

# 30. The Parable of the Prodigal Son

## *The Word of the Lord: The New Testament for Young Children*

### Notes for Parents & Teachers

#### 30. The Parable of the Prodigal Son

- a) There are hundreds of ways you can emphasize aspects of this story. (Some are listed in the introduction notes).
- b) The younger son would get some of his father's goods when his father died. But he didn't want to wait and said, "I want them now!" Can children imagine saying this to their dads? The goods belonged to the father, but the son was acting as though they were already his own.
- c) How did the son go to that far country? Almost surely he rode, with lots of clothes and lots of money for food, feeling great. He was like someone who had just won a large amount of money. How did he come back from that country? He walked. He had no shoes, his clothes were rags, and he had no food. He must have felt awful. But, by coming back he was coming to real happiness, whereas, when he went out, he was going to a bad life and eventually to no happiness.
- d) Contrast the food at different points in the story. The son ate rich food at first. Then he wanted pigs' food, which the Jews thought was terrible because they did not like pigs. Then he wanted bread like his father's servants, and finally he was given the fatted calf—a wonderful meal. The first two kinds of food were bad for him; the second two were good for him.
- e) It's very important to notice that the man had to walk every step back from where he went. He went there easily, on a horse, but he walked home, tired and probably dirty and very, very hungry. But he did it.

- f) Get children to think about what the man's father might have thought all those years that his son was away. He was so sad for his son and knew he wasn't behaving well. Perhaps he often stood at the door of his house, looking out and hoping to see him. Then one day he did see him. How did the father feel? So happy! Did he wait for the son to arrive, and tell him how bad he had been? No! Imagine his joy when he ran to his son and kissed him. "My son is alive! He was dead and now is alive!"
- g) Ask children how the son must have felt when his father ran to him and kissed him. He was going to say that he had sinned and that he wasn't worthy to be his son any longer, that he only deserved to be a servant. But the son knew, from his father's greeting, that he only needed to say how bad he had been. He didn't need to say that he would be graded down to being a servant.
- h) The story is so full of happiness at the end, after so much trouble and sorrow. The perfect happy ending, which is what our Lord wants with all His heart for each of us. But to make the story live, focus on the earlier selfish choices, and the unhappiness of father and son, and the son's struggles to walk all the way home, hungry, and tired, feeling so bad.

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## The Lord Tells a Story About a Lost Son

A man had two sons. And the younger one said to his father, “Father give me the share of your money that is to be left to me.” So the father gave him the money.

Now not many days after that, the younger son gathered all his belongings together, and he went to live in a distant country. And there he wasted his money, living recklessly.

Then when he had spent all his money, there came a famine throughout the country, and he had no money left to buy food. So he went and joined one of the people of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. And the son longed to fill his belly with the husks which the pigs did eat. But no one gave him anything.

After a while, the son said to himself, “How many of my father’s servants have more bread than they can eat, while I am dying with hunger! I will go to my father and tell him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be your son. Make me one of your servants.’”

And so the son came back to his father. When he was still far away, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to meet him and fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

But the father said to his servants, “Bring out a robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring a fat calf and kill it. Let us eat and be merry. For this is my son who was dead and now he is alive again. He was lost but is now found.”

And they began to be merry.

Luke 15

