



## Welcome Home

(based on Luke 15:1-2, 11-24)

Jesus was sitting and eating with some tax collectors and sinners. When the religious leaders saw the people Jesus was sitting with, they were shocked. “Jesus welcomes the wrong kind of people,” they grumbled.

Jesus could see that the religious leaders didn’t understand, so he told three stories.

This is the third story. There was once a man with two sons. One day, the younger son came to the father and said, “I’m tired of waiting. I want to leave. Give me my share of the family money now.” The father gave his younger son the share of the family money. The son took the money and went to a place far away from home. He stayed away for a long time. The son lived wherever he wanted to live. He did whatever he wanted to do until one day, his money was all gone.

Soon the young man became very hungry. He got a job feeding pigs. He was so hungry he ate the pigs’ food. One day, he had a change of heart. “I will go home to my father and say I’m sorry,” he said.

The young man began the long walk home. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and ran to meet him with open arms.

“Father, I am sorry,” sobbed the son. “I do not deserve to be your son.”

The father hugged and kissed his son. He called for clean clothes. He called for new sandals. He gave his son a special ring. He gave his son a big party.

“Come and celebrate with me!” he shouted. “My son was missing, and now he has come home. My son was lost, but now he has been found.”

Jesus said, “God is like the father. God never gives up. God never stops loving us. All of heaven celebrates when we realize that God has found us, too. That is God’s grace!”



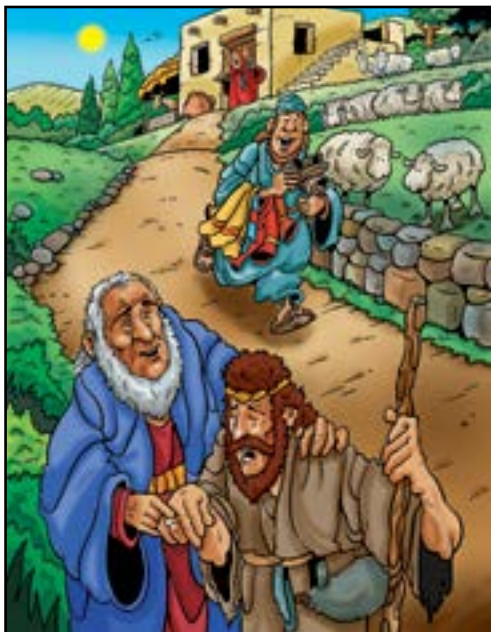
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

### Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your child—imagine and wonder.
- Invite everyone to share experiences of losing something or of being lost. Ask: What did you do when you found the object or when you were found? Let them tell their stories and express their feelings.
- Pick a searcher, and invite everyone else to hide. Each time the searcher finds someone, celebrate by clapping, jumping, and shouting. At the end, gather everyone for a group hug. Talk about how it feels to be found, loved, and celebrated.
- Ask your child to think of someone who may feel a little lost because he or she is new at school or does not have a friend. Invite your child to name that person after you say, “God, help me show (name) your love.”



### Responding to God's Grace

- Watch a YouTube video of children retelling the parable: “The Prodigal Son - Short Film” ([bit.ly/GGGProdigalSon](https://bit.ly/GGGProdigalSon)).
- Choose a “person of the week,” someone you do not usually play with or someone you do not know very well. If welcoming a child, invite the child to play and introduce him or her to your other friends. If welcoming an adult you know casually at work or from the neighborhood, intentionally have a conversation to learn more about the person. Pray for your person of the week, asking God to help him or her feel welcome at school, in the neighborhood, and at work. Ask God to show you how to be welcoming to others.

### Celebrating in Gratitude

- In celebration of God's love, sing the following words to the tune of “Playmate, Come Out and Play with Me.” If you do not know the tune, find it online.

Hey, hey, oh Dear God,  
thank you for loving me,  
and all the world we see,  
created joyfully.  
Help us to show all  
those who have lost their way,  
your love is here to stay,  
forever more.

- Pray this prayer each day this week:

*God, when I feel lost, find me. When I feel found, help me share your love. Amen.*

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.