

Coming Home

A father and his two sons
Luke 15:11-32

Character Trait: Grateful

(Estimated Lesson Time: 90 minutes)

Objectives:

- Children will recall that God rejoices and celebrates when we turn to Him.
- Children will explain ways to show gratitude towards others.
- Children will discuss specific ways to express gratitude towards God.

Supplies:

- *Coming Home* loaded onto a tablet or phone in the *Bible App for Kids*
- A ball *(suitable for throwing)*
- Paper *(a piece for each child)*
- Paper plates *(optional, one for each child)*
- Fingerpaint *(enough for each child)*

Welcome Activity:

(5 minutes)

Welcome the children.

SAY: I am so grateful that you are here to learn more about God and His great love for you. Today, we will learn about a story that Jesus told long ago to explain just how much God loves us and how He feels when we decide to turn to Him.

Review:

(5 minutes)

Guide the children in a brief review of the previous lesson by asking the following:

- **What did Jesus' disciples suggest they do about the hungry crowd?** *(They suggested that the people be sent away to buy food.)*
- **What did the boy give Jesus to use?** *(Five loaves of bread and two little fish)*
- **What did Jesus do before he broke the bread and fish into pieces?** *(He thanked God for the food.)*
- **What happened after Jesus thanked God and broke up all the food?** *(Jesus' disciples passed out food to the whole crowd. Everyone ate as much as they wanted!)*

Today's Bible Story:

(10-15 minutes)

Show *Coming Home* from the *Bible App for Kids* or share the story aloud:

- "Why does Jesus spend time with people who do bad things?" the religious leaders wondered.
- So Jesus told them a story about God's love.
- This is how it went...
- A man had two sons.
- The younger son asked for the money he would get when the father died.

- Heartbroken, the father gave his younger son half of his property.
- The son moved to a distant country.
- He wasted all the money.
- Then a famine came, and he had to feed pigs.
- He wished he could eat the pigs' food.
- "My father's servants do better than this," he thought. "I'll return home and admit that I have sinned against him and God. Maybe he'll make me one of his servants."
- The son went home.
- While he was still far away, his father ran to him and hugged him.
- "I'm not worthy to be your son," he told his father.
- "Bring my son my best robe!" the father told his servants. "Put a ring on his finger. Roast our fattest calf. My boy was lost, and now he's found!"
- The older son was angry when he heard about the celebration.
- "It's not fair!" he complained. "I work faithfully and get nothing. He wastes your money and gets a party!"
- "All that's mine is yours," the father replied. "Your brother was dead; now he's alive! He was lost; now he's found! So what can we do but celebrate?"



Discussion:

(15 minutes)

Encourage the children to think more about the story by asking the following:

- **How did the father feel when the younger son left?** *(Heartbroken, sad)*
- **What did the younger son do with all the money?** *(He wasted all of the money.)*
- **How did the father respond when the younger son returned home?** *(The father was happy and overjoyed. He ran to him and hugged him. The father was so happy that he planned a celebration.)*
- **Why was the older brother upset with all of this?** *(The older brother complained that it was unfair. He was angry that he worked faithfully but did not receive anything.)*
- **Jesus told this story to teach others about God's love for us. What does this story tell you about God's love and how He responds when we turn to Him?** *(Answers will vary but should include that God loves us like the father loved both of his sons. When we turn away from our wrongdoings and turn to God, He rejoices and celebrates.)*

SAY: The religious leaders did not understand why Jesus spent so much time with people who sinned. So, Jesus told the story of the father and his younger son who once left but then returned. Jesus used this story to help others understand how God feels about us. We all sin and make bad choices, but God loves us so much that He is happy and rejoices when we decide to turn to Him.



God's Bigger Story:

(5 minutes)

SAY: Like the younger son in this story, we are all lost and dead in sin until we return to the Father who created us and loves us. God rejoices when His children choose to change their ways and follow Him.

Memory Verse:

(10 minutes)

"For this son of mine was dead *(rest one forearm on top of the other)*
and has now returned to life *(pivoting at the elbow, slowly raise the top forearm)*.
He was lost *(look around with hand over brow)*,
but now he is found *(hug yourself)*."
So the party began *(dance and celebrate)*.

Luke 15:24 (NLT)

Activity:

(15 minutes)

Give one child a ball. Explain that while you sing a song, the children are to toss the ball around to different children while standing up. The child holding the ball when you stop singing is "out" and must sit down. Play until only one child is left standing. This child is the winner. Continue playing as time permits.

SAY: In the game, there was only one winner. But thankfully that is not true of God's love. Through the story that He told, Jesus explained that God's love is big enough for everyone and strong enough that there is nothing we can do to lose it.

Response Activity:

(10 minutes)

SAY: When did the younger son decide to go home to his father? *(Allow a few volunteers to share aloud: After he had lost everything and wanted to eat what he was feeding the pigs. The younger son knew that his father's servants lived much better.)*

SAY: During the famine, the younger son had nothing left and was so hungry that he wanted to eat what he was feeding the pigs!

Provide each child with a large piece of paper and a small amount of fingerpaint. Tell the children to use their fingers to draw pigs and food for them in the fingerpaint. After the children complete their paintings, set them aside somewhere to dry and provide an opportunity for the children to wash their hands.

SAY: That was a very messy activity, but look at your hands now. They are so clean that no one would ever know they were covered with paint just moments ago! This is how the father reacted to the younger son in the story. The father was so happy that his son had returned that he did not even remember how the younger son had wronged him. This is how much God loves each of us, too!

For younger children...
Pass out a small amount of fingerpaint placed on paper plates instead of paper. This will make distributing the paint easier and will help smaller hands keep the paint on the artwork. The paper plate also serves as a good reminder of this specific element of the story: The younger son was feeding the pigs when he became grateful for his father's love.

For older children...
Make this activity more challenging for older children by telling them to write the word "lost" with their finger in the fingerpaint. Then, on a clean area of their artwork, tell them to dip their finger in the paint and write the word "found."

Character Trait: Grateful

(10 minutes)

SAY: To be grateful means to show thankfulness and appreciation. In the story Jesus told, the younger son who returned home was probably very thankful.

Encourage the children to think more about being grateful by asking the following:

- **What are some specific things you are grateful for?** *(Answers will vary.)*
- **What are you grateful to God for?** *(Answers will vary.)*
- **What are some ways you can show your gratefulness to others?** *(Answers will vary but may include using our words and showing kindness in return.)*
- **What are some specific ways you can show gratefulness to God?** *(Answers will vary but may include through prayer or using words, worship, and by choosing to follow and obey His ways.)*

Connect with Others:

(5 minutes)

SAY: Showing gratitude is one way we can express having a thankful heart. Gratitude tells others that we care and appreciate what they do for us.

Challenge the children to think of a specific way they can personally show their gratitude to someone in their life.

Closing:

(2 minutes)

SAY: One thing we can all be very grateful for is God's great love for each of us. Jesus showed this in the story He told to the religious leaders. Even though the younger son left and wasted everything he had, the father still loved and welcomed him back home with open arms. Even though we sin and make mistakes, we can know that God always has loved us and will continue loving us—no matter what!

Prayer:

(2 minutes)

SAY:

Dear God,
Thank You for Your never-ending love! We are grateful for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, all that He teaches us, and the sacrifice of His life so that we may know and love You.
Amen.

Notes