



Lesson 11

## The Father Is Love

Based on: Luke 15:11–32

*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

John 17:3



*TruStory CRE: 1st – 2nd Grade*

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## Leader Prep

*Each week you'll find encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.*

### Further Resources

#### To help you plan and lead:

-Customizable Leader's Guide

-PDF Leader's Guide

-2017–18 Scope and Sequence

-TruStory How It Works

-Small Group Enhancement

-At Home Weekly: Lesson 11

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

### (!) Allergy Alert

When you see a (!) listed next to a resource or activity, note that potential allergens are suggested that may affect children with particular sensitivities. Please check with parents before their children participate.

### Inspire

*Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

In high school, our girls' Bible study planned a trip to New York City to celebrate the year. As the trip approached, our leader asked me, "Did you invite Cecilia?" "She hasn't been to Bible Study in six months," I protested. "It doesn't seem like she should get the reward of going." "I know," my leader said, "but I thought maybe the Lord could use this trip to help her get plugged into the group again."



I was silent for a few moments. The older brother from the parable of the prodigal son loomed over me—but I didn't want to acknowledge my attitude. It wasn't fair; I hadn't missed Bible study all year!

A few years later, I experienced how the younger brother in the parable may have felt. I went through a season of feeling guilty all the time. I was trying so hard to please God but realizing the impossibility of being perfect. It got to the point where I felt guilty if I walked by a piece of trash on the sidewalk without picking it up.

In the midst of my striving, the Lord told me, "All I want is your heart. You don't have to do anything to please me; I'm already pleased with you." I was never the same. Gratefulness for God's love filled my heart. After that, I thought about Cecilia with a new perspective. It's amazing how an encounter with the Father's love can change you. He is love.

*Kelly Goddard*  
HRock Church

## Equip

*Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

In Luke 15, Jesus tells a memorable story that we refer to today as the parable of the prodigal son—a story that might better be called the parable of the unloving brother. We can see the specific reason why Jesus tells this parable as we look at the story in context.

In the beginning of the chapter, we see tax gatherers and sinners coming to Jesus—something that greatly bothered the Pharisees and scribes. Pious Jews didn't have anything to do with these kinds of people. In direct response to the Pharisees' unloving attitude, Jesus tells a series of three parables, all of which together point to one clear message: God rejoices when the lost are found. He is love.

In the first two stories, we read about a man who loses a sheep and a woman who loses a coin. Both stories end with rejoicing over the lost object being found. This third climactic parable also tells the story of something lost—this time, a wayward son who finds his way home, and great rejoicing ensues (by almost everyone).

While we can take away many possible applications from such a story, the main point Jesus was



making is that God rejoices when the lost are found and wants us to do the same. The end of the story makes this clear as it closes with the father teaching a poignant lesson to his older son, who doesn't rejoice when his brother returns.

This lesson points directly at the religious leaders grumbling about Jesus spending time with sinners; it tells the leaders that they should have the same attitude toward the lost. This lesson, from an earthly father, reveals the heart of love our heavenly Father has for His children. God loves it when His children come home. God is love.

## Support

*Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

The parable of the prodigal son is one of the most touching stories in Scripture. We can relate to the son in the story because we may know what it's like to have done something wrong and feel absolutely ashamed. We may know what it's like to have a sibling or a friend who appears to be getting more than we feel is deserved, and we may know what it's like to feel wretched and in need of God's total love and forgiveness.

Spend some time this week praising the God who offers Himself freely to those who repent and turn to Him. Praise Him for the times He offered you grace and forgiveness, even though you didn't deserve it. Praise Him for the blessings He has given you that are far greater than anything you could have imagined—when God forgave you, rejoiced over you, and called you His child.

## Connect

*Children develop relationships with their leaders and one another through simple activities and conversation starters.*

## Conversation String

### Supplies



- Whiteboard
- Dry erase marker
- Yarn or string (1'-4' per child)
- Scissors

Children find partners and discuss questions about their families.

## Prepare Ahead

Cut yarn or strings into various lengths. Make a match for each length of yarn. Cut enough pieces for each child to have one. Write the following questions on the board as a guide for children:

- How many people are in your family?
- What's your favorite thing to do with your family?
- What are some family traditions you have in your home?
- If you could go on a vacation with your family anywhere in the world, where would you choose to go?
- What's the best thing about your family?

## Relate

**CONNECT QUESTION:** Welcome and greet children. Open your time by asking this question:  
**What's a time when your family threw a party or you attended a fun party?**

**It's fun to hear about all the fun parties you've attended. Now, I'm going to pass out a piece of string to each of you. Then, you can find the child in the class who has a string that's the same length as yours.** Once children find their match, invite them to spend a few minutes asking one another questions about their families. They can use the questions written on the board as a guide, or you can read the questions aloud and give the children time to discuss in between.

## Developmentally Speaking

Children in this age group are primarily egocentric but are beginning to see the perspectives of others. This activity allows children to talk about themselves but also learn more about the lives of others in their class.



*The Big God Story, prayer, and discussion.*

## Remember Verse

### Supplies

-Lessons 9–12 Remember Verse Image: John 17:3 – TruStory Year 2 Spring

Each week children will spend time memorizing a portion of Scripture together. The Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:3

## Game: Block Out the Verse

### Supplies

- Bible
- Poster board
- Marker
- Construction paper (5–6 sheets, dark-colored)
- Scissors
- Tape

## Prepare Ahead

Write the words of the Remember Verse onto the poster board. Then cut out 21 pieces from the construction paper to cover each word of the verse and the reference.

## Relate

Review the Remember Verse with the group a few times using the poster board. Then take a sheet of construction paper and block off one of the words. You could also block off a couple words at a time. Invite children to recite the verse with the words missing. Continue to block out



words until the poster is completely covered and children are able to recite the verse from memory.

## Storytelling

### Supplies

-Bibles

-Investigate Questions - TruStory 1st–6th Year 2 Spring Lesson 11

**Bible Passage: Luke 15:11–32**

**Storytelling Technique: Statue Scenes**

**The Father Is Love**

## Relate

**What's a parable?** Invite answers. **Yes, a parable is a story that shows us something true. In today's part of The Big God Story, Jesus told three parables in a row. The third parable—the story we'll look at—is a parable about a lost son. This parable shows us that the Father is love and wants all of us to know that He cares about us. Before we start, let's take a few minutes to ask God to teach us today.** Lead the children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Invite kids to turn to Luke 15 in their Bibles. Then, read Luke 15:11-12 aloud. **The younger son wanted to take his inheritance--the money his father would give him one day—really early. During Bible times, sons often lived where their parents did for a long time. So it would've been a surprise that the son wanted to leave his father's land.** Let the kids know that they'll be helping you create statue scenes during today's storytelling. Ask one child to come be the son and stand very still with his palm facing up as if asking for something. Ask another child to come be the father and stand near the first child like a statue. His face should look sad. **This probably made the father sad. His son was choosing to leave him and go spend his money in another land.** Let the scene change. The father should put his hand over the son's, as if he's giving him money. They should both freeze. **The young man wasn't thinking about what his father wanted. But the father did what his son asked. He gave the son his inheritance.** The two children can sit down.

**So the young man left and found his way to another country. He spent lots and lots**



**of money.** Ask a new volunteer to come up and smile wide and freeze. **Eventually he ran out of money. He became so poor that he couldn't buy anything to eat!** Ask the volunteer to change so that he's now holding his belly and looking sad. Have him freeze. **This young man, who had just been so wealthy, had to become a servant to stay alive. He worked with the pigs, which are very dirty animals.** Ask all of the kids to get on all fours like pigs and freeze. Read Luke 15:16 aloud. **Before he'd had plenty of food to eat, but now he was very hungry. He was so hungry that he wished he could have just bite of what the pigs ate!** Allow the scene to change again. The pigs can shift positions, and the son should look longingly at them. Invite them all to freeze. **If this young man had chosen to stay with his father, he would have had plenty to eat. His father would have taken care of him because he loved him. Instead, the son had selfishly chosen to ask for his inheritance and then leave.** Allow kids to sit down.

**One day the young man had an idea.** Ask a new volunteer to come up and put a finger up in the air like he's had an idea. Have him freeze. **He knew that his father's servants had plenty to eat. Even though he had taken his money and left, he wondered if he could go back and be a servant for his father. He didn't expect to be treated like a son again, but at least he could work and not be hungry.** Read Luke 15:20 aloud for the class. **The father saw his son when he was still very far away.** Ask a volunteer to come up as the father and look excited and freeze. **The father ran out to meet him and hugged him and kissed him! This was a very important part of Jesus' parable. Why do you think He wanted people to know that the father ran to hug his son?** Invite responses from the kids. **That's right! Jesus wanted everyone listening to know that this is what God the Father is like. He is love! He loves us so much and always forgives us, even when we've run away from Him.** Invite all the volunteers to sit down.

**The young man told his father that he didn't expect him to treat him like a son anymore after what he had done. But the father was so excited to have his son home!** Read Luke 15:22-24 aloud for the class. **Instead of treating his son like a servant, the father treated him like an honored guest! He prepared food and got him new clothes and invited everyone to celebrate.** Invite everyone to stand and look excited or happy. Have them position themselves like they're celebrating or at a party. Then ask them to freeze. **The father loved his son so much and was so excited that he had returned. The young man knew that his father loved him, just like we know that our heavenly Father loves us. He is love.** Invite the kids to sit.

**At first the young man's older brother was upset that his brother was getting a**





**party, but the father explained that he was so happy his son had returned home. The father wanted to celebrate because he loved his son so much!**

**From this parable we can see that Father is love. He loves us so much and always forgives us, no matter what we've done. In fact, Jesus came to die for our sins, even when we had chosen to disobey Him.**

**God's love for us is so amazing, and He invites us to know Him. When we come back to Him, He treats us just like the father in the parable treated his son. It's so amazing that we can know our Father who loves us and forgives us!** Share a personal story about a time you were particularly aware of God's love for you.

## Discussion Questions

- What did the son ask his father for? Luke 15:12
- Why did the son return home? Luke 15:14–18
- What does this story tell us about God's love?

## Respond

*Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond to God through creative activities and games.*

## God Is Like ...

### Supplies

- Textured paper (4–5 sheets)
- Scissors
- Butcher paper (4'–6')
- Table (4'–6' long)
- Masking tape
- Markers



-Snacks (!)

In The Big God Story, the father threw his son a party when he returned. In this time, students celebrate what God is like by sharing a snack and offering words of praise about their heavenly Father.

## Prepare Ahead

Cut out a variety of hearts in different sizes from the textured paper. Create approximately 15–20. Spread the hearts across the table. Then, cover a long table with a sheet of butcher paper. When you place your hands on the butcher paper, you should be able to feel the outline of the hearts. Tape the sides of the butcher paper down using masking tape. Place markers and snacks on top of the table.

## Relate

Have children sit together at the table. **When the Prodigal Son came home to his father, his father threw him a party and celebrated his son's arrival. Though his son had sinned and made mistakes, his father welcomed him home and wanted to celebrate him. What does this parable tell us about what God the Father is like?** Invite children to spend a few moments pondering. Then encourage volunteers to share their thoughts with the group.

**God is like the father in this parable. He loves us and wants us to know Him. Even when we make bad decisions, He wants to be with us and help us to make better choices. Let's spend some time celebrating God together.** Invite children to enjoy the snacks as they sit around the table and write words and draw pictures that celebrate what God is like. When kids are drawing on the paper and they come across one of the textured hearts underneath, invite them to scribble over them so they can see a heart appear.

## (Optional) Run Home

Students recall that the father in the parable welcomed his son's return as they "run home" in creative ways.

## Relate

**When the younger son left home, he lost everything he had and decided to return**



**home to his father. We're going to play a game were you'll have to run home to the father in various ways, like jumping or skipping.**

Have the class line up across one side of the room. You'll stand on the opposite side. Then you'll call out "Run home ..." and give a command of how kids should run to you. For example, you might say, "Run home ... jumping like a frog," and kids will have to jump like frogs. Have kids use various techniques such as running backward, skipping, hopping, jumping, etc. The first child to run home and tag you wins that round. Continue for several rounds using different variations.

After the game, discuss: **How do you think the son felt when he saw his father? How did the father show love to his son? How does the God the Father show you His love?**

## Bless

### Supplies

- Bible
- Lessons 9–12 Remember Verse Cards: John 17:3 – TruStory Year 2 Spring
- Lesson 12 At Home Weekly – TruStory Year 2 Spring

*Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.*

### Relate

Invite children to stand together as you read the blessing from 1 John 3:1 over them:

**See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.**

Then, go to each child and bless him individually, saying: (Child's name), **may you know that**



**God loves you and desires you to know Him.**

Once each child has been blessed, say a blessing over the entire group:

**May you know that you're a child of God. May you remember your Father will always respond to you in love, for He is love.**

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.





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