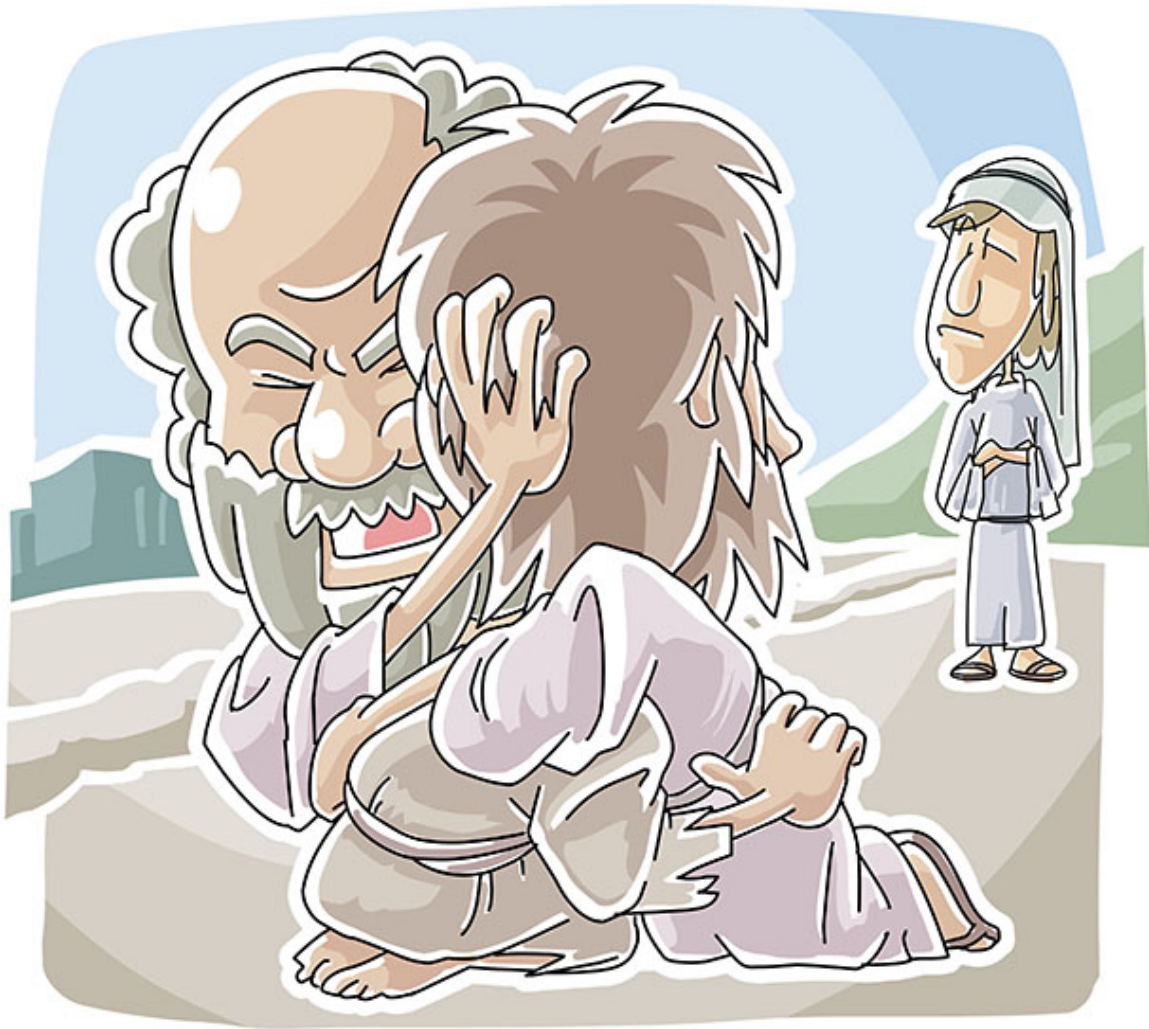


# ***"The Parable of the Prodigal Son"***

Luke 15:11-32 ESV

Bible Lesson & Activities for Children

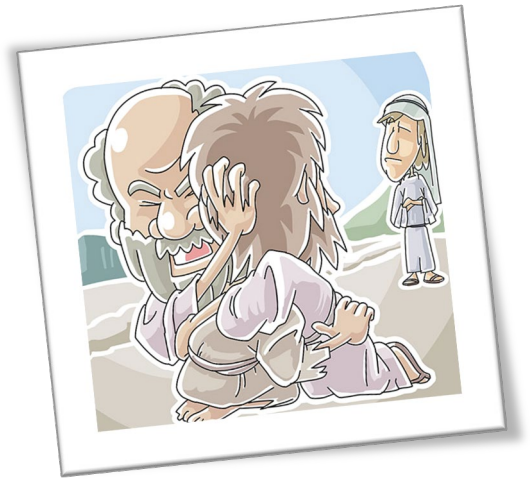


THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

---

# The Parable of the Prodigal Son

---



The parable of the prodigal son is a wonderful reminder of God’s grace and love. Hopefully, children know that they are loved by earthly parents, but they still face punishment and

consequences for poor behavior at home. Although God is saddened by sin, He promises to forgive us when we genuinely repent. It’s important for kids to understand that God is our Heavenly father and genuinely wants us close to Him. He wants the best because He loves us!

**Lesson focus:** This lesson emphasizes the love and grace of God. Through a fun interactive experience of the story and extra activities, students will learn the parable of the “two lost sons.” The proud angry older son was just as in need of forgiveness as his brother! Students will be encouraged to return to God and trust Him, no matter what. We love because He first loves us and seeks us!

**Passage:** Luke 15:11-32

**Target Students:** Elementary School, adaptable for K-6<sup>th</sup> Grades

**Materials Needed:** Construction paper, markers, stickers, scissors, tape/glue, paper towel tubes, paper bags or plates, toy money, popsicle sticks, cotton balls, (all optional, depending which activities you choose to use). Object Lesson props include some sort of “soiled” item (something borrowed that has been tarnished or dirtied).

## More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#)
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#)
- Watch the [video Bible Story “The Prodigal Son”](#) from Saddleback Kids
- Watch the [video Bible Story “Two Sons and a Father”](#) from the Crossroads Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible Story “The Prodigal Son”](#) from the Bible Project
- For more free Bible illustrations, we recommend [Christian Clip Arts](#).

---

# Contents

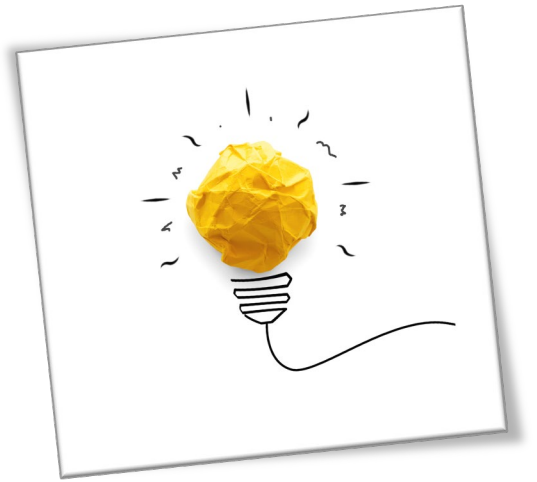
---

Contents .....	2
Object Lesson (5 minutes) .....	3
Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes).....	6
Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes) .....	8
Craft Activities (15 minutes) .....	12
Craft one: "Prodigal Pig in the Mud" .....	13
Craft Two: "Prodigal Son Puppet" .....	14
Luke 15:31-31 ESV.....	15
Luke 15:31-32 ESV.....	16
Story of the Prodigal Son: Coloring Pages .....	16
Bible Worksheets .....	18

---

## Object Lesson (5 minutes)

---



*Greet students and explain the predicament of the dirtied item...for the sake of this message, a library book is used. Clothing, a tool, or other items can easily substitute.*

Hello, children of God!

I am afraid I have a problem...I borrowed this book from the library, and it sounded like a good one to share with my young (brother/child/grandchild/niece/nephew/cousin). Well, I left the book with him for a few minutes, and look! (*Hold up the item*) It's practically ruined now. I tried to get these marks out, and nothing will work. What am I going to do? I'll have to take this back to the library, and they'll know it was my fault that it got all dirty. The library will make me pay for this book. Maybe they'll even take my card away! Maybe I can beg for forgiveness somehow...

This sort of reminds me of a story that Jesus told in the Bible. He wanted to explain to people that we are all sinners in need of help, and that God loves and forgives each of us. This story was about two sons. One of them went to his father and demanded his inheritance. An inheritance is money that usually is given to children after their parents die. Well, this man wanted his money before his father died. He didn't really care about his home and family and wanted to go live lavishly without worries. His father granted the request and gave him the inheritance money! The son went out and spent it. We call this story the parable of the "prodigal son." "Prodigal" means wasteful. This man wasted his father's money on fancy foods and clothes, not thinking about the future and living for fun. Well, after a little while, that money ran out. The son was all out of funds, and there was a

big famine in the land. That means everyone ran out of food, and no one could find jobs or get enough to eat. This son was suddenly hungry and desperate. Eventually, he got the only job he could find, which was feeding pigs! He was so starving that he wanted to gobble up the yucky slop that the pigs were eating. When that happened, he realized how far he had fallen. He thought about his family back home, and about how even the servants in his dad's house ate better than pig slop. So, he went home, prepared to ask that his father take him in as a servant. However, when he got close to home, his father came running out to meet him, and wanted a big party for him! He was so happy that his lost son had returned that he forgave all the mistakes the young man made and rejoiced at having him back. His other son (the man's brother) was upset and thought this was unfair, but the father explained that he wanted to start fresh and was glad to have the wayward son return.

You know, we all make mistakes and need forgiveness. The great news is that God promises to give us grace. Do you know what grace means? It means we get something that we don't deserve. We deserve punishment for our sins, but God gives us life instead, because of the work of Jesus! In this story, we could say that God was the "prodigal" one, because he lavished extravagant or even "wasteful" grace on the son, despite what he had done. But God does that for us, too. We sin and do things we shouldn't. We might even think that we cannot be forgiven. But God loves us and wants to seek us out when we are lost. He rejoices when we return to Him, no matter how far we stray or what mistakes we make. If I went to the library and they didn't charge me anything for the book I ruined, that would be grace. God gives us even greater forgiveness, because He wipes out our sins and gives us freedom and new life! Whatever we do, we can rest assured that God promises to forgive. When we come to Him and repent, He will always welcome us back

with open arms. What a comforting understanding! Let's say a prayer to thank God for His love and grace.

### **Children's Prayer Moment**

(Have kids repeat each line, if desired)

Dear God,

Thank you for being our Father

You always forgive us

Even when we make mistakes.

Thank you for your grace and love.

We love you, God!

Thank you for Jesus

In His name, Amen!

---

## Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes)

---



This lesson describes God’s love and grace, despite our sins and mistakes. The focus story features the parable of the prodigal son, which follows the parables of the lost sheep and coins. There are fun opportunities to emphasize the “lost and found” or pig elements of these stories! To get started, select from one of the following openers, or select another of your own choosing!

- Pig slop scoop: build “pig slop” by saving a variety of scraps and wrappers from food. Place two containers of the “slop” on one side of a room, and have students line up and race relay style to bring the slop back to an empty bucket near their line.
- Hide and go seek! To coincide with the element of seeking lost things, play a classic or nontraditional version of the playground favorite. Consider “sardines” as an alternate, or play “hide and go sheep” inside by hiding cotton balls for children to find.
- Lost and found: hide a specific item, or several small items, in a designated area, and challenge student to find them.
- “Spending spree” fun: Give students each an amount of play money, or a certain “imaginary money” number to spend. Display pictures or descriptions of items and invite them to “purchase” the things mentioned. When the money has run out, announce that there is now a food shortage, and nothing has been saved up. (This happened in the story!)

- Pig snort challenge: Have students sit in a circle. One “pig” will go around the circle and make a snorting noise at students one at a time. The object is not to laugh when snorted at. If a student laughs at the snort, they become the next pig.
- Pen the pig: Use popsicle sticks to play this game with partners. Take turns placing sticks down on a grid design. When four sticks complete a pair, place a small object inside to represent a pig. The object of the game is to complete the most pig “pens.” Keep track of progress as you go. This could also be played with pencil and paper.
- Group hug! To remember the father’s embrace in the story, have all students gather together for a large group hug! (As you feel comfortable, of course...)

Transition into the Scripture study component and discuss how God gives us grace. What is that? Quite simply, grace means getting what we don’t deserve. Because of sin, we deserve death as punishment. But that’s not what we get! Instead, God gives us life through His Son. Invite students to watch for examples of grace as they review the story.

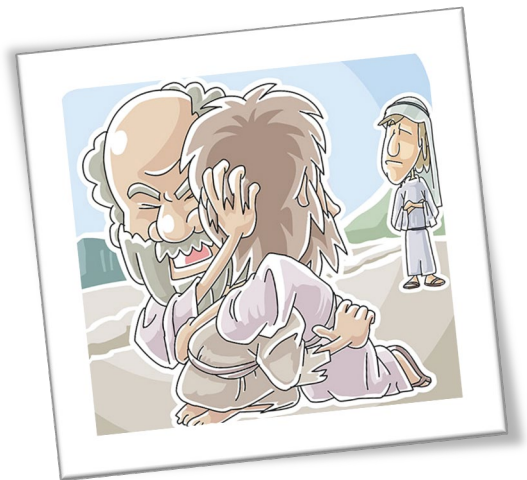
**Ask:** Have you ever made a big mistake at home? Did you ever worry about what would happen as punishment?



---

## Main Bible Teaching (15 minutes)

---



This story is a fun one to act out with students. You could have them use homemade or already-made puppets to act or appoint kids to take on the parts

and mime the action as you describe it. You could also take turns reading and explaining the parables.

Option: if time and interest allow, consider incorporating the other two “lost” parables of Luke 15 or at least briefly describe them. The lost sheep and coin set the stage for the prodigal son, emphasizing the heart God has for saving each and every one of us. Either way, start off by explaining why Jesus told these stories:

*Luke 15:1-2 ESV Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. (2) And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”*

Explain that during His life, Jesus was often criticized by Pharisees for what He did and how. The Pharisees were people who thought that everyone should follow the rules and act “perfectly” all the time. They didn’t think Jesus should be spending time with sinners. Jesus knew that God wanted these “lost people” to come to Him, and He did want to spend time with them. He also saw that the Pharisees were even more lost in their self-righteous pride.

**Ask:** Who are people that you don’t usually hang out with? Do you think God wants you to spend time with different kinds of people?

*Luke 15:11-12 ESV And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. (12) And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them.*

Explain that this was a pretty rude demand the son made. Usually, inheritance wasn't given until a father died. With this, the son was basically saying he didn't care for his father, and he might as well be dead! The father knew this wasn't best for his son but gave him the money anyway. What do you think he did with it?

*Luke 15:13-16 ESV Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. (14) And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. (15) So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. (16) And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.*

It didn't take long for the man to waste all the money his father had given him, but then he found himself in trouble. There was no food in the land, anywhere! The only job this man could find was feeding pigs, and he was so starved he wanted to eat the slop himself! He was stuck.

**Ask:** Have you ever suddenly realized something important, or realized you made a mistake? This man sure did!

*Luke 15:17-19 ESV "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! (18) I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against*

*heaven and before you. (19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”*

So, the son decided he would own up to his actions and go home. But he didn't feel worthy of being called son anymore. He planned to beg his father to take him on as a hired hand, just a servant. He probably thought that his father would be angry and wouldn't want to forgive him. But he was in for a surprise...

*Luke 15:20-24 ESV And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. (21) And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' (22) But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. (23) And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. (24) For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.*

The father certainly didn't want his son to be a servant! He saw him coming from "a long way off." The father had been waiting for his son to come home. He was so excited to see him, it was like nothing had even happened. He rejoiced and called for a party! Jesus wants us to know that this is how God feels about us. No matter what we do or how far we stray from Him, we can always return, and He will welcome us with open and loving arms. God rejoices when sinners come to belief. He seeks out the lost and longs for us.

*Luke 15:25-32 ESV "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. (26) And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. (27) And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has*

*received him back safe and sound.’ (28) But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, (29) but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. (30) But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ (31) And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. (32) It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”*

There’s a final scene to this story, after the celebration has started. The older son did not appreciate what was happening. He didn’t think it was fair that his brother had strayed and squandered money and was still treated so generously with forgiveness. With this, Jesus was sort of explaining that the Pharisees were acting the same way. It was as though they thought only they should receive grace, or only people who worked hard and were “good enough” should have God’s favor. Jesus wanted them, and all of us, to understand that God loves everyone. We all sin and need forgiveness, and God will give that mercy to all who believe and repent! He loves us and cares deeply for us. We make mistakes, but when we bring them to God, He gives grace every time!

**Pray:** Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His grace and forgiveness, acknowledging need for Him. Ask for help in trusting Him and leading others to Him.

---

## Craft Activities (15 minutes)

---

The story of the prodigal son provides us with a comforting reminder that God loves us and forgives us, no matter what we do. Even when we make mistakes, He is faithful and loves us as His dear children. These crafts serve to recount and act out the story for children. A “pig in the mud” is a fun and creative illustration of the son’s hopeless despair and moment of return to his senses (plus, it’s just fun to craft pigs!). A double-sided puppet helps to tell the parable and engage with it, considering how the son was before and after leaving-- and returning-- home.

### **Bible Verses or Captions to Consider... (Main Text: Luke 15:11-32)**

- *For this my son was dead and is alive again. -Luke 15:24*
- *Don't be a pig in the mud!*
- *Riches...to rags...to riches... the story of the Prodigal Son!*

---

## Craft one: "Prodigal Pig in the Mud"

---

### You will need:

- Partial paper towel or toilet paper tube (optional)
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- Construction paper, cardstock or cardboard
- Markers or decorating materials
- Stickers, glitter, jewels, or other decorations



### Procedure:

1. Decorate paper or cardstock with verses or captions. Consider using a brown "mud-colored" paper for the background.
2. Cut shapes out of pink (or other "pig-colored") paper to create a pig shape. Glue onto the background paper. Add ears, eyes, and tail.
3. If desired, attach partial paper towel or toilet paper tube as "snout."
4. Add extra stickers, glitter, and decorations as desired. Display to recall the story and need to not "eat with the pigs"!

---

## Craft Two: “Prodigal Son Puppet”

---

### You will need:

- Scissors
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue and/or tape
- Decorative materials (markers, crayons, stickers)
- Paper bag (or paper plate)
- Cloth or felt (optional)



### Procedure:

1. Decorate the bag or plate to be a two-sided puppet. On one side, create an interpretation of the “extravagant” or rich son. Use felt or cloth for robes, gems for rings on fingers, and other items to represent the son in “privileged” state.
2. On the other side of the puppet, depict a sad and poverty-stricken son, with rags and mournful features. Perhaps even smear or draw some dirt on this side.
3. Add verses or captions as desired.
4. Use the puppet to tell the story. The “rich side” can show the son when first running away, as well as after returning home. The “poor side” can be used to exhibit the action in the middle of the story. If desired, make additional puppets to portray the father, brother, and pigs in the story!

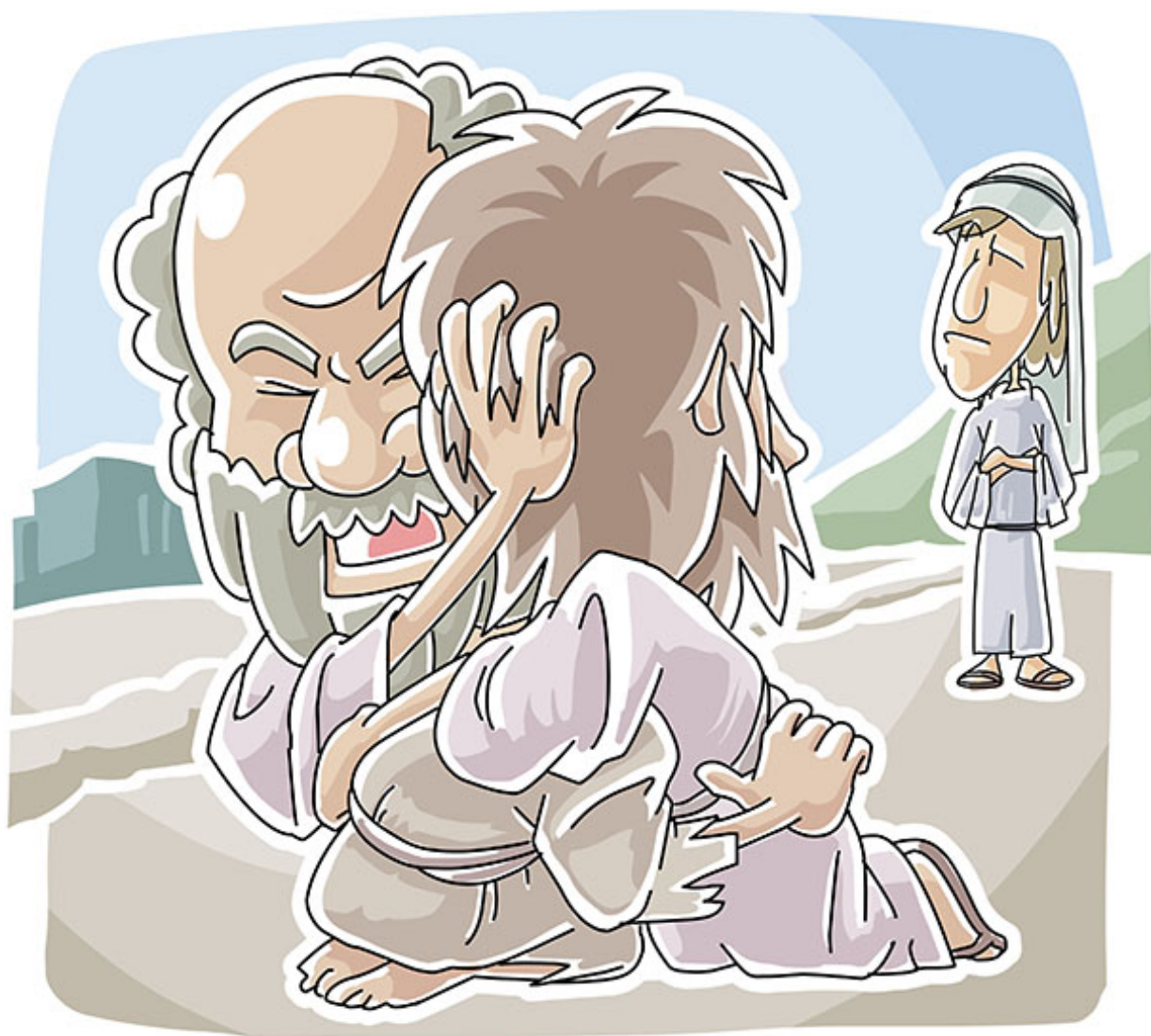


---

## Luke 15:31-31 ESV

---

And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'





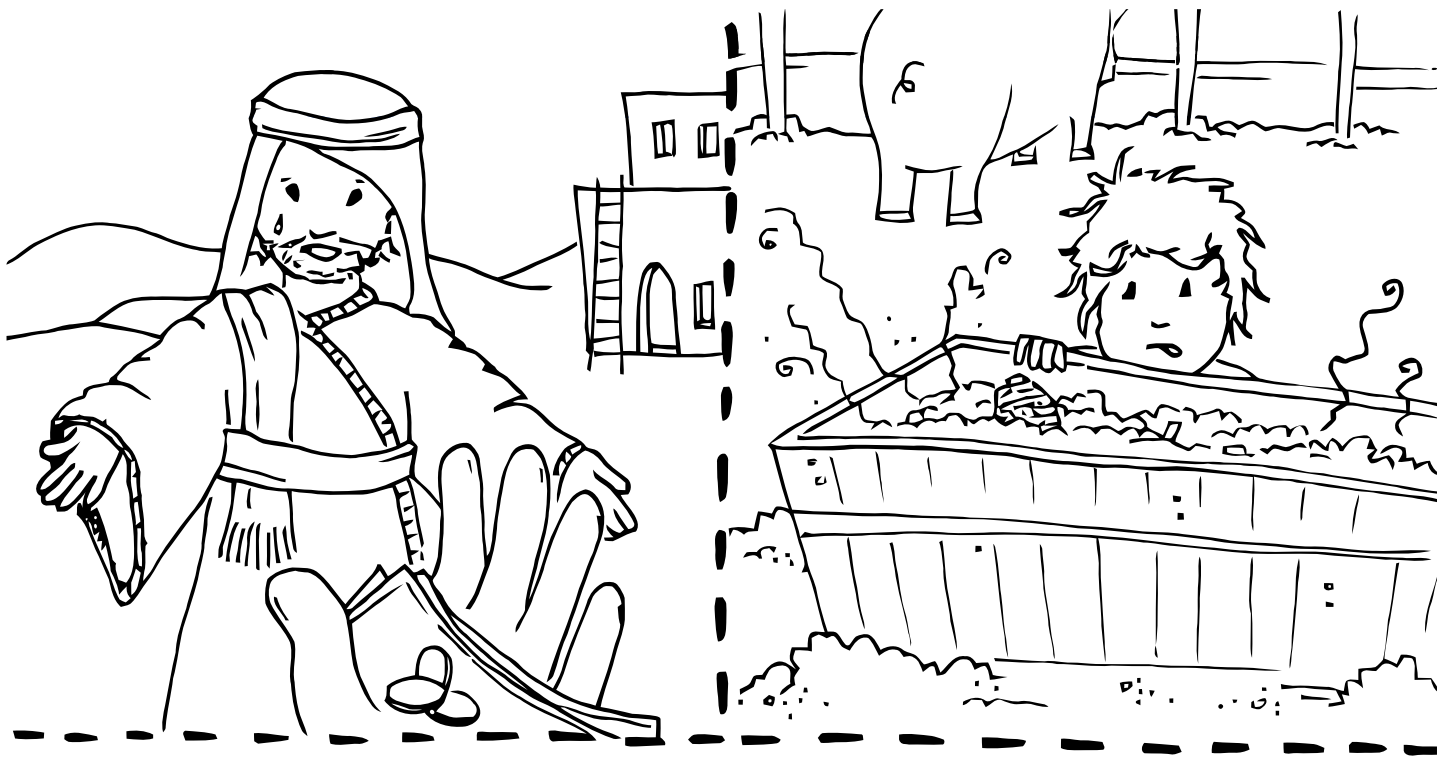
---

## Luke 15:31-32 ESV

---

And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'





the  
Prodigal Son ...

Luke 15



# Word Search

Directions: Find the words given in the word search.

Luke 15:31-32 ESV And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. (32) It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

I O O B O H N D B H G E A F U D Q Y F I  
N V C Z D X G B A Y P L Q D B T Z S B P  
E X K O L X F Z V I V Z A D A D V A X H  
U L A K Y O I Y J K L D Z D A C W Y H O  
M R Z I F H A R D G H J T C Q L A J D C  
C W N O Z X H Z J I L A J F V Z M L C E  
N T E P N T G H J C Q W V P I M D U E E  
F F V J E Q C M X N R F Y O A T Z O C E  
P R I M N N O S V N C L N P C Y T D Q Y  
X N S R Z N F X J E O V Y O U R S I I M  
K I B S A T M O G F A L R B D F U A N Q  
D S K N V Y N C E L E B R A T E O A N G  
W O C W N K B N R M U Q O D L S Y M Y Y  
O H J H P D V F T W Y G J E Z S Y P H K  
I U D O O U L C H V K A S A G E M O A Y  
G T J K P M M I A E B O Q R D C R I B U  
D H Z G P O K N U C W C Y O U E I O N S  
A V L J Y Y A S R Z B V A L V O J O Y E  
U J N Q Q U J X Q D L M G B V N C J P S  
Z P I D D A F D S H D F N Y X R F R I H

## WORD BANK

CELEBRATE

YOURS

GLAD

FITTING

MINE

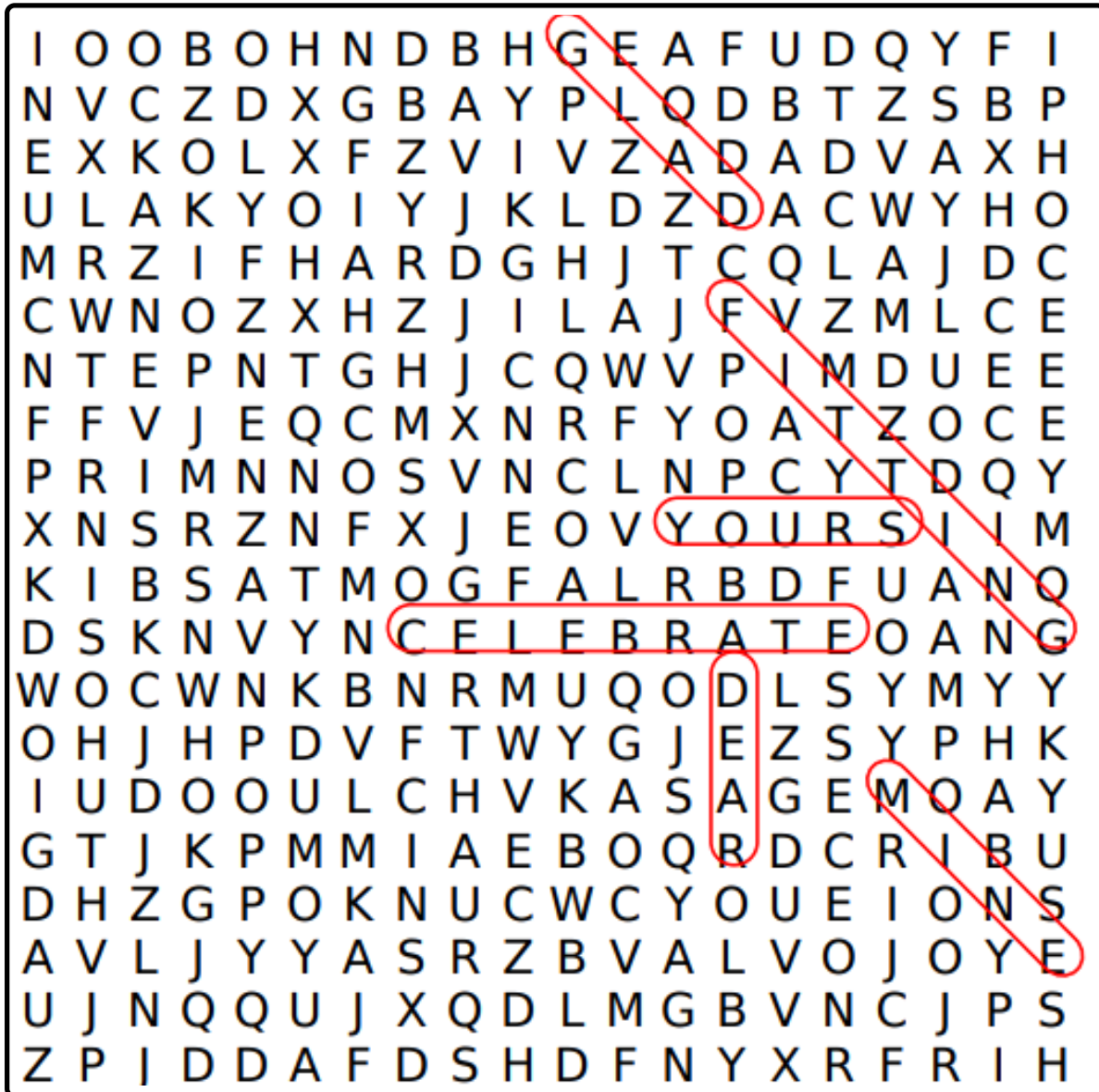
DEAR

# Answer Key

## Word Search

Directions: Find the words given in the word search.

Luke 15:31-32 ESV And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. (32)It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"



### WORD BANK

CELEBRATE

YOURS

GLAD

FITTING

MINE

DEAR