

TEXT Luke 15:11-24

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to tell the different steps taken by the prodigal son — leaving home, riotous living, repentance, new life. They will realize that sin will bring sorrow, but Jesus has great things in store for all who will return to Him.

MEMORY VERSE Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.
— James 4:8

The Prodigal Son

MEMORY VERSE IN ACTION

DRAW NIGH — Hold palm before face at arm's length, move palm very near to face.

TO GOD — Point up.

AND HE WILL DRAW NIGH — Hold palm before face at arm's length, move palm very near to face.

TO YOU — Point to others.

MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

The visualization of the memory verse for this week is a little girl who is kneeling and a thought balloon above her. (See pattern at the end of this lesson.) Cut out each of the pieces as indicated by the heavy black lines. Arrange them in sequence on your display board as your students learn the verse.

BIBLE LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction: Open your class time by handing out some play money to each of your students. Ask them how they would spend the money if it were real. Explain that today's Bible story is about a young man who had some real money to spend — but he used it the wrong way.

1. The younger son of a father asked for his share of the inheritance.
2. The prodigal left home, lived a sinful and wasteful life, and soon his inheritance was gone.
3. Without money or food, he joined himself to a farmer who sent him out to feed pigs. Then he came to himself, declared himself a sinner, and started home.

Climax: The father ran to meet the returning prodigal, kissed him, and gave him a joyous welcome home.

Conclusion: Sin brings trouble and sorrow, but repentance and returning to the Lord brings love, joy, and forgiveness.

Response: The students will be able to tell why the prodigal left home and what events brought about his return. They will realize that sin brings sorrow, but Jesus is waiting to welcome Home all who return to Him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The parable of the prodigal son is well known. In the Middle East it wasn't unusual for a father to give his son a portion of the estate while the father was still living. The firstborn, by reason of birthright, would receive a double portion and was expected to support the females of the family. A son was subject to his father all the days of his life. In the parable, Jesus has the young man collect the portion of the goods that would come to him and leave for a far country. In that way his father would be unable to have any control over him. The son spent all that he had and was forced to feed swine to survive. As swine were unclean animals according to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 11:7), the job must have been very detestable to the young man.

When the prodigal son found himself in these circumstances, he did some serious thinking about his condition. He repented and returned to his father's house. His father received him joyfully and forgave him, welcoming him back to the family. Some say this teaches that once you belong to the family of God, no matter how much you sin you are still a child of God. That is not what the Lord is teaching. The only way the young man was restored to his family was by repenting and turning back to his father's house and admitting that he had sinned. Had he failed to do this, he would have died in a far country. Those that say, "Once a son, always a son" forget that before conversion one's father is the devil (John 8:44).

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

To conclude your class time, set your table with a paper tablecloth or place mats. The place mats could be made from construction paper with edges decorated to look like a border. Glue paper dinner plates onto each mat. Cut out pictures of hamburgers, tacos, glasses of milk, pop, juice, etc., for the students to glue onto their plates. Explain that in the story of the prodigal son the father wanted to have a celebration meal for his

son, because he was so happy that his lost child was home once more.

Obtain some play money. Make for each child a little moneybag (see Patterns). Copy the bag onto heavy paper. Make slits in back side of the bag where indicated and insert a piece of string (approximately 24 inches) as shown. Attach the string to the inside of the front of the bag to make the handle. Glue the bag together at tabs. Put some play money in each bag. Print the student's name on the bag.

Copy the figure of the boy and the coat or robe from construction paper for each child (see Patterns). Have the students color the coat or robe. Tell the story of the prodigal son and use the coat to put on the boy while telling how the father forgave his son, just as God will forgive anyone who comes back to Father's House — or gives Jesus his heart. The father gave him a new coat to show his love and affection.

Cut pigs from construction paper (see Patterns), and show them while telling the story of the prodigal son. Cut and curl (by stretching taut) one four-inch length of paper or curling ribbon to make the pig's curly tail. (White or pink $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide is best.) Glue the tail onto the pig.

QUESTIONS

What does *prodigal* mean?

Why did the father give the son his share of the riches?

How did the son spend his money?

Do you think the son was very smart? Did he think about what would happen when his money was gone?

What do you think about the son's friends? What kind of friends do you want?

Why did his friends leave when his money was gone?

Why couldn't he get a good job?

Have you ever been so hungry that you felt you could eat the garbage that pigs eat? What do you do when you are hungry?

Why did he decide to go home to his father?

How did the father feel when he saw his son coming home? Did the father punish the son?

How do you think Jesus feels when He sees someone come back to Him?

When we get saved, what does Jesus do with the things we have done against Him?

PRESCHOOL SUGGESTIONS

Make little pigs from used envelopes and use them for props in telling your story (see Patterns). Draw the pig on the envelope so his back is along the fold. If you use white envelopes, color both sides of the animal and then cut him out. Make a feed trough by folding a piece of narrow paper into four equal parts, accordion style.

The little puppets of the boy and pig can be used as pencil puppets or finger puppets (see Patterns). Cut the pieces from felt scraps. Pin together two pieces of felt for body, trace pattern onto felt, and cut both layers at once. Trace patterns for faces and clothing onto felt and cut out. Glue the pieces onto the body fronts according to sample picture.

For Pencil Puppets, sew wrong sides of body front and back together leaving a small opening between A and B. Stuff each part of the body. Put glue on the pencil eraser and insert into the opening of the body. Stitch the opening closed, very close to the pencil.

For Finger Puppets, glue around the edge of the wrong side of both body pieces and put them together leaving a small opening between A and B. Let them dry completely.

Show your group a jar full of pennies and pictures cut from magazines of a number of things the prodigal son might have spent his money on. As you show each picture (food, car, house, clothes, etc.), take some pennies out of the jar. When you have finished showing the pictures you will have no money left. Make a pigpen from a shallow box filled with dirt. Use paper pigs (see Patterns). Put some scraps of food and cornhusks into the box to show what the pigs were eating.

REVIEW IDEAS

Stage an interview with someone who is pretending to be the prodigal son after his return to his father's house.

Give an overhead review of the prodigal son story (see Patterns).

In preparation for this review have about three people record pig noises (snorts and squeals) on a cassette tape. Put two or three cornhusks into a pan. Fill a drawstring bag with pennies (or, if your department is small, purchase enough foil-covered chocolate money for everyone). Pretend you are the father and have people help you as you tell the story. Give moneybag to son; son says good-bye; son spends money with friends; all money is gone (show empty moneybag); job feeding pigs (cornhusks and pig noises); son sorry; returns to father's house; father sees son and welcomes him with joy!

COORDINATING SONGS

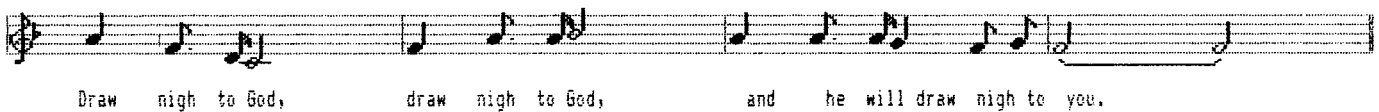
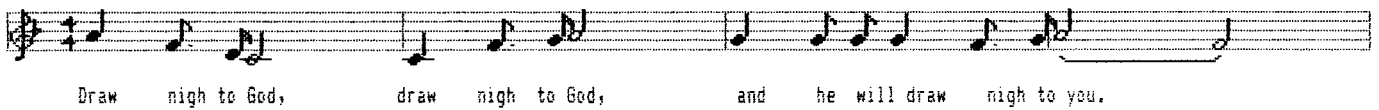
- "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"
- "Come and Go With Me to My Father's House"
- "Jesus Heals the Broken Hearted" — a very old song
- "Everybody Ought to Love Jesus"
- "Apple-Red Happiness"
- "I Am a Promise"
- "Seek Ye First"
- "Into My Heart"
- "Yes, He Did"

"God Loves Me Just Like I Am"

SUPPORT MATERIAL

- Ring, Robe, and Shoes — A Magic Picture Book
- The Boy Who Ran Away — Arch Books
- The Father Who Forgave — Arch Books
- Prodigal Son — Visual Graph, Scripture Press
- The Lost Son and Other Stories — by Ella K. Lindvall, Moody Press

MEMORY VERSE SONG



MEMORY VERSE VISUALIZED

