

THE PRODIGAL SON



Passages to Study: Luke 15:11-32.

Read with the class: Luke 15:11-32.

Texts for memorization:

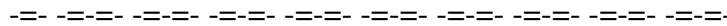
Younger: - Luke 15:18 “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee

Older - Luke 15:18.



OBJECTIVES: To teach that:

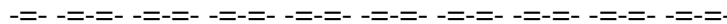
1. Every sinner is far away from God because of his/her sin, and therefore is lost.
2. The lost one does not benefit from the love and care of its owner and is not subject to his will.
3. Repentance means much more than feeling regret for having sinned.
4. True repentance makes the sinner get up from where he/she is and turn to God.
5. There is pardon for the repentant sinner.



SCENE No. 1. VISUAL AIDS: In the father’s house, two sons observe the father as he divides up his goods.
Sug. Some words that describe the younger son could be written out and added to this scene, such as **REBELLIOUS, PROUD, SELFISH, UNGRATEFUL, INDEPENDENT,** etc.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The younger son asks the father for his part of the inheritance.
 - The father could have denied his request, for he was still alive. An inheritance is normally received after the father’s death.
- Apl.** God the Father permits His creatures to use their free will, even when it leads them into disobedience.
- The **REBELLIOUS** son wanted his independence from the father and from everything that might hinder him from living as he wished.
 - Because of **PRIDE**, he feels he can manage his life by himself.
 - **SELFISHLY** he wants everything for himself, without respect for what the father might have in mind.
 - Being **UNGRATEFUL**, he has no appreciation for home and family or for the goodness of his father who has provided him with a home and comfort and many other good things for many years.
- Cmt.** Early in life, adolescents think they can manage their own lives without any supervision from parents. This is a characteristic of our society which has adopted this same attitude towards God. See 2 Timothy 3:1-4.



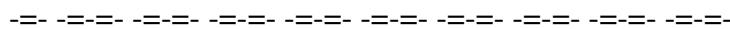
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SCENE No. 2. VISUAL AIDS: Heading for the far country, the younger son sets out on his journey, likely with baggage loaded on a camel. His thoughts about the future can be shown within circles showing parties, friends, food and drink, etc.

DEVELOPMENT:

- As he travels along, the younger son anticipates the good times he will have, without making plans for the more distant future.
- Cmt.** One of the more glaring failures of inexperienced youth is to be short-sighted, and not consider the consequences of present actions projected into the future.
- While the money lasts, the younger son has no big problems.
- He spends his money on clothing, perhaps accommodation, parties and friends, until he finds he his money has run out.
- With his money gone, he finds that he no longer has friends, and no one who is concerned about him.
- There arises a great famine in the country where he now lives.
- Apl.** The world has nothing that will satisfy the true need of the soul.
- Cns.** People without God are truly lonely and lack the resources in themselves to find support and satisfaction.
- His mistake has been to think he could buy happiness. What he purchased was “emptiness”. The prodigal has left happiness behind. True happiness is only found in the Father’s house.
- Cns.** Two keynote words in Luke 15 are **JOY** and **HOUSE (HOME)**,
- Apl.** Those who spend money on drugs, liquor and parties, etc., commit the same error as the prodigal.
- Times of pleasure do not last forever.
- He has been a fool, for he has lived for the present, without thinking about the future.
- His uncontrolled lifestyle has taken him almost to the point of being forever lost.
- Sug.** In order that the students understand what it means to be desperate, try to guide them in imagining what it would be like to realize, all of a sudden, that their money has run out.



SCENE No. 3 VISUAL AIDS: Figures of the prodigal sitting among pigs, with some left over bits of food for the pigs around him. Then change it for the figure of the prodigal standing up, about to leave for home.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The younger son has ended up hungry and needy.
- Because of this, he has come to realize he is in a country that has food for animals but nothing for him.
- Sug.** Talk tactfully to the children about what it is like to be hungry. It is possible that some of the students have had that experience. Did they become desperate?
- When the prodigal was in need, he began to think about and remember the father’s house and the food that was available there.
- He compares his life with that of the father’s servants rather than that of his older brother.
- Cmt.** The uppermost thought in the mind of the prodigal is not a bed for sleeping, nor a shower in which to wash himself, nor a house in which to be comfortable but **ABUNDANCE OF BREAD** to satisfy his most urgent problem, hunger.
- Cmt.** There are two important points to present to the students.
- 1. If there is an abundance of bread, then there is something for him.
- 2. He has come to the realization of how far he has gone in his mismanaged life; he is in a worse condition than his father’s servants.

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Cns. In a world that foments the idea of self-sufficiency, a sustained effort to get ahead, coupled with the innate pride resident in the human heart, the sinner finds it difficult to humble himself before God and admit that he is a sinner.

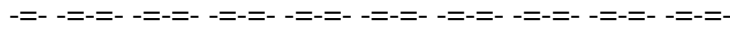
- Recognizing the state that one is in brings a person to true repentance.
- Repentant, the son rises to his feet to return to the father.
- The prodigal does not travel along thinking about food but about his sinfulness and about obtaining pardon.

Cns. Conviction of sin and recognition of guilt always precedes the act of faith which leads to reconciliation and pardon.

Sug. Take time to show the students that true repentance and confession requires an honest appraisal of one's spiritual condition before a holy God.

Cns. The prodigal is not inventing excuses with the idea of making himself more acceptable to the father in order to awaken pity with a sad story. The father would **SEE** the deplorable condition of the son before he **HEARD** him confess his sin.

Apl. God the Father responds to one who humbly confesses his sin.



SCENE No. 4. VISUAL AIDS: Three figures can be used to show the successive steps in the prodigal's return.

1. The prodigal heading for the father's house,
2. The son being welcomed by the father who takes him in his arms, just as is.
3. The son dressed in new clothing in the father's house..

DEVELOPMENT:

- While still a great way off, the father saw him and had compassion on him.

Cns. If the father sees him when he is still far away and has compassion, it is because he has been looking and waiting for the son to return. The father saw the boy before the boy saw the father.

Apl. It is thrilling to think that the Heavenly Father is looking to see if a sinner is on his way back.

- The father **RUNS** to receive the son and throws his arms around him.
- Having confessed his sin, the father receives him as a son, not as a hired servant.

Cmt. The sinner that seeks pardon finds that the Father was looking for him beforehand to show him love and mercy.

- The repentant sinner that seeks salvation is made a child of God.
- The son who has returned is received in grace by the father who gives him:

1. A kiss; 2. A new garment; 3: A ring; 4. Shoes; and then, 5. A joyful celebration.

Apl. Each of these gifts has special meaning.

1. The kiss assures the son that he has been pardoned. Prodigals that come to God the Father find forgiveness.
2. The dress is not something the prodigal provides himself, but it comes from the father's house. It is "**the best robe**" that meets Heaven's standard of righteousness needed by the sinner in order to enter into the presence of God. See Romans 5:17-18.
3. A ring speaks of a promise. Being circular, it has no beginning and no end, suggesting an endless commitment.

Apl. The same is true of the love shown by the Father and confirms His commitment to every sinner He receives as a son.

4. The shoes have a double meaning,
 - a. Slaves in ancient times went about barefoot and this gesture of the father shows that he has received the prodigal as a son and not as a slave.

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b. The prodigal’s walk will be different from now on. Instead of taking a road that puts distance between him and the father, the new shoes will be used to tread on a path of obedience, carrying out the father’s will.

Apl. Thus it should be also in the life of the believer.

5. The feast was to rejoice over the arrival of the one who had been lost.

Cmt. Notice what the father tells the older son. (Luke 15:32.) The prodigal is described as one who was dead and is now alive, who was lost and has been found.

Apl. These same words can be used to apply to any sinner that comes to the Father in repentance, seeking forgiveness.

- Only the beginning of the feast is mentioned and there is no indication that it ever ended. (Vs.24).

Apl. The joy that God shares with us is never ending.

- The son returned to the father’s house, and was not placed in the servants quarters until he proved himself to be worthy.

- He returned to have fellowship with the father, eat at his table, and would be expected to use the father’s goods correctly and never more be separated from him.

Cns. The son entered the father’s home on the basis of a sacrifice in which blood was shed, the blood of the fatted calf.

Cmt. No sinner can enter into the joy of the Father without coming on the basis of the shed blood of an innocent victim.

Apl. The blood of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is that which cleanses the sinner and makes him/her fit to be in the Father’s house.

Note: The final part of the story that touches on the older son is very instructive. It reveals the thinking of the father about a son who has just returned.

- The older son is a figure of the scribes and Pharisees who complained that the Lord Jesus received sinners and ate with them. The older son did not want to receive his brother nor eat with him.

- See v.28. **HE WOULD NOT GO IN.** This describes the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees towards the publicans and the sinners. It also shows why people do not enter into the joy of sins forgiven, a joy originating in Heaven itself.

- By being so obstinate, the older son deprived himself of the father’s joy, as well as fellowship at the father’s table, and enjoyment of his brother’s company.

Apl. This attitude of the older son is seen in those who do not seek the Father nor benefit from the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus shed for forgiveness of sins.

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