# God's Forgiveness

STEP 1 D Life Need (5-10 minutes)

lesson 7

 Suggest an ending to a story about a boy who has wronged his family.

## STEP 2 () Bible Learning (15-20 minutes)

- Bible Study: Read about a son who rebelled against his father, but later repented. □ Bible Adventures pp. 2–3, Bibles
- **Bible Review:** Students review the events of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son through roleplay.

Optional: Bible-time costumes, digital camera

## STEP 3 Dible Application (5-10 minutes)

 Students do an activity that explains how we receive God's forgiveness. Bible Adventures p. 1, pencils

#### STFP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Write a prayer of confession, receiving and thanking God for His forgiveness. Bible Adventures p. 4, Bibles, pencils
- Memory Work: Use the Key Verse as part of a litany about God's forgiveness. U Whiteboard and marker
- Optional Activity: Prayer journal assignment

### **Memory Verse**

"The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion."

-Numbers 14:18

50

### Bible Basis:

A son who rebelled against his father is welcomed back home (Luke 15:11-24).

### **Bible Truth:**

God welcomes a sinner who repents and seeks forgiveness.

### Lesson Aim:

That your students will express appreciation to God for His unconditional love and forgiveness.

### **UnderStanding**



Last week's lesson focused on God's holiness and mercy. This week, God's forgiveness is emphasized as we look at the

parable of the prodigal son.

The parable of the prodigal son is well known: A son squanders his inheritance and ruins his life. When the son comes to his senses, he returns to his father in repentance and is welcomed back wholeheartedly.

The story of the prodigal son is the third of three stories Jesus told in Luke 15. These parables hold deep meanings, and Jesus intended for the parables to be understood. Also, the stories were Jesus' response to the scribes and Pharisees. These Jewish religious leaders had expressed indignation at Jesus' association with sinful people. The Pharisees taught that a so-called righteous person would avoid being religiously "tainted" by sinners. Jesus' point in the parables was something many of the leaders had forgotten—God loves all sinners and welcomes any person who turns from sin and repents.

The story Jesus told in Luke 15:11-24 would have been a nightmare to a Jewish parent in New Testament times. The son abandoned his family, wasted his father's hard-earned money, and ended up hungry and miserable. We understand

-continued on next page

indicates items you will need to prepare before class

#### **Understanding the Bible** —cont'd

just how demeaning the son's job of feeding pigs was when we realize that God's people considered pork to be an unclean meat. The son was not only tending the pigs, but also was reduced to eating what the pigs ate. This showed Jesus' listeners just how low the son had sunk in his disobedience.

The parable, of course, is an example of God's love for us. We may make the worst possible mess out of our lives and grieve God with our sins. Even then, we can fully trust in God's promise of unconditional love and joyful acceptance of us when we come to our senses and repent.

### Tips

# Here are some ways to encourage your students to turn to God for help with their problems, worries, and needs.

- To help your students gain a clearer perspective on a problem situation, ask them to think of the worst possibility, and then discuss possible ways of handling it. As they consider their options, ask students to think of what God would want them to do.
- When leading students in prayer, mention your needs and ask students to pray for you. Let students know that you depend on God for guidance and wisdom in tough circumstances.
- Remind your students that if God is concerned about the smallest details of their lives, He also cares about the big things. Your students can talk to God about any situation and find help. It sounds simple, yet truly believing it will change your students' lives.

> PRESESSION ACTIVITIES

*Choose from these activities to do as your students arrive.* 

The activity in *Bible Adventures* is a recipe for "Forgiveness Fudge." To get students thinking about what is involved in using a recipe, bring a cookbook to class and read through a simple recipe for fudge. You might let the students make fudge from a simple no-cook recipe. Or make some fudge ahead of time and plan to serve it at the end of Bible Learning.

 $\square$  cookbook, ingredients for fudge

Provide paper and pencils. Ask your students to recall a time when they forgave another person. Have students write down how they felt about forgiving someone who had wronged them. If students are comfortable in doing so, they may read their experiences in class.

**D** paper and pencils

For Worship Time, use songs on the DisKit CD from the Creative Teaching Aids packet.

DisKit, CD player



# Understanding Your Students

No matter what age we are, there are times when we feel that our lives are falling apart. Youth today are faced with various pressures from society and from friends. Even students who have a more mature perspective on life often feel defenseless and frightened when things go wrong. As a Sunday school teacher you hold the key to helping your students understand that God will guide them through any situation.



### **Lesson Aim:**

That your students will express appreciation to God for His unconditional love and forgiveness.



Free! Downloadable Options for Steps 1 and 4. **RealLifeDownloaded.com** 

# Objective: That your students will consider the part forgiveness has in relationships.

### Materials: none

Today's lesson from Luke 15:11-24 uses the familiar story of the prodigal son to teach students that God welcomes us with open arms. This important lesson about God's gracious forgiveness can help pave the way for students to accept Jesus' precious gift of forgiveness, or if they have already accepted it, can remind them that God is always willing to forgive His children. To help your students connect their attitudes about forgiveness with what they will learn in the Bible study, lead them in the activity below.

I'm going to read you a story about a boy named Jamaal who broke some of the household rules. As I read, think of ways Jamaal and his family could handle their situation.

Jamaal had just enough time to make it to the park where he was meeting some friends to play baseball. Jamaal started to wheel his bike out of the garage when he noticed it—his brother's good baseball mitt. Here was his chance to play with a good mitt.

Jamaal already knew what his brother Quentin would say if he asked to borrow the mitt. He didn't let anyone touch his mitt. Jamaal also knew what his folks would say about borrowing without asking. But Quentin wasn't home, and this might be Jamaal's only chance to use the mitt. He tried to force back the guilt he felt as he wheeled his bike out of the garage.

Jamaal tossed the mitt in the air as he got off the bike. "Check me out. I finally have a decent mitt to play with," he called out.

"How many baseball cards did you have to give up to get that?" one of his friends asked. Jamaal's friends knew he saved his allowance for baseball cards, not baseball mitts.

Jamaal grinned, "It didn't cost me anything. You might say I found it lying around the garage." Jamaal felt another wave of guilt come over him. "Come on, let's start the game."

While Jamaal waited for his turn to bat, he started to worry. *What if Quentin got home before he did? What if*—BOOM! A clap of thunder jolted Jamaal back to the game. Then the rain came pouring. All the ball players ran for their bikes and left.

By the time he got home, Jamaal was soaked. But he beat Quentin home. Jamaal sighed, "I made it." He put his bike in the garage, and then turned to take Quentin's mitt off the handlebars—only the mitt wasn't there. Jamaal groaned. He knew exactly where it was—in the park, on the ground, soaked by the rain. Later that afternoon Jamaal, Quentin, and their folks got together for a family discussion about the situation. Pause and then ask students:

### • How do you think the story will end? What should Jamaal do? How

**should Quentin treat Jamaal if Jamaal asks for forgiveness?** (Most students will probably agree that Jamaal should pay for a new mitt. Help your students see the importance of asking for forgiveness. Some of your students might think that Quentin shouldn't forgive Jamaal.)

Asking for forgiveness isn't easy. But it is the one sure way to mend relationships, as a son found out in today's Bible study.

Lesson 7



### **Bible Basis:**

A son who rebelled against his father is welcomed back home (Luke 15:11-24).

# Objective: That your students will compare a father forgiving his son with God's forgiveness for repentant sinners.

### **Materials:**

Bible Adventures pp. 2–3, Bibles
Optional: Bible-time costumes, digital camera

Jesus told a story about a father and son to show people what God's forgiveness is like. If we are truly sorry for our wrongs and ask God to forgive us, He will—each and every time we confess.

### **Bible Study**

After students find and bookmark Luke 15 and Psalm 103:11-13 in their Bibles, distribute *Bible Adventures* for Lesson 7 to your students and have them turn to "Welcome Home" on pages 2 and 3. Ask for a volunteer to read the opening paragraph to the class. Explain that an inheritance is property or money that is passed to a family member when someone dies. Then choose someone to read Luke 15:13 from the Bible.

- What did this son do with his inheritance? (He took it with him to a "distant country" and spent the whole thing unwisely on "wild living." Explain to your students that this may mean partying and hanging with the "wrong crowd"—having friends who were bad influences on him.)
- What does this verse show us about the son's attitude about his father? (He wanted to be free of his father's authority. He wanted to spend his money the way he wanted to, not as his father would recommend.)



Have a volunteer read the first section of Scripture Spotlight, Luke 15:14-16.

• What happened to the younger son? (After he had spent all his money, there was a famine. He went to work for a pig keeper. He was so hungry that he wished he could eat the food the pigs ate.)

Read footnote 1, then point out to your students that pigs were considered "unclean" animals, so it would be a disgrace for a Jewish person to work with them.

• How do you think he felt now? (Encourage students to put themselves in the son's place. They may suggest that he felt sad, he hadn't made a wise decision, or guilty.)

Ask a student to read the next paragraph and another to read Luke 15:18-19.

**What did the son decide to do?** (He decided to go back to his father and ask him for a job.)

• What might make it hard for the son to do this? (It would be hard because he'd have to admit he'd been wrong. He would have to swallow his pride.)

Read aloud the next paragraph from *Bible Adventures*, beginning with "The son went home." Then ask a volunteer to read Luke 15:20-21 from the Bible.

-



house. But now he was having second thoughts. Even the men who worked for his father were so much better off than he was!

Read Luke 15:18-19. What did the son decide to do? What might make it hard for the son to do this?

The son went home, ready to be his father's servant. When his father saw him coming, he ran to meet the son, and hugged and kissed him.

Read Luke 15:20-21. What did the son say to the father? How had the son's attitude changed?

But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

What did the father mean when he said that his son had been "dead" and "lost"? What did he mean by "allve again" and "found"? How did the father feel about his son? Did he forgive the son? Read Psalm 103:11-13. What would you say to someone who says, "My sin is too big for God to forgive"?

Sometimes we run away from God too. We may do something wrong and then be afraid that He will reject us or not forgive. But God is watching and walting for us with open arms to come back to Him. • What did the son say to the father? (The son said he was unworthy to be called his father's son.)

• How had the son's attitude changed? (He had been humbled by his experience and knew he'd been wrong.)

Choose a reader for the last Scripture Spotlight section, Luke 15:22-24.

• What did the father mean when he said that his son had been "dead" and "lost"? (It was as if the son was dead and lost to his father—the father probably feared he would never see the son again.)

• What did he mean by "alive again" and "found"? (When the son came home, it was as if he had come to life again—he had been restored to the father.)

• How did the father feel about his son? Did he forgive the son? (The father loved his son and was filled with compassion for him. He forgave him right away.) Explain that compassion is like sympathy when we feel bad for others' bad situations—and usually means we are moved to want to help them.

Have a volunteer read Psalm 103:11-13 aloud as the rest of the class follows along.

What would you say to someone who says, "My sin is too big for God to forgive"? (For those who fear God, who want to follow Him, God's love is great and far-reaching. He forgives our sins and puts them far away from us. He is compassionate to us. So no sin is too big for God to forgive when we admit it to Him.)

Read aloud the final paragraph from *Bible Adventures*, or have a student do so. Tell students that you will be available to talk with them after class. Some students may feel that they are far from God and need some reassurance of His love. Others may wish to become part of God's family. See the inside back cover of this commentary for help in leading a child to Christ.

### **Bible Review**

This fun activity can help your students review the events of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. Divide the parable into the following scenes. Have students choose the roles and pose as if for a snapshot of those people at that moment. Encourage them to use facial expressions to communicate the scene. Scene 1: Son asking for the money and the older son looking on. Scene 2: Son sitting by the pigs realizing what he's done. Scene 3: Son near home when father sees him. Scene 4: The welcome when father and son reach each other. Recast the scenes like this: Scene 1: Person praying to receive Christ. Scene 2: Person with back to Christ and sinning. Scene 3: Person turns back to Christ. Scene 4: The person's response to knowing God has forgiven him or her and welcomed him or her "home." If you have a camera available, someone can be the photographer.

How does the parable of the prodigal son help us understand God's love for us?

54

Lesson 7





# Objective: That your students will do an activity that explains how we receive God's forgiveness.

### Materials: Bible Adventures p. 1, Bibles

We can get a good picture of God's forgiveness from His Word. Direct your students to page 1 in *Bible Adventures*. Ask a student to read the introduction and directions for this page. In order to make forgiveness fudge, we need to know the ingredients and what to do. Have students look up the Bible passages and fill in the missing ingredients in the recipe. The answers: Psalm 32:5—confession; Acts 3:19—repentance; James 5:16—prayer; James 4:10—humility; Psalm 106:1—thankfulness. Take the time to discuss the "ingredients" for forgiveness fudge.

The first ingredient, confession, is admitting to God that we have done wrong. The next ingredient, repentance, is truly being sorry for doing wrong and turning from sin.

Then we add prayer. We can come to God and ask Him to forgive us. Our next ingredient is rare, but forgiveness fudge will fail without humility. We need to realize that we can't make it on our own—we need to depend on God to forgive us.

The last ingredient is thankfulness. We can express our appreciation and thanks to God for His complete forgiveness. STEP 4 Life Response (5-10 minutes)

56

### **Bible Truth:**

God welcomes a sinner who repents and seeks forgiveness.



WI	th OI	a fable study give Done when we as	tus a glamper of tells like the sen and try when we come book	rGada to sur every trops to Hiery	2
	1 BE	Ma I	ed welcomen a terror orise for generation. Un- ter a propert responses (Gody sockorring an ord basis below 45%) preprint, or part out yo (Tarek) forgererores, 0	the space below g hose you and mix You can use the you write in over section we have cam.	
		H	tan birna, hanna, par han	diplace or	- and
				Party	1
	2			A	7
				-	Y
	SV.	The second		The Long Description	

# Objective: That your students will complete a prayer confessing their sins and receiving God's forgiveness through Jesus.

### **Materials:**

U Whiteboard and marker, Bible Adventures p. 4, Bibles, pencils

### Memory Work

Have your students find the Key Verse, Numbers 14:18, in their Bibles and read it aloud together. List the characteristics of God mentioned in the verse. Your list should include: God is slow to anger (patient), loving, forgiving.

Lead students in the following litany. You can use Numbers 14:18 as the refrain or write this simple phrase on the whiteboard for students to repeat: For the Lord is patient, merciful, and forgiving.

Blessed is the one who comes confessing sin.

For the Lord is patient, loving, and forgiving.

Blessed is the one who repents of doing wrong.

For the Lord is patient, loving, and forgiving.

Blessed be the Lord who shows His love to us.

For the Lord is patient, loving, and forgiving.

All of us have times when we run away from God, just like the prodigal son ran away from the father. Encourage students to think of ways they may have wandered or run away from God in their attitudes, talk, or behavior. This is between them and God. You may want to have students scatter throughout the classroom to give them personal space for this activity. Have them turn to *Bible Adventures*, page 4, "With Open Arms." Guide students to complete the lesson page by writing a prayer of thanksgiving. Encourage their creativity. Tell them they can either use the words supplied in the word bank or use their own words to write their prayers.

### **Closing Activities**

In closing, gather for prayer. Give the students a moment to pray silently, thanking God for His mercy and love. Give them an opportunity to silently confess sin and receive God's forgiveness.

### **Optional Activity**

In their prayer journals this week, encourage your students to write their own songs. Students could choose a familiar hymn tune and write new words that express thanks to God for His mercy and forgiveness.