Jesus wanted the people listening to him to know that God loves sinners and wants them to be saved, so he told them this parable:

“A man had two sons. One day the younger son said, ‘Father, give me the part of your money that will be mine when you die. I want to have it now.’

“The father divided his money between his two sons. Not long after that, the younger son took everything he had and went to live in a country far away. There he lived a wicked and sinful life. He foolishly spent his money until it was gone.

“Now the son was very poor. He didn’t even have enough money to buy food. And because there had not been rain for a long time and nothing was growing, he couldn’t find anything to eat in the gardens or fields. At last he got a job taking care of pigs. As he did his work, he was so hungry that he wished he could have some of the pigs’ food. But no one would even give him that.

“The son saw how foolish he had been. He thought, ‘My father’s servants are never hungry. They have all the food they want. And here I am, dying of hunger! I’ll go back to my father and tell him how sorry I am that I have sinned against God and against him. I’ll say that I am not good enough to be called his son and ask him to let me be one of his servants.’

“The father had not forgotten about his son. He still loved him very much. While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. At once the father ran out to meet him! He threw his arms around him and kissed him.

“The son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I’m not good enough to be called your son.’

“But before the son could say any more, the father called for his servants. ‘Hurry!’ he said. ‘Get the best robe, and put it on my son! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Bring the best food we have, and make a special meal. Let’s have a party and be happy! For my son was lost, but now he is found!’”
This parable reminds us of the wonderful love God has for each of us sinners. He is always ready to forgive our sins and welcome us “back home” after we stray from him.

1. As you read the Bible lesson, have your child point to the story character that is like God. Yes, it’s the father who watched for his son and then welcomed him home and forgave his sins. The son is like us. We need our heavenly Father’s forgiveness.

Use the following prayer to confess sins and ask for forgiveness. If you have the Christian Worship hymnal at home, you can find short prayers on various topics to use each day. See pages 134-139.

Lord God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Forgive my open sins and my secret sins. Forgive the sins I know and the sins I do not know. Forgive the sins I did to please myself and the sins I did to please others. Forgive them all, gracious Lord, for Jesus’ sake. Amen. (hymnal, page 134)

2. Grab a calculator, and do the following activity together.

- Have each family member write on a slip of paper about how many sins he or she commits each day. Add up the numbers, and toss out the papers.
- Multiply that number by 30 to find the total number of sins for a month.
- Multiply that number by 12 to find a total number of sins for a year.
- Write the total on the calculator screen.

This number represents a tiny portion of the many, many sins Jesus bore on a cross for your family and the rest of the world. But God’s grace forgives them all and gives us peace on earth and future glory in heaven. Let’s thank God by gladly obeying his commands.

Pray Together

Father, hear me as I pray.
Wash my many sins away.
Cover me with your great love.
Bring me home to heaven above. Amen.

*Ephesians 2:8,9

*The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

*Hymn 304:1

Jesus sinners does receive;
Oh, may all this saying ponder
Who in sin’s delusions live
And from God and heaven wander.
Here is hope for all who grieve—
Jesus sinners does receive.