is the word of God. If working mainly with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

*For younger children:* Luke 15:20

*For older children:* Luke 15:21-24

Help the children become familiar with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

*Reader:* A reading from the Gospel of Luke:  
(*Read the selected passage.*)

*Reader:* The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself, then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week, at home, at school and with

others. Of God's "inheritance" to you, God's gifts to you, what can you thank God for? Where has God's love and forgiveness been for you?

- Welcome any prayers of concern or petition for anyone in any need or trouble, whether for themselves or for others. "Be with us, God, and hold us up in our troubles."
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



## Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as:

- Thank you, God, for all the blessings of this life—for the food given to us, the love that supports us and for this time together with each other and with you. We give you thanks forever and ever. *Amen.*

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Wonder aloud about the story, connecting with the feelings and the ideas, and to explore how God comes to us in this story.

- Are we the lost, or are we rejoicing with God?
- Or are we (and we must admit that we often are) more like the elder brother or like those who grumble when those whom we dislike are given grace and forgiveness and mercy and love?
- What do you think of the prodigal son asking for his inheritance before his father is even dead?
- Then imagine his predicament when, after a time of partying and games, he finds himself looking at pigs' gruel and wishing he could eat it. Imagine how he must feel on his way home—humiliated, ashamed, afraid to meet his father.





## Weaving God's Beloved Community

God's beloved community is woven as our own stories connect

to the story of God and to the stories of the people around us.

As your time together draws to a close, take a few minutes to help the children summarize the story and say what they learned today by asking questions such as:

- When the son went away and spent all his money and then came back home, how did he feel?
- What did his father do upon the son's return?
- What does God do when we have done wrong and then come back to God?



## Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or

back to their homes with God's love and blessing.

The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- God of love, you always want us to be with you. You always take us back when we lose our way. Be with us this week, help us to do what you would always want us to do—to love you and to love others. Bless us and our families, now and forever. *Amen.*

End with a dismissal used in church, such as:

- Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

The children answer:

- Thanks be to God!



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## HUGGY ARMS

Preschool, Primary

Children trace their arm span on paper, then decorate it with stickers, crayons and a special message.

### Materials:

- 4' length of paper, 1 per child
- scissors
- crayons or markers
- heart stickers

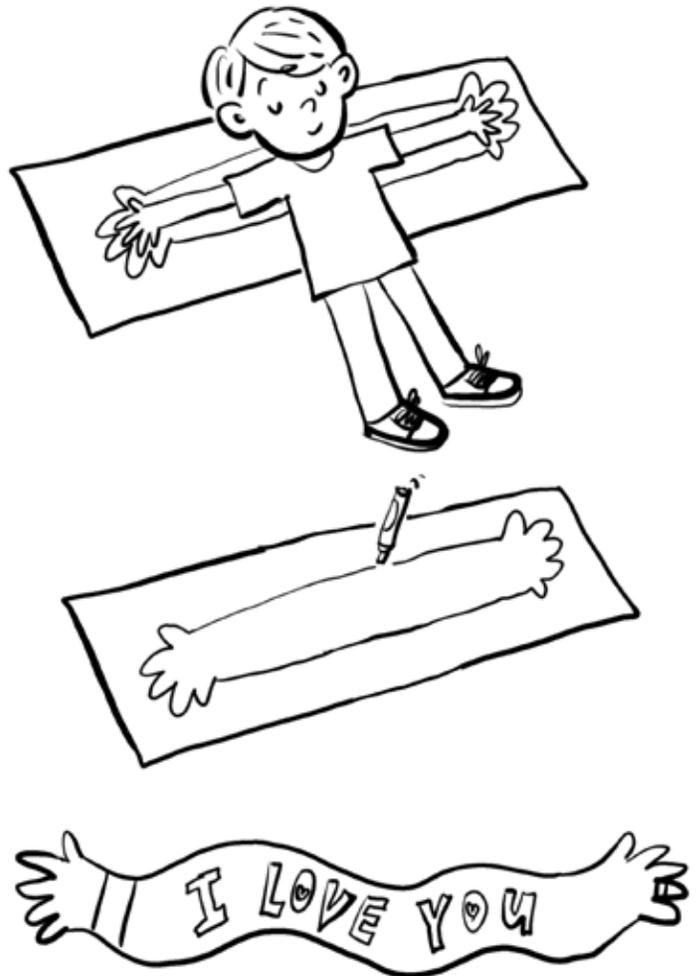
### Directions:

Help each child to make a picture as follows:

1. Put the paper down on the floor and have a child lie down on his or her back with arms straight out, perpendicular to the body. The paper should be under only the outstretched arms.
2. Outline the arms.
3. When the child gets up, draw lines to connect the two arms, making a single long arm-span.
4. Cut out the arms.
5. Write *I Love You* on the arms.
6. Decorate with heart stickers and crayons.

### Variation:

Instead of using paper, use a four-foot length of fabric for a softer touch, then use fabric paints to paint *I Love You* on the arms.





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## FUZZBALL FABLE

Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children make fuzzball characters and use them to retell the story of the prodigal son.

### Materials:

- large fuzzballs (found in craft stores), 3 or more per child
- googly eyes
- felt pieces
- scissors
- liquid glue
- toothpicks
- small paper or plastic cups for glue

### Preparation:

Pour some liquid glue into the small paper or plastic cups, which will be easier to handle than the glue dispensers.

### Directions:

Invite each child to make three or more fuzzballs as follows:

1. Each child will make at least three fuzzballs, but may make as many as there are characters in the story:
  - prodigal son
  - father
  - older brother
  - farmer
  - pigs
  - servant
2. Dip a toothpick into the cup of glue, and then spread glue onto the back of a googly eye, to glue the eye onto the ball.
3. Cut a small piece of felt for a foot and glue feet onto the fuzzball. For a pig, of course, you need four hooves.
4. Make additional features for the character as needed. For example, you may also want to use a small felt circle for a pig's snout and pointy pieces for ears.

5. Make sure there's a fuzzball for each story character. Make more as needed.
6. Let the fuzzball characters dry.
7. When all fuzzball characters are ready, have children sit at the table or on the floor in a circle with their characters ready to "act." The leader will retell the story of the prodigal son as the children have their fuzzballs act out the story in their own way.





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## DROOPY DRAMA

Elementary, Intermediate

Props are central to this dramatization of the parable of the prodigal son. The children act out their character while standing behind the appropriate costume, which is hanging on a clothesline.

### Materials:

- clothesline
- clothespins
- clothing props for the following characters:
  - prodigal son
  - father
  - older brother
  - farmer
  - pig
  - servant

*optional:* other props (corn or spoon to eat, ring, etc.)  
copy of the “Script for Clothesline Drama” (pp. 11-12)



### Preparation:

- You may do the preparation with the children, who may have fun setting up this drama.
- Tack up the clothesline across the room, with one end on one wall and the other end on the opposite wall.
- Leave space behind the clothesline for children to run behind.
- Use clothespins to hang up the various clothing props.
- What to do about the pig clothing? Use your imagination to come up with a creative “pig”!
- Decide what other props you want to use for this drama and put them out.

### Directions:

1. Assign children the different roles above. If you have fewer than six children, they can have multiple roles.
2. Read the story from the script. As you tell the story, the children with the assigned roles take a prop, as needed, and then run behind the clothesline and take their place behind the appropriate clothing. Have them grab the sleeves to make any arm movements. When their role is finished, they run back to their place in the audience.

## Script for Clothesline Drama

This is a story about a father and his two sons. Here is the father, “Dad.” Here is the older son; we’ll call him “Big Brother.” And here is the younger son; we’ll call him “Prodigal.” They all live together in a big farmhouse with their servant “Servius” and their fat calf that they call “Cutie Pie.”

One day, Prodigal decides he wants to go out into the world and see what it’s like. So he goes to Dad and says, “Dad, I need to find out about the world. I know that I have half of your money coming to me. I would like to have it right now.”

Dad says, “You sure, Prod? I can give you everything you need right here. We’ll miss you if you leave.”

Prodigal says, “But I want it right now. Thanks a lot. See you later.”

Dad goes back into his house sadly. Prodigal goes into the house and packs up his clothes, his favorite things, and a little food and walks away. He goes to a distant country and finds the biggest city there. When he gets there, he sees restaurants, movies, concerts and all sorts of things to spend his money on. He eats all he wants, plays laser games, watches movies, buys games and toys and clothes and has a lot of fun.

But then Prodigal’s money runs out. He checks his pockets over and over again. It’s all gone! How can he eat? Where can he live? He stands in the street and begs for food, but nobody has anything to give him. There’s a famine in the land—no food anywhere. No one has any spare money or any spare food to give to him.

Prodigal walks to the nearest farm and knocks on the door. An old grizzled farmer opens the door. He says, “What do you want?”

Prodigal says, “I just ran out of money. I have no place to live and I’m hungry. Can you give me a job so I don’t starve to death?”

The farmer thinks for a minute and then says, “Well, sure. You can feed the pigs out there. See them out in the field? Hey, Sweet Tooth!” He yells to the pig. “Come here and meet your friend?” Then he gives Prodigal a big bucket of corn cobs and leftovers from last week’s dinner.

Prodigal pours some of the pig food into the pig’s feeding bowl. He’s so hungry that he scoops up a handful and starts to eat it himself. But Sweet Tooth the pig growls at him, so he puts it back into the bucket. The farmer forgot to give Prodigal any food, and Prodigal is as hungry as ever.

Finally, after he sits and watches Sweet Tooth eat his fill of food, Prodigal says to himself, “What am I doing? How many of Dad’s servants have plenty of food to eat, and here I am dying of hunger! I’m going to go back to Dad, even though he’ll be mad at me and I’ll be embarrassed to see him. But I’ll just say, Dad, I have sinned before you and against heaven and I am so sorry. You don’t have to call me your son anymore. I haven’t acted like your son. But please, just hire me and treat me like one of your servants so I can come back to you.”

So Prodigal gets up and takes the long road back home. He rehearses his lines all the way home.

At his old home, Dad is standing outside the door. When Prodigal was still a long ways off, Dad sees him. His eyes fill with tears and his heart breaks with love. He runs up to Prodigal and puts his arms around him and kisses him.

Prodigal says just what he has been practicing: “Dad, I know you’re angry with me. I have sinned before you and against heaven and I am so sorry. You don’t have to call me your son anymore. I haven’t acted like your son. But please, just hire me and treat me like one of your servants so I can come back to you.”

But Dad calls to his servant Servius, “Hey, Servius! Look here! Prodigal has come back home! Quick, go into the house and get my best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get Cutie Pie and prepare him for a big feast and celebration! My son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found!”

And so everyone celebrates Prodigal’s return. Then Big Brother comes in from the fields where he has been working. He hears the music and the dancing and the laughing and says to Servius, “What’s going on here?”

Servius says, “Prodigal is back, and Dad is serving Cutie Pie for dinner because Prodigal is back safe and sound.”

Big Brother gets angry and won’t go into the house to join the party. Dad goes out and says to Big Brother, “Come on in!” But Big Brother says, “Listen, all these years, I’ve been a good son and done everything you want. And you never cook Cutie Pie for *me*! But look, your other son took all your money and spent it all, and you cook Cutie Pie for him! That’s not fair!”

Dad says, “Big Brother, my son, you are always with me and I will always love you. But we have to celebrate. I thought your brother was dead but he’s alive. He was lost and has been found. It’s time to be happy!”



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## “COME BACK”

### Preschool

In this game, children run back home just as the prodigal son ran back home to his father. This is a variation on of the game Big Steps, Little Steps.

#### **Directions:**

Invite the children to play as follows:

1. Have children line up at one end of the room, facing the middle of the room. The adult leader stands behind the children.
2. Instruct children to take steps: *baby steps, sideways, kangaroo hop, jump, one foot hop, big step*—be creative and think of other types of steps, too.
3. When the children have crossed much of the room, shout “Come back home!” and have them run back to you.
4. For a variation on this game, have them run *backwards* back to you. Touch each child’s head as he or she gets “home.”



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## MAGNETIC SCENE

Primary, Elementary

Children use box lids, miniature scenery, and wooden dolls to create a scene of the countryside where the prodigal son traveled.

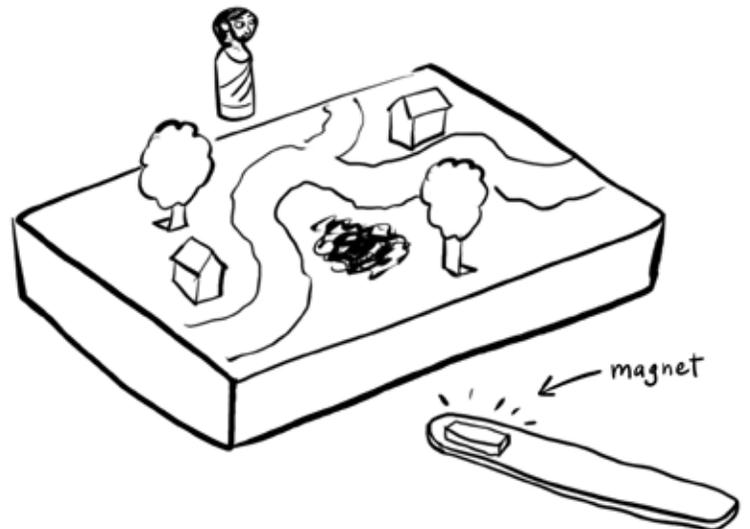
### Materials:

- box lids, 1 per child
- button magnets, 2 per child
- markers
- glue
- wooden “dolls” with flat bottoms (as shown, available at craft stores), 1 per child
- optional:* other scenery as desired (tiny trees, houses, etc.)
- craft sticks

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a scene as follows:

1. Decorate the inside of the box lid, making a scene of the prodigal son's home, the town where he spent all his money, the farm where he fed the pigs and the roads between. If you have these, add craft trees, houses and other decorations.
2. Decorate a doll as the prodigal son. On the bottom of the doll, glue a button magnet and let dry.
3. On a craft stick, glue another button magnet. *Make sure that it is glued so that this magnet and the doll magnet attract and not repel!* Let this magnet dry.
4. Place the prodigal son doll on the scene that you have decorated. To make him move “by himself,” hold the craft stick underneath the box and let it “find” the doll. The magnet on the stick will move the magnet on the doll.
5. Retell the story of the prodigal son as the children move their prodigal son around the scene they've created.





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## STOP-AND-POP BALLOON STORY GAME

Elementary, Intermediate

Children try to retell the prodigal son story by arranging the story's action in its proper order. The catch: the story lines are written on separate slips of paper and tucked inside inflated balloons.

### Materials:

balloons, 1 or more per child

a copy of the "Stop-and-Pop Balloon Story Game: Story Lines" (p. 16)

*optional:* foam pool bats (one brand is called Noodles®), 1 per child

### Preparation:

- Make a copy of the story lines and cut to separate into small slips of paper.
- Insert one story line into each balloon and inflate.

### Directions:

Invite the children to play as follows:

1. Form a circle.
2. Throw all balloons into the air. Children bat the balloons around with their hands (or with the bats).
3. When the leader yells "Stop and pop!", each child grabs a balloon, pops it with his/her feet, and takes out the slip of paper.
4. Children they work together to figure out what story line is first, second and so on, and get in line in this order.
5. Children stand in order of their story line, or put the story lines in order (if there are more lines than children). Then read the story aloud in that order.
  - Did they get the order right?
  - What does it sound like if the lines are out of order?





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## MOOD PLAY

### Elementary

Children act out the parable of the prodigal son using only facial expressions and body language.

#### Directions:

1. Retell the story of the prodigal son and invite children to act it out only through facial expressions and body language: *proud, giddy, sad, lonely, scared, joyful*, etc.
2. See the story page (pp. 18-19) “An Emotional Reunion” for an enactable version.
3. Most of the children will choose to be the *prodigal son*, but you may have children who choose, or are assigned, the roles of *father* and *older brother*. What do they do while the son is gone? How do they feel all that time? Or have each child act out the emotions of all the characters as the story is read.

## An Emotional Reunion: A Moody Version of the Prodigal Son

We introduce you to a father. He has two sons and he is very proud of them. Here are the two sons. The older one is proud because he always does the right things. The younger son doesn't like living at home, so he is mad right now.

One day, the younger son screws up his nerve and goes to his father. He says, "Father, I know that I will get half of your property when you are gone. I want it right now." When the father gives it to him, he is very happy and he goes skipping off. But how does his father feel?

A few days later, the son gets his stuff together and travels to a distant country. He is walking, so he gets pretty tired on the way, but he finally gets to a town where he can spend all his money. Seeing all the theaters, and dancing places and restaurants, he feels giddy. He even feels a little crazily happy.

But now he has spent all his money. He looks around him and he doesn't have a place to live or food to eat. He is very sad. He is also scared and hungry.

He finds a farmer who will hire him to work. He is overjoyed that he now has a job! But then he sees what kind of job it is. He has to feed the pigs! He is indignant! And then he is envious, because the pigs get more to eat than he does. He wants to eat the food that the pigs are right now gorging themselves on. But no one gives him anything to eat, and he is starving, and scared, and tired and very unhappy. Suddenly he is sorry that he left home.

Then he has an idea and it makes him excited. He thinks, "How many of my father's workers have plenty of food and here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. I am so ashamed. But if you take me back, I can be one of your workers.'"

So he screws up his nerve again and heads home. His father sees him and is filled with love for him. He runs and puts his arms around his son and gives him a big sloppy kiss.

The son starts to give his little speech. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am so ashamed. Please, please take me back and I will be one of your workers." Is he crying?

But the father is so happy he can hardly keep from jumping for joy. He calls to one of his workers, saying, "Quick! Find my best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and give him some shoes. And get the fatted calf, and make dinner. We are going to celebrate! My son was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!"

And they all began to celebrate—the father, the son, the rest of the family, and the workers. All of them were dancing for joy.

Except for the older brother. He was puzzled, confused when he hears music and sees everybody dancing. “What is this?” he asks. The worker says, “Your brother has come home, and your father is celebrating because he is safe.” Was the brother happy, too? No, he was very angry! He stood outside and would not go in the house. So the father comes out to get him, but he says angrily, “Listen, I have been working like a slave for you and always done what you want. But you have never given me even a goat so I can celebrate with my friends!” He was indeed very angry.

The father says, “Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But it’s good that we celebrate when your brother comes back, because we thought he was dead, but he is alive!”



Discuss with the children:

- What do you think the older son feels now?
- How does the father feel?
- How does the prodigal son feel?
- How does God feel when we get close to God?



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## A CONTEMPORARY PRODIGAL

Elementary, Intermediate

Children act out a contemporary version of the parable of the prodigal son and record it.

### Materials:

- copy of the "Family Relations" script (p. 21), or a script you write yourself
- pencils
- audiocassette recorder or video camcorder

### Preparation:

Make a copy of the script "Family Relations" on the next page (p. 21), or make up your own script. You may also wait until class time and invite the children to participate in creating a contemporary script.

### Directions:

1. Invite the children to pick a contemporary scene or country, or part of your city. (Watch for stereotyping!) Use the guide on page 21 to make your story a contemporary lesson about the wayward son and his loving father..
2. Pick actors to play the different parts.
3. You can fill in the script and have someone narrate the story while the other children act it out. Or you can make up your own story, using your own words.
4. Record the story on videotape or audiocassette! Play it back not only for your own group, but also for another class or adult group.

## Family Relations

There is a person named \_\_\_\_\_, with a brother/sister named \_\_\_\_\_.

One day \_\_\_\_\_ said to his/her father/mother, "Please give me my share of \_\_\_\_\_ that will belong to me when you die." That's how s/he got rich very quickly.

Then \_\_\_\_\_ packed up his/her things and went traveling to a distant land called \_\_\_\_\_ and there s/he spent all his money on \_\_\_\_\_. S/he did all these wasteful things: \_\_\_\_\_.

And then there came a great disaster in that land. Here's what happened: \_\_\_\_\_.

And suddenly poor old \_\_\_\_\_ was poor and hungry. S/he went and hired himself/herself out to a company called \_\_\_\_\_, and his new job was to \_\_\_\_\_. S/he didn't like that at all, and s/he didn't make much money either.

So s/he went back to his/her father/mother and wanted to say to father/mother, "\_\_\_\_\_."

But his/her parent saw him/her and ran and put his/her arms around him/her and kissed him/her. Then the son/daughter said, "\_\_\_\_\_" just like s/he was going to say.

But the parent said, "\_\_\_\_\_." And the parent gave \_\_\_\_\_ gifts of \_\_\_\_\_.

And the whole household had a party, where they served large portions of \_\_\_\_\_.

But the brother/sister named \_\_\_\_\_ got mad about this fancy party for the sibling. He said angrily, "\_\_\_\_\_." But the parent said to the brother/sister, "Look here, \_\_\_\_\_."



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## PRODIGAL SON RELAY RACE

Elementary, Intermediate

Children form two teams and race to see which team can finish the prodigal son's actions first.

### Materials (need 2 sets of each):

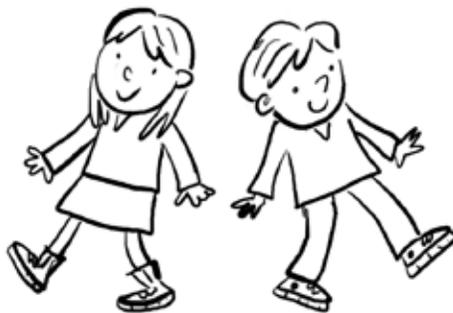
- lots of pennies
- small wastebasket or large coffee can
- coat
- donut holes or animal crackers or other small snacks
- ring
- stuffed animal, rubber chicken or other animal toy
- copies of the "Signs with Instructions" (p. 24), cut apart

### Preparation:

- Put the relay objects in place as shown in the illustration.
- Note that there are *two* teams with a relay course for *each* team.
- For reminders, put a copy of each of the five instructions next to the matching station on the relay courses.

### Directions:

1. Divide the group into two teams and have each team line up single file. Each person on each team is to do the entire relay before passing the turn to the next person.
2. Begin the relay on the leader's signal, with these instructions:
  - Run to the stack of pennies and pick up 5 pennies, saying "Give me my money right now!" three times.
  - Next, run to the wastebasket or coffee can and put the pennies into it, saying "I love to throw my money away!" three times.
  - Run to the snack and eat one. Finish eating before going to the next station.
  - Run to the coat and ring and put them on. Then take them off and leave them.
  - Run to the animal, pick it up and shout, "I'm forgiven! Cook the fatted calf!"
  - Run to the next person in line and tag him or her. The next person now repeats the course.
3. The first team to have everybody finish the entire course wins.



## Signs with Instructions

Pick up 5 pennies and say “Give me my money right now!” three times.

Put your pennies into the wastebasket or coffee can and say “I love to throw my money away!” three times.

Eat a snack. Finish eating before going to the next station.

Put on the coat and ring and put them on. Then take them off and leave them.

Pick up the animal. Hold it up and shout, “I’m forgiven! Cook the fatted calf!”



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

## YOUR OWN COMING-HOME PARTY

Elementary, Intermediate

Children imagine coming home chastened, poor, hungry and tired, and then plan their ideal homecoming celebration.

### Materials:

paper and pencil

### Directions:

1. Invite the children to imagine the following: God welcomes you home after a tough trip that was harder than you thought it would be. Take 10 minutes to think of what your welcome-home party should be like:
  - Who will come?
  - What kinds of gifts would you want?
  - What food would be served for you and your guests?
  - What would you wear?
2. Next, get together as a group and share your ideas and plans:
  - What did you plan in common?
  - Who had really different ideas?
  - Was there any spiritual component?
3. This is God's welcome home party for you, and so God is at the table with you. What would you say to God? Here are three suggestions from the Bible:

*Psalm 107:1, 8-9:*

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.

For he satisfies the thirsty; and the hungry he fills with good things.

*Philippians 4:6*

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

*1 John 4:19*

We love because [God] first loved us.