I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,  
but will have the light of life.

John 8:12
(NIV 1984)
Looking Back at Lesson 7

A Canaanite Woman’s Faith
Matthew 15:21-28

**Aim:** How did a Canaanite woman show great faith in Jesus?

**Truth:** Even when tested, the Canaanite woman continued to pray to Jesus and trusted that he would heal her daughter.

**Application:** Jesus strengthens believers’ faith as they continue to pray to him.

**Response:** When Jesus does not answer our prayers right away, we trust him completely and continue to pray.

**Lesson Summary:** A Canaanite woman called out to Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus tested the woman’s faith by not granting her request immediately. Instead, Jesus repeatedly tested her faith. The woman continued to trust that Jesus would help her. Jesus then commended her faith and healed her daughter.

**Memory Treasures:** *Proverbs 3:5; Mark 9:24; The Third Commandment; Hymn 422:1-4

In Jesus’ parable, what did a father do when his son sinned?

The loving father forgave his son and welcomed him back home.

**Application:** Our heavenly Father is eager to forgive our sins.

**Response:** We repent of our sins and trust that God lovingly forgives us.

**Lesson Summary:** Jesus told a parable about a young man who sinned against God and his father by leaving home and squandering his inheritance on a sinful life. When he recognized his sins, the young man humbly returned home and repented. His father welcomed him home and forgave him. When the father’s other son sinfully resented the attention given to his repentant brother, the father explained that they had to celebrate because the lost son had been found.

* Ephesians 2:8, 9
* The Conclusion to the Commandments
  The Keys, First
  Hymn 379:1,3

famine—shortage of food


Heavenly Father, thank you for the love and compassion you give me even though my sins make me completely unworthy. As we study this lesson today, assure the students of your great love for them, your eagerness to forgive them, and your desire to keep them as your sons and daughters. Amen.
Sing: Sing “Jesus Sinners Does Receive” (hymn 304:1,5,7) as a reminder that Jesus welcomes and forgives sinners.

Pray: Dearest Lord, we sinners daily disobey your holy will. Out of your great love, please forgive us for all our sins. As we study your Word today, help us learn more about your great love and your will for us. Amen.

On the board write “action” and “expected results.”

Point out that when certain things happen in this world, we expect certain results. Ask what would be the expected results in these situations:

- You don’t eat for eight hours. [I’d be hungry.]
- You accidentally cut your finger. [I’d bleed.]
- You hear a funny joke. [I’d laugh.]
- You hit a home run. [I’d feel good and get cheers.]
- You stand outside in the rain. [I’d get wet.]

Explain that those are expected results in this world, but God’s ways are different from our ways. To help us understand God and his ways, Jesus taught many parables.

Today we will study Jesus’ parable about a man and his two sons. It shows us a beautiful truth about God and his ways. Let’s look closely at the spiritual meaning of the parable as we answer this question: **What did a father do when his son sinned?**

**Alternate Lesson Plan**

Sing: Sing “Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound” (hymn 379:1,3). This hymn reminds us that our heavenly Father loves us lost sinners so much that he gave up his Son to save us.

Pray: Dear Father in heaven, thank you for the amazing grace you have shown us undeserving sinners. Receive us as your repentant children. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

On the board write “parable” and ask for its definition. [An earthly story with a heavenly, or spiritual, meaning.] Explain that while on earth, Jesus taught many parables to help people understand God’s Word.

We too sometimes find it difficult to understand the spiritual things God wants us to know. That is because God’s ways are different from our ways. We are blessed to have Jesus’ parables recorded for us in the Bible so that we may learn about God and his ways.

Today we will learn more about God and find the answer to this question: **What did a father do when his son sinned?**
1. Have the students complete God’s Word 1, item 1.

2, 3. After you read each statement below, have students raise their hands (or stand) if they agree with it. After each “vote,” ask why they responded that way.

The younger son . . .
• was selfish. [Agree: He wanted his inheritance early and thought only about himself and leaving.]
• was happy to live at home. [Disagree: He wanted to go far away from home.]
• was rebellious. [Agree: He rejected his father’s way of life and left home to live a wild life.]

Blessings and Temptations
Divide the class into two groups and give each group a section of the board or a piece of poster board. Read the first two sentences of God’s Word Today 1 and have one group list spiritual blessings God gives us. The other group should list things that could tempt us away from God and lead us to reject his spiritual blessings. After two minutes have the groups exchange places to review the other group’s list and add to it if possible. [See some answer suggestions in God’s Word Today 1.]

Luke 15:11-13
1. Let’s match two people from the parable with those they represent. Underline in red the description(s) that match the younger son. Underline in blue the description(s) that match the father. One description will not be used.

a. anyone who rejects God’s love
b. God the Father
c. anyone who loves God most of all
d. anyone who turns away from God’s ways
[The younger son: a, d; The father: b]

2. Usually a father’s inheritance would not be distributed until after he died. Why did the younger son want it earlier? [He wanted it so that he could leave his father’s house and go live his own way.]

3. Circle all the words that describe the younger son:
   - selfish
   - impatient
   - greedy
   - rebellious
   - wild
   - sinful
   - foolish
   - wasteful

[All of the given words should be circled.]

KEY POINT How did the younger son turn away from his father?

The younger son left his [father’s] house and led a [wild/sinful/rebellious] life.

Our Spiritual Inheritance
God has made us to be his children through the gift of faith. Like the sons who received their father’s inheritance, we too have been given many spiritual blessings from God our Father.

Circle in red the spiritual blessings we have received from God.
faith        wild living
money        his Word
forgiveness  popularity
God's love   eternal life in heaven
earthly fame possessions

[Circle: faith, forgiveness, God's love, his Word, eternal life in heaven.]

Finish this sentence: The words not circled represent things that could [tempt/lead] us away from [God].

Luke 15:14-20a

4. Number in order what the younger son did after he left home.

[1] He wasted his money on wild living.
[4] He realized that his father's hired men were better off than he was.
[3] He became so hungry that he wanted to eat the pigs' food.

5. How did God use the younger son's negative experience to spiritually change him? [The younger son came to repentance and realized he had sinned against God and his father.]

KEY POINT What changed attitude did the younger son have when he decided to return to his father?

The younger son was humbly [repentant] for sinning against [God] and his father.

Actions and Attitudes of Repentance

Imagine that at the beginning of the school year, you found the answers to all your science tests for the year. You’ve been cheating by memorizing those answers in order to get an A+ on every test so far. But now you’ve been caught. You will spend a week in detention and will need to retake and pass every test before you have any recess. Which of the following actions and attitudes would show your repentance? Put an X in front of all correct answers.
6, 7. Tell the students: “Look at the lesson picture. Imagine you are the father in the parable and explain what the artist is expressing in the picture. Use verse 20 as the basis for your answer.” [I was so happy to see my younger son return home that I ran out to meet him, strongly embraced (hugged) him, and kissed him.]

8. Read Luke 15:1,2 with the students. Discuss how the older son acted like the Pharisees who muttered that Jesus spent too much time with sinners. [Both felt that they were the righteous ones. Neither realized that they also were sinners, or lost sons.]

9. Have the students complete God’s Word 3, item 9.

   - Apologizing sincerely to the teacher and to God.
   - Being angry about the punishment I’m receiving.
   - Finding a way to use the answers I have in order to pass the tests I’m retaking.
   - Destroying the answers and promising never to cheat again.
   - Being too afraid to pray because God must be angry with me.
   - Trusting in God to forgive me for Jesus’ sake.

Luke 15:20b-32

6. List things from verse 20b that show the father loved his son and was glad to see him returning home.

   [He was filled with compassion for his son.]
   [He ran out to meet him]
   [He hugged (embraced) him.]
   [He kissed him.]

7. Draw pictures to show more things that the father did to welcome his repentant son:

   [Possible drawings: a robe, a ring, sandals, a calf, and items for a dinner.]

8. Although the older brother had remained at home, how did he show that he was selfish and self-righteous? [He became angry with his father for welcoming and forgiving his brother. He refused to go inside to welcome his brother.]

9. Both sons acted sinfully. Yet what did the father still have for both of them? [Love and forgiveness.]
How did the father treat his repentant son?

The father rejoiced over his son’s [return] and lovingly [forgave] him.

God Welcomes Sinners

God has promised that anyone who sins and then repents will find God’s love and forgiveness waiting for him or her. How does our heavenly Father welcome us as repentant sinners?

- God is filled with [compassion/love] for us.
- God [forgives] our sins and gives us Jesus’ robe of [righteousness].
- God joyfully welcomes us back as his dear [children].
- God celebrates with his returned children now and [forever].

Aim: In Jesus’ parable, what did a father do when his son sinned?

Truth: The loving father [forgave] his son and [welcomed] him back home.

Application: Our heavenly Father is eager to [forgive] our sins.

Response: We [repent] of our sins and trust that God lovingly [forgives] us.

Summarize Jesus’ parable for your parents. With their help, evaluate this imaginary situation:

A young woman who worked as her church’s secretary stole a lot of money from the church and made it look as if the pastor had taken it. When she was finally caught, she left the church. Years later she repented and rejoined the church, but many church members refused to talk to her. Some felt she shouldn’t be allowed back into the church.

1. Which character in the parable was the young woman like?
2. Which character were many church members like?
3. Based on the parable, how do you think God felt about the young woman’s return?

Student’s initials: _______    Parent’s initials: _______
What does God say about all these commandments? He says, “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

What does this mean? God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands.

But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.

The Keys

First: What is the use of the keys?
The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth: to forgive the sins of penitent sinners but refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?
The holy evangelist John writes in chapter 20, “[Jesus] breathed on [his disciples] and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

Hymn 379:1,3
For hymn texts, use the hymnal or the electronic memory treasure files for your grade level.
Lesson Activities

1. Review

God Receives Sinners

Purpose: Students will review the lesson by completing an acrostic.

Procedure: Have each student complete Copy Master 1. The answers are as follows:


We Were There

Purpose: Through a drama they create, students will put themselves in the scene and talk about the parable events and application.

Procedure: Have the students work in pairs. Instruct them to create a drama (written first or extemporaneous) involving two servants in the father’s house in the parable. Scene 1: They talk to each other about what happened when the younger son left his father’s house. Scene 2: They talk to each other about what happened when he returned to his father’s house. Finale: They write a conclusion explaining the spiritual meaning of the parable.

Additional options: (1) Have them record (audio or video) their dramas; (2) Have them take turns presenting their dramas to the class.

Note: Instead of one pair doing both scenes and the finale, the activity can be divided into three sections and assigned to three small groups.

2. Application

We Live in Our Father’s House

Purpose: Students will learn more about the truth that they are God’s children of inheritance and will list temptations that could lead us away from our Father.

Procedure: Have the students work individually or with partners to complete Copy Master 2.

[Answers: 1. sons, daughters; 2. love; 3. cares; 4. whatever/anything we ask; 5. compassion/pity; 6. Son; 7. forgives; 8. rooms/dwelling places/mansions. Possible answers for temptations and sins: money, possessions, powerful careers, earthly fame and glory, ambition, wild living.]

Memory Treasures Exercises

Read the Ephesians 2:8,9 memory treasure.

- What does not save us? [Works.]
- Who has given us undeserved love (grace)? [God.]

Look at the Conclusion to the Commandments.

- Underline in red the words that tell how we can show love for God. [“Keep my commandments”; “keep these commandments”; “gladly obey.”]
- Underline in blue what God promises to his children. [“Grace and every blessing.”]
Biblical Answers

Purpose: Students will express truths about the Father’s love and forgiveness based on specific Bible passages.

Procedure: Duplicate and cut apart the rectangles on Copy Master 3. Choose four students to come to the front of the room. Give each of them one of the four situation cards from the copy master. Have each of the other students look up one or two of the following passages: Psalm 86:15; Isaiah 1:18; Jeremiah 31:3; Micah 7:19; Matthew 18:14; Luke 15:10; Hebrews 8:12; 1 John 1:7. Tell the class, “The lost son repented of his sins, but he didn’t think that his father would welcome him back as a son. These four people in front of you do not trust the full extent of their heavenly Father’s love either. When they read their stories aloud, check the passages to find ways to explain how the Father loves them and wants to forgive them.” [Examples of answers:

- Situation 1: Hebrews 8:12 and Micah 7:19 tell us that God never holds our sins against us. When he forgives us, he completely forgets them. They are gone forever.
- Situation 2: Isaiah 1:18 and 1 John 1:7 teach us that Jesus’ death paid for all our sins, no matter how many or how bad they are. Even if our sins were like a bright red stain, Jesus’ blood makes us white as snow or new wool.
- Situation 3: Jeremiah 31:3 and Psalm 86:15 show us that God’s love lasts forever. He is abounding—overflowing—with love. He forgets our sins and loves us just as much as ever.
- Situation 4: Matthew 18:14 and Luke 15:10 make it clear that God cares about every single one of us. The angels rejoice when we repent!]

Note: If you have only a few students, you could read the situation cards.

3. Music

Song of Confession

Purpose: Students will look at the words contained in a hymn of confession.

Procedure: Have students look at stanzas 1 and 4 of “Lord, to You I Make Confession” (hymn 302). Read each line and discuss how the younger son could have said those words of confession. Then discuss how we too can use those two stanzas to confess our sins to God and be assured of his forgiveness. Sing stanzas 1 and 4.

Note: This same activity also can be used with the memory treasure hymn stanzas.

4. Art

Here’s the Message

Purpose: Students will use their creative abilities to design signs containing an application message.

Procedure: Using poster board and craft materials, have each student design and decorate a sign containing a brief saying that expresses what was learned from the parable. They may use one of these ideas or create their own: “Welcome home—you’re forgiven”; “Dead, now alive—lost, now found”; “Forgiven and in God’s Family.”

5. Writing

A Lost Son—At Your School!

Purpose: Students will examine a scenario and then write an evaluation and response to it.

Procedure: Have each student complete Copy Master 4. [Answers: 1. These five students are being like the older brother in the parable. They are not rejoicing in the return of a lost sinner. They are unforgiving, unloving, and self-righteous. 2. Possible answer: “You guys, I’m happy he’s back. God has forgiven him, so we can forgive him too. Come on. Let’s go talk to him.”]
6. Bible Study

Com-Parables

*Purpose:* Students study the other two “lost” parables in Luke chapter 15 and compare them to this lesson’s parable.

*Procedure:* Explain that Luke chapter 15 often is called the “lost chapter” because it has three parables about lost items: sheep, a coin, and a son. As a class read the other two parables in Luke chapter 15. Lead the students to see that Jesus has the same message in all three: The Father wants lost sinners to repent and be found.

*Optional:* Work with the class to write a contemporary parable with the same message, or have each student write a contemporary parable of his or her own.

What God Does When I Sin

*Copy Masters 5.1-5.4* contain an age-appropriate, theme-related Bible study. Use it as an additional classroom activity, or encourage parents to conduct this Bible study with their children at home. The Bible studies are from the original Christ-Light (© 1998) and use the 1984 edition of the New International Version Bible translation.