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The Real Prodigal

Key References: Luke 15:11-32; 1 John 3:1; Ephesians 3:8, 9; *Christ's Object Lessons*, chap. 16, pp. 198-211; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 8, pp. 116-120; Our Beliefs nos. 3, 10, 11



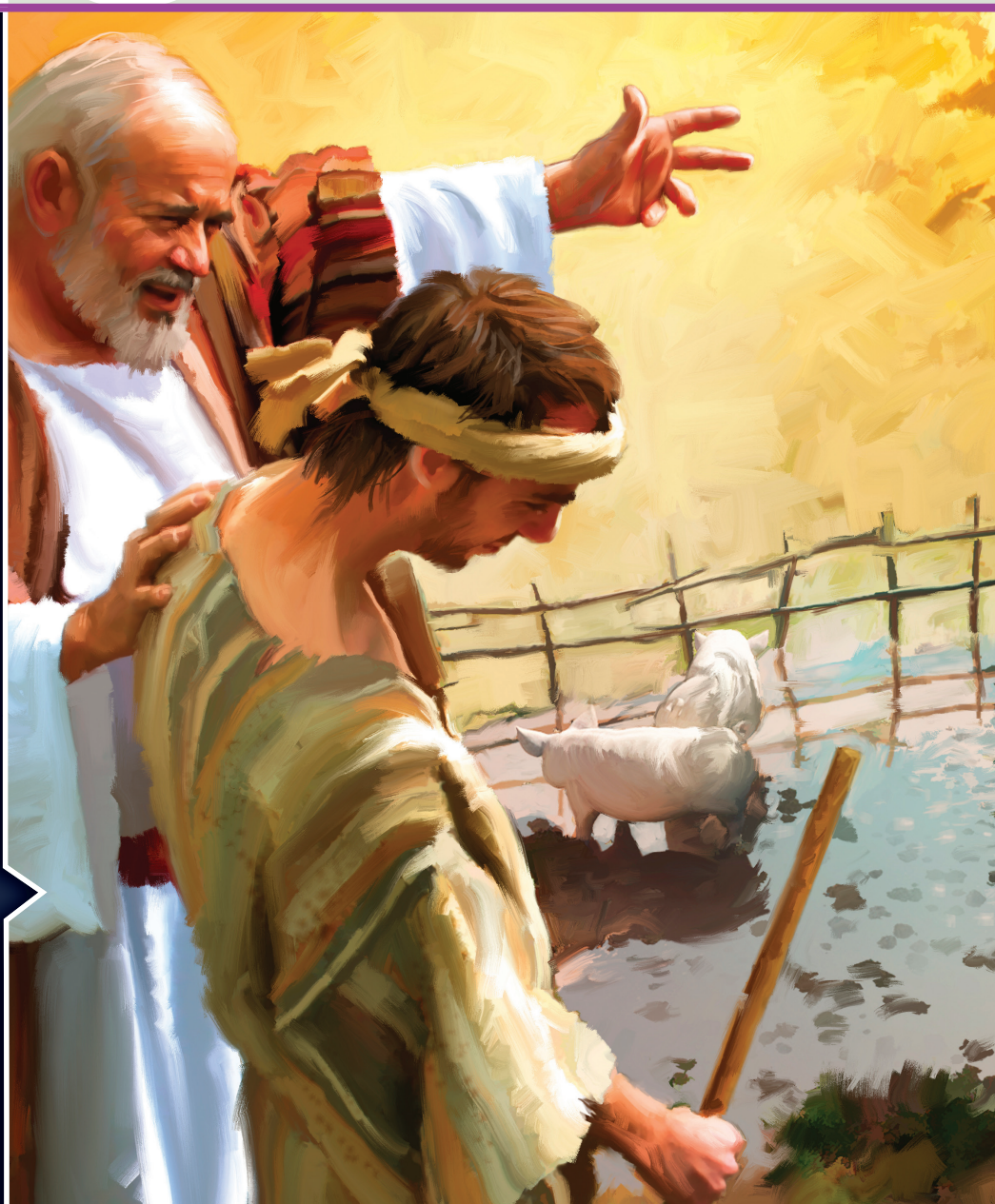












Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 75.

power**text**

"I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18, 19).

power**point**

God's lavish love for us inspires us to serve Him.

Think of the latest news you have heard that reported some natural calamity, or epidemic, or crime. How do you feel about all the pain, suffering, and heartache in our world? How do you think God feels about these?

Got any work, sir?" the unemployed laborer asked the farmer. "I can do anything."

Sure you can! thought the farmer.

"I see you eyeing my clothes, sir. They are a bit shabby; I've been down on my luck."

Sure you have! Aren't we all? This famine is hard on all of us. But you don't look like you've been starving long, mused the farmer.

"OK, boy! I do have work. You start at the bottom and work up. See down there; it's the hog pen! Muck it out. Take this shovel.



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Sunday

READ Read Luke 15:11-17 and this week's lesson, "The Real Prodigal."

THINK What did the prodigal son recognize when he served someone who did not care much about him? What happens when we turn away from serving God?

REVIEW Review the power text, Luke 15:18, 19.

PRAY Ask God to teach you how to best serve Him.

Monday

READ Read Luke 15:18, 19.

THINK What realization made the prodigal son decide to serve his father wholeheartedly?

APPLY In the end the prodigal son realized his need to ask for his father's forgiveness and make things right. For what do you need to ask God to forgive you? Be specific.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to forgive you.

Tuesday

READ Read Luke 15:20-24.

THINK How does the father's reaction to the son's return help you better understand God's lavish love? What are the benefits of serving God in contrast with pursuing your selfish desires?

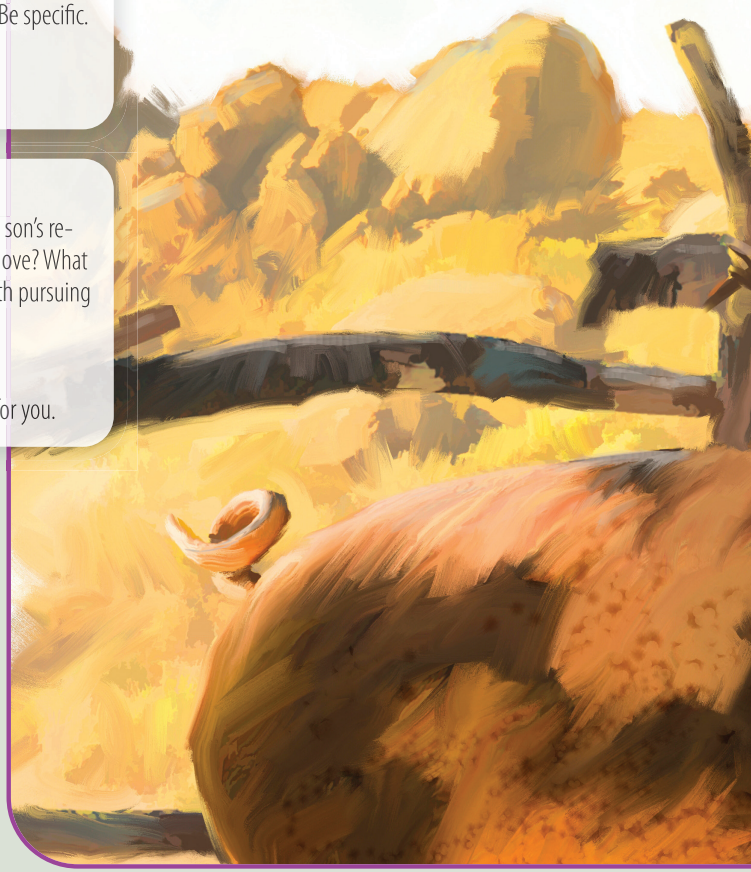
REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for His never-ending love for you.

"And when you are done, stay down there. You can shake the pods from the trees and feed the hogs with them. Take it or leave it."

"I'll take it, sir." So the laborer, proud shoulders slumped, plodded down to the hog pen.

As the young man shoveled the muck from the hog pen, he tried to forget the awful stench by remembering better times. He remembered the fine apartment he once had in the city. And all the friends. He had once been the toast of the town. His lavish parties had been famous. Expensive too. Had he really run through his entire inheritance?



With a pang of conscience that nearly doubled him over with pain, the young man remembered the day his dad had handed over the money. The old man had aged overnight, it seemed.

"Now, there's a thought!" the laborer croaked to the hogs. "Dad knew it would probably come to this! That's what he was trying to tell me!" The shoveling complete, the laborer climbed a tree that overhung the hog pen. By rocking back and forth, he hoped to shake down more than enough pods for the animals and some extra for himself. But by the time his stiff legs got him down, the hogs had snuffled up everything.

That's when memories about home burned into his consciousness.



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Wednesday

READ Read Luke 15:25-32.

THINK How was the older son's service different from the way the prodigal son decided to serve their father? What motivated each son's service?

FIND What did the older son not understand? (See Ephesians 2:8, 9.)

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God for the right attitude to serve Him.

Thursday

READ Read 1 John 3:1.

SERVE Allow God to love someone lavishly through you. Do something meaningful to serve someone today.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to make you a channel for His lavish love to flow to others.

Friday

READ Read 1 John 3:16.

ASK Ask an adult to tell you about a time they experienced God's lavish love and decided to share His love through service to those in need.

TELL At worship, tell your family the parable of the prodigal family. Ask them to tell how the story ends.

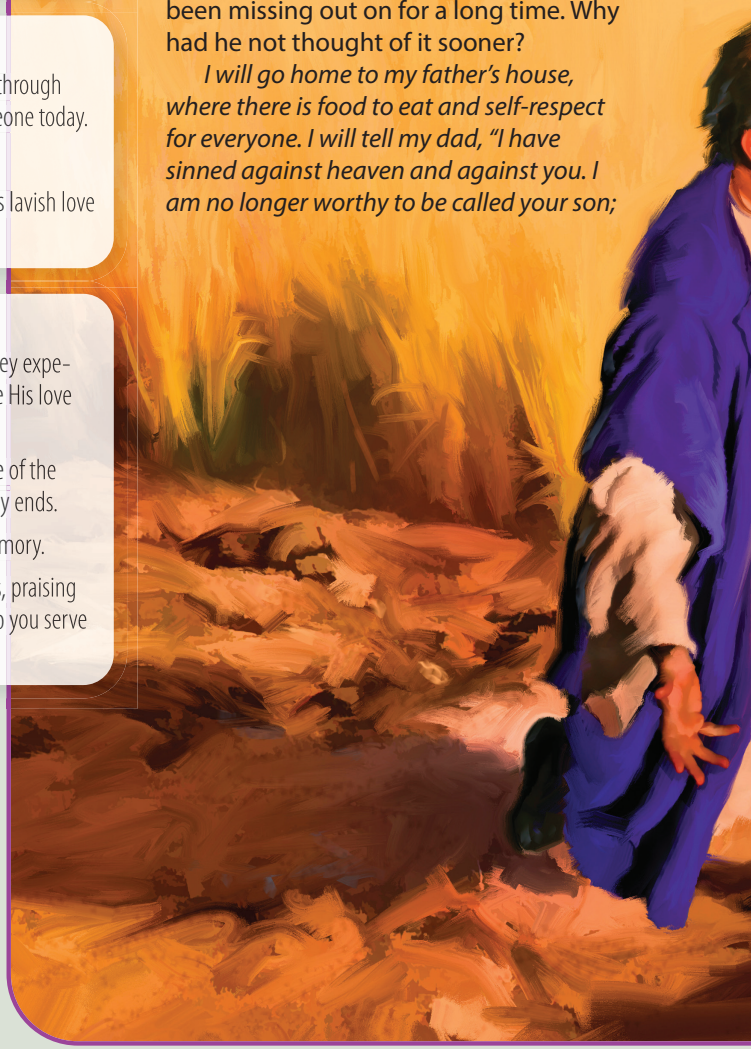
REPEAT Say your power text aloud from memory.

PRAY With your family, say sentence prayers, praising God for His lavish love and asking Him to help you serve others out of love.

He wondered what they were eating at home. His dad was a rather decent employer who had the farmhands eat at his own table. Not like this stingy farmer. "Real quality, my dad," the boy muttered. "If only . . . nah! I couldn't do that."

Dreary day after dreary day followed this predictable pattern. Until the day he realized he had hit rock bottom. There was no place to go but up. And then he suddenly remembered all that he had been missing out on for a long time. Why had he not thought of it sooner?

I will go home to my father's house, where there is food to eat and self-respect for everyone. I will tell my dad, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son;



make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18, 19). If Father is willing to receive me back home, I will do anything to serve him. I will even muck out his barn!

And before he realized it, he was running, stumbling toward home. And all the way he rehearsed his confession. *Father, I have sinned against God and against you.*

The father saw his son a great way off and ran to welcome him. The old man didn't seem to hear the heartbreaking confession. Instead, he eagerly led the boy inside, called for a rich robe to cover the filthy clothes, and laid plans for a lavish welcome-home party.

The old man's joy could not be contained. He was leaping and singing and telling everyone the great news. "This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (verse 24).

This story reminds us of God's amazing love. In spite of the sinner's wayward behavior, the Father never stops loving that person. Such lavish love inspires each one who has experienced God's forgiveness and grace to serve Him wholeheartedly out of love.

