

10. Ultimately, what kind of response is God seeking from us (and the Pharisees from vv. 2-3) when a sinner comes home?

11. What person can you demonstrate God's love and grace to this week? How will you do it?

Last Word: In our lesson we've stressed the point that we serve a Father in Heaven who joyfully showers His gracious forgiveness upon His repentant children. *"Let us celebrate"* He shouts to the heavenly host, *"for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."*

Additionally, we've noted that we are called to emulate our Father's forgiveness. No doubt this can be hard, especially when we've been deeply hurt by another. But no matter how challenging it may be for us to forgive another person, that is no excuse for withholding mercy to the repentant. Rather, we should fearfully seek to *"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus"* (2 Peter 3:18a). By pursuing spiritual maturity through a deeper knowledge of Christ and His grace we can continually move ever closer to forgiving as freely and graciously as our Heavenly Father has forgiven us.

Prayer: Ask God to help you take His words of instruction and example to heart so that you too will graciously forgive as freely as He does and celebrate the return of His lost children.

Lesson 1

Our Forgiving Father

Luke 15:1-32

Every morning the old man would rise, wondering if this day would be the day his broken-heart would heal. During the day, while working out in the fields, he would wishfully study any passerby looking for a certain face. Then in the cool of the evening, he would sit on his porch, longingly look out the gate and down the road, hoping to catch a glimpse of a figure headed home.

Then one day he saw him, a thin, ragged young man, with tattered clothes and the weary, disheveled look of a hard-worn traveler turning in from the road. Instantly the father knew it was the boy he had been waiting for all this time. With a sudden burst of excitement and desperate anticipation, the old man did something no one expected... he ran to lovingly embrace his son.

Jesus' story of the prodigal son never fails to move our hearts with amazement and wonder. Perhaps it's because we know this story all too well because it's really about us. Even though we've squandered our Father's gifts and ignored His wishes, He runs to welcome us home and celebrate our return. Through the heartfelt emotions of the prodigal's father, we are provided a wide-open window on why Jesus was celebrating and graciously receiving sinners – and in turn the reason why we ourselves should be doing the same. *Read Luke 15:1-32.*

1. From v. 1, state the circumstances of the telling of these parables. (cf. Luke 7:34)

2. What problem(s) do the “*Pharisees and scribes*” (v. 2) have with what Jesus is doing? (cf. Luke 18:9-14)

3. According to the parables of the *Lost Sheep* and *Lost Coin* (vv. 3-10), how does God respond when one of His valued ones is lost?

How does He react when He finds His lost one?

4. The third, and climatic parable, tells the story of a father and his two sons. Describe all the ways in which the younger son brings shame to his family. (vv. 11-13, 30)

5. How is every person’s choice to sin like the younger son’s choices? (cf. James 1:14-15)

Similarly, how is vv. 14-20a a picture of any person’s repentance? (cf. Psalm 51:16-17)

6. Visualize the father’s reaction upon seeing his younger son returning home (vv. 20b-24). How does he treat the son who insulted him and squandered his hard-earned wealth?

7. Using the father’s welcome of his prodigal son as your model, how would you describe to a friend our Heavenly Father’s forgiveness of the sinner who returns to Him?

8. Unwilling to join the celebration, the older son fumes outside the house (vv. 25-30). What do you notice in his language about his perspectives and attitude?

How does the father respond to his older son’s objections? (vv. 31-32)

9. For reasons that might be similar to the older son’s, in what way(s) might the Heavenly Father’s lavish forgiveness challenge our notions of fairness?