

The Prodigal Son

PreK-
K

GRACE

LUKE 15:11-32

What is happening in this story?

The parable begins when the younger of two sons asks his father, prematurely, for his share of the inheritance. Upon receiving it, he moves quickly into a selfish lifestyle and soon finds that life can be very difficult. Not only that, but he's lonely for his family. What he previously failed to value, he now sees as precious. So he heads home, planning to beg to be given a servant's job. Of course, his father greets him very differently than that, graciously and lovingly throwing a party in his honor—much to his older brother's dismay.

Why does this story matter for kids?

Every kid has messed up at some point. It might be something big like harming a friend or sibling, or something of lesser consequence, like not cleaning their room. For many kids, doing something wrong leads them to wonder if they are still loved. Children need to know that actions have consequences, but this certainly does not mean they are no longer loved—by caregivers or by God.

Why this theme?

The small word *grace* is huge in significance for Christian faith, and this parable brings the concept vividly to life. Jesus' point, of course, is that God's grace is more powerful than any of our bad decisions, and that God will always welcome us home.

AGE LEVEL TIP

This lesson is a perfect opportunity to experience receiving grace from classmates and leaders. Watch for kids who are fearful of messing up, and give them extra support. Redirect rambunctious kids, reminding them that they are a valued part of the class even when they mess up. All of us can learn to receive grace.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Crayons
- Scissors

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Party blowers (1 per kid)
- Cocoa powder
- Hand wipes
- Muffin tin
- Cupcake liners
- Coins
- Single-hole punches
- Yarn or ribbon

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

When the first kid arrives, blow a party blower and yell, **“Welcome!”** Give that kid a party blower to greet the next kid. Continue to have kids greet new arrivers with big welcomes. **It’s fun to be welcomed to Sunday school with so much excitement!**

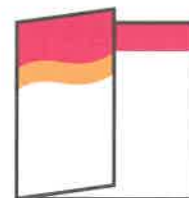
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Today we’re going to hear a story about a family. **This family has a father and two sons. Who is in your family?** Give kids time to share. **Who has heard of the word *grace*? Grace can be what we say before we eat a meal to thank God for our food, but it has another meaning too. When we are given grace, it means we are loved even when we mess up. There is no mistake so big that it can make the love stop. I wonder how grace looks in our families. We’ll see how grace helps the father and two sons when we read our Bible story.**

Pray together: **Dear God, your grace is *amazing!* Thank you for giving us grace no matter what we do. Help us give grace to others too. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets, cocoa powder, and hand wipes.

Put small amounts of cocoa in a few paper cupcake liners. **Pigs are a part of the Bible story today.** Have kids oink like a pig. **Pigs are messy, noisy eaters!** Invite kids to make noise like pigs that are eating. **And pigs like to roll around in dirt.** Have kids dip a dry finger into the cocoa powder and rub the powder on their leaflet to make the pigs “dirty.” Kids can clean their hands with a hand wipe. Collect their leaflets until Respond.



Gather kids around the screen where you’ll watch the video.

One of the kids in the video today makes a choice. Watch for whether it’s a good choice or a bad choice, and watch for how others respond.

View Episode 2, “Wish Woe,” on the Year Gold Spring PreK–Grade 2 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **Ada and Otto both have an allowance to spend. How do they each want to use their money?**
- **When you have money, what do you like to spend it on?**
- **What bad decision does Otto make?**
- **Why was Ada unhappy with Otto?**
- **How did Otto’s parents show him grace when he messed up?**



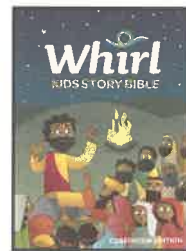
Open your Whirl Kids Story Bibles.

Let's find our story today! Help kids find "The Prodigal Son" on page 270. Before you read, invite kids to look for the pigs.

Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **Why was the young man sad?**
- **When have you made a bad choice and needed someone to forgive you?**
- **How does the father show his son grace and forgiveness?**
- **Who has given grace to you? In what way?**
- **How does God show all of us grace?**



Gather near the Wall Chart to place today's sticker.

Point out the Testament (New) and character image (Prodigal Son). **Jesus was the first to tell people the story about the son who returned home. Let's add a sticker to remind us of where the son was when he decided to go home** (with the pigs). Point to the corresponding images of the pigs on pages 270-271 in the Whirl Kids Story Bible.



Play together!

We're going to play a game that will require lots of grace. Let's toss coins into a muffin tin. We'll try to get one coin in each spot in the tin. Place a muffin tin filled with paper liners on the table. (The paper liners prevent coins from bouncing.) Have kids stand several steps from the table. Kids take turns tossing coins into the tin. After every two coins, allow kids to take a step closer to the muffin tin. Eventually they'll be standing over the tin, making it easy to drop their coins in the tin. **What is the hardest part of the game? Grace is like getting to step closer to the tin. It's a gift we get even when we haven't done anything to earn it!**

BIBLE BIT

In Jesus' day, it was undignified for a man of the father's status to run. The father loved his son so much that he wasn't worried about social norms.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, pay attention to how Otto expected his parents to react when he first went into the well (as compared to their actual reaction).

OUR CHURCH

Read a prayer of confession from your church's prayer book with the kids. Congregations also read psalms as a form of confession. Psalm 51 is a common one.

RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets and crayons.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. **Look at the word in the top corner of your leaflet. It starts with the letter G. What sound does G make? The word says *grace*.**
2. **Follow the red arrow to the red circle. Imagine you've messed up and made a bad choice. Draw a face in the red circle that shows how you feel when you make a bad choice.**
3. **Follow the blue arrow to the blue circle. How does it feel to receive grace after you mess up and make a bad choice?** Invite kids to draw in the blue circle a face that shows how they feel when they receive grace.
4. **The green arrow points to the green circle. How does it feel when you see someone else mess up or make a bad choice that hurts you? Draw a face that shows how you feel in the green circle.**
5. **Follow the purple arrow to the purple circle. When other people mess up, we can give them grace. Just like the father in the story and like God, we can forgive and show grace to others.** Invite kids to draw a face that shows how it feels to give someone else grace.
6. **When you give and receive grace, you can celebrate like the young man in the story. Draw yourself and a friend at the table at the bottom of the leaflet.**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Everyone messes up and makes bad choices. We all need grace sometimes. We also can give grace to others. God gives us grace no matter how many times we mess up. How can you show God that you are thankful for grace? Take time to hear kids' responses.

Pass out leaflet panels, single-hole punches, and yarn or ribbon.

A "Welcome Home!" banner shows others there is always grace for them to come home. Punch holes in the top corners of the leaflet where indicated, thread yarn through the holes, and tie the ends together. Hang your banner at home!

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.