

LARGE GROUP LESSON

BOTTOM LINE:

God can forgive all your sins.

OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn that there is no mistake they've made that God can't forgive.

KEY PASSAGE:

Luke 15:11-32, Parable of the Lost Son

INTRO:

How many of you have ever heard those dreaded words, "Just wait until your father gets home!" Those are some scary words, aren't they? It's bad enough when you get in trouble on the spot and Mom or the babysitter or a grandparent punishes you, but when you have to hear, "Just wait until your father (or mother) gets home," you know you are in BIG trouble.

Times like that you want to run and hide. You want to disappear. You know you messed up. You know you're going to get it. And the waiting for the inevitable makes it so much worse. What will they say? What will they do? Will they really ground you for the rest of your life?

Last week we learned that Jesus wants us to build our lives on Him. We learned from the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builder that we have a choice - to build our lives on shifting sand, or to build them on the solid rock of Christ. Many of you have already made the choice to follow Jesus. Some of you made that decision last week. But what happens when you get in trouble with your Heavenly Father? What if you wander from your faith? What if you do something really, really bad to mess up your relationship with Jesus?

You may want to run and hide. You may think God will turn his back on you. I have good news. If you can get past the fear, if you can find the courage to ask for forgiveness, God will give it to you.

The final parable in our series is one I'm sure you've all heard. It's one of the most beautiful and powerful stories in all the Bible.

READ LUKE 15:11-32

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MAIN POINT:

The prodigal son was a pretty rotten son. He asked his father to give him his inheritance before his father had even died. He went off to the city and wasted the money partying. He blew a fortune and ended up feeding pigs, longing to feed himself with the food he fed to those animals.

The prodigal knew he had done wrong, and he did not expect to be forgiven. Yet look what happens when he heads for home. His father sees him. His father runs to him. His father doesn't ask questions. He doesn't give a lecture. He throws a party. He forgives his son because he loves him.

God wants us to know that He will always forgive us. He will welcome us back when we stray. His love is never ending, and His love never fails. No matter how much you think you have messed up, no matter what anyone else tells you, God will forgive you because He loves you.

DRIVE IT HOME:

It's interesting to note that this story doesn't end with the prodigal coming home. Jesus goes on to tell us about the prodigal's brother - the one who didn't ask for his inheritance and waste it away. When the brother finds out that his father is throwing a party for the other brother, he can't believe it. He asks his father, "How could you give him a party after what he did? Why didn't you ever throw me a party?"

One of the things that makes it hard to come back to Christ are the people who try to talk us out of it. They may be unbelievers who try to convince us God isn't real. They may be rebels who want us to sin with them even more. Sadly, sometimes they may be other believers who don't have the same kind of forgiveness in their hearts that Jesus has.

Whatever happens in your life, whatever you do, no matter how bad you think it is, I want you to reflect on this story. Remember the words of the brother - and ignore them, because it's not the jealous brother who will decide your fate. God loves you. God is your Heavenly Father, and He wants to welcome all his children home!

If you've never given your heart to Jesus, today is a great day to receive Him. Or if you need to renew your commitment to Jesus, you can do that as well. God wants to run to you. He wants to forgive you. He will always be waiting and watching, no matter how far you stray. Accept Jesus as your Savior today, and you can begin to experience the love that God has for all of us! Please talk to one of us or your parents today if you want to know more about making this decision to follow Christ.

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CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER:

Dear God,

Thank you for your amazing love and forgiveness.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*