



# Exploring the Story of The Prodigal Son

1. Gather with the household. Tell everyone that you are all going to sweep through the house to look for things that are "lost," such as socks under the bed, coins in the sofa, etc. When everyone has combed through the house, come back together with the things you have found.
2. Talk about what you found. Did you know these things were lost? Are any of the objects things you have been looking for? What are other things we have lost? Have they been found? How does it feel to lose something that is very special to us? What does it feel like when we find it again?
3. Share in your own words: Jesus uses the example of lost things in the Gospel we are going to read—lost sheep, and lost coins. Listen to see if you can figure out why these lost things are so important. What do they represent?
4. Read from the Gospel of Luke 15:1-15.

*Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling. "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."*

*Then Jesus told them this story:*

*"If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and*

*neighbors and say, 'Let's celebrate. I've found my lost sheep.'*

*Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine people who don't need to."*

*Jesus told the people another story: "What will a woman do if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them? Won't she light a lamp, sweep the floor, and look carefully until she finds it? Then she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Let's celebrate! I've found the coin I lost.'"*

*Jesus said, "In the same way God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him."*

5. Ask: What do the lost sheep and the lost coin represent? Allow each person to respond, then share:

*These lost things represent people who have strayed away from the message of Jesus. There is much celebrating when they are found! But Jesus didn't just tell stories about lost things. He also told a very important story about a lost person. This is the story of the Prodigal Son. Has anybody in our household ever been lost?*

(Allow each person to share stories of being lost. Talk about what it felt like, how the person was found, and how everybody felt when the person was found.)

Then continue, *In this Gospel, a son chooses to leave his father; he truly is lost because he reaches a point when he doesn't know what to do or where to go.*

**6. Read from the Story of the Prodigal Son.**

Jesus also told them another story:

Once a man had two sons.

The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living.

He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs.

He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.

Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death!

I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."

But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.

Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine

was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate.

The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing.

So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf."

The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found." (Luke 15:11-32)

**7. Talk about these questions:**

- ◆ Who do you think this story is about?
- ◆ Which character is most like you?
- ◆ Why was the older son angry? If you had been him, how would you have felt?
- ◆ How did the father show compassion and forgiveness?
- ◆ Do you think the younger son deserved to be treated like he was? Why?
- ◆ Can you recall times that you have felt "lost" from God? How did God find you?