Learn by Doing

Choice

The Prodigal Son and His Brother

The parable of the prodigal son can teach us about various ways we can respond to the Lord’s love and guidance, and also how He responds to us at different points in our lives. In this activity, students will explore the actions of both sons, comparing their reactions to their father, and hopefully recognizing his love for both of them.



1. The father represents the Lord, and the sons show two different ways we sometimes respond to Him. Do you identify with one of the sons more than the other?
2. We all move away from the Lord at times and make selfish choices that end up being harmful to us and to others. Like the father in the parable, our Heavenly Father is always ready to forgive and welcome us back with joy.
3. At other times we follow the rules, but feel like we aren’t being val-ued —like the older brother. It may seem as if trouble-makers get all the attention. They have the “fun” of being rebellious, and get attention when they are sorry.
4. Have students look up the parable and fill out the chart (p. 2), describing qualities of both brothers. When charts are completed, have students discuss their responses. Suggested questions appear below.

Discussion:

What do these comparisons tell us about what people are like?

Do some people need the Lord more than others?

Do some people deserve the Lord’s love more than others?

Does the Lord treat different people differently?

How can we prepare to “make merry and be glad” with our heavenly Father?

Materials Needed

copies of *The Prodigal Son and His Brother* p. 2, copies of the Word or Bible (each pair can share one), pens or pencils

New Church Concept
The Inner Meaning

The prodigal son symbolizes those who are prodigal or wasteful of spiritual riches…. His return to his father and his confession that he was not worthy to be called his son symbolize repentance of heart and humility. The best robe that is given to the son means important first truths. The ring means the conjunction of good and truth in the internal person and the sandals mean that conjunction in the external person. The fatted calf symbolizes the goodness of love and of charity. The eating and being merry mean heavenly joy and affection. *Apocalypse Explained* 279, adapted

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Read the story from Luke 15:11-32 and complete the chart below with information on the older brother.

Qualities	Prodigal Son	Older Brother
Positive Qualities 	The younger son is sorry at the end of the story. He humbly asks his father's forgiveness (v. 21).	(see v. 29)
Negative Qualities 	The younger son is greedy for his inheritance and then wastes it all on his own pleasure (see v. 12-13).	(see v. 25, 28-30)
Turning Away 	The younger son rejects his father by going away to a far country (v. 13).	(see v. 28)
The Father's Love 	The father shows his love by running out to meet the younger son, kissing him, giving him gifts, and preparing a feast (v. 20, 22-24).	(see v. 28, 31)
The Ending 	Who is the father showing love for in v. 32—the younger or the older brother?	