



10

# The Real Prodigal

**Service**
We serve self-sacrificially.

**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).

**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
- Student story on page 112 of this guide

**OUR BELIEFS**

- No. 3, The Father
- No. 10, The Experience of Salvation
- No. 11, Growing in Christ

**OBJECTIVES**

**The students will:**

- **Know** that God's lavish love inspires us to serve Him and others.
- **Feel** cherished by God as well as ready to serve Him.
- **Respond** by sharing with others evidences of God's lavish love.

POWERPOINT

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

## The Bible Lesson at a Glance

*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* eleventh edition, defines *prodigal*, the noun, as "one who spends or gives lavishly or foolishly." The adjective is defined as "characterized by profuse or wasteful expenditure."

In Jesus' parable of the lost son, the younger son chooses to leave home. He takes his inheritance and wastes it, which is why he is called prodigal. The father's love does not change even when the son wants nothing to do with him. In the end the father is prodigal, lavish almost to the point of waste—with his love.

## This is a lesson about service.

The prodigal is anyone who turns their back on God. By depending on ourselves instead of on God, we turn our backs on grace just as much as we do when we deliberately go against His will. But the loving Father waits with a lavish welcome and on our return embraces us in complete forgiveness. As we experience the Father's abundant grace we are inspired to serve others and to share the good news of His grace with everyone.

## Teacher Enrichment

The parable of the prodigal son brings "out . . . God's pitying love for those who are straying from Him. . . . He is full of kindness and tender pity toward all who are exposed to the temptations of the artful foe" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 198).

The parable presents "the Lord's dealing with those who have once known the Father's love, but who have allowed the tempter to lead them captive at his will" (*ibid.*).

The father waits for the son to return, but runs to meet him while he is still a long way off. It is unheard of in the East for a wealthy patriarch and landowner to run to welcome a younger man, especially someone so foolish.

Famed British preacher Charles Spurgeon, in a work titled *Prodigal Love for the Prodigal Son* (printed in *The Parables of Our Lord* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprinted 1992], pp. 381-392), outlines the Father's prodigal love—much love, much forgiveness, full restoration, exceeding joy, overflowing comfort, strong assurance, and intimate communion.

*Have I embraced the lavish love of God? How can I share that love with someone who needs to experience it?*

# Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and use several minutes to debrief students on the previous week's lesson. Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. (The leader should be familiar with the previous lesson to be able to direct the discussion.) This is also a good time to have students recite the power text.

**Have students begin the readiness activity of your choice.** »

# Program notes

| LESSON SECTION | MINUTES | ACTIVITIES | MATERIALS NEEDED |
|---|---|---|---|
| Welcome | Ongoing | Greet students at the door. Ask about their week. | |
| 1 Readiness Activities | 10-15 | *A. Lavish Love* | pre-written directions, index cards, pens/pencils |
| | | *B. Lost Trouper* | |
| | | *C. Lavish Love Fruit Salad* | recipe on card, various *fruits, eating utensils |
| * Prayer and Praise | 15-20 | See page 107. Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program. | songbooks, world map, pushpins, note paper, pens/pencils, offering plate/basket |
| 2 Bible Lesson | 15-20 | Introducing the Bible Story | |
| | | Experiencing the Story | Bibles |
| | | Exploring the Bible | Bibles |
| 3 Applying the Lesson | 10-15 | *Lavish Love Scenarios* | |
| 4 Sharing the Lesson | 10-15 | *Lavish Love Reminders* | household items (see activity on p. 110) |
| * Closing | | Prayer and Closing Comments | |
| | | Reminder to Parents | |
| | | Coming Up Next Week | |

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

# 1

## READINESS ACTIVITIES

*Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.*

### A

**YOU NEED:**

- ☐ directions written where all can see
- ☐ index cards
- ☐ pens/pencils

### Lavish Love

As students arrive, give each one a card and pen or pencil. Ask them to follow the directions written where all can see.

***Directions:***

Say: **On the cards provided, write a list of things you would do to shower your family members with lavish love. You could fantasize about a party, a treat, a vacation, or a night out that you would offer them.** Collect the cards and read them to the class, with permission.

***Debriefing***

Say: **How does imagining this treat for your loved ones help you understand Luke 15:18, 19?** (It helps us understand that those who experience God's love are inspired to love and serve Him wholeheartedly in return.)

**Let's say the 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).***

**The power point reminds us that**

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

### B

### Lost Trouper (person who persists patiently in spite of difficulty)

Ask for a strong volunteer who is willing to be a trouper and get lost for a few minutes. Ask the volunteer to wait outside the door. While the person is outside, explain to the class that they will close their eyes while the person returns and hides. They will then call and search for the person, but they should not let on when they find them. Instead, they will deliberately keep calling and looking in other parts of the room as if they do not know where the person is. They should continue until you give the signal to stop. If the trouper gets frustrated and tries to attract their attention, they are to ignore the clues. Explain that when the trouper comes out, they should rush to hug and congratulate them.

**Note:** Clue in the other adults to join the search, leading kids to look someplace else and keeping them in the hunt by suggesting the trouper is lost. When you can keep the group searching no longer, call a halt and ask the lost person to come out. When the person walks forward, everyone should affirm him/her for being a good trouper.

***Debriefing***

Ask the person: **How did it feel to be lost?** (Accept his or her response.) **How did it feel to be found?** (a relief) **Did you at any point doubt our love for you? Tell us about it.** (Encourage the person to talk.) **How did we do at lavishing love on you at the end?** (OK, better, great) **Let's say the power text, Luke 15:18, 19:**

***"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).***

**The power point reminds us that**

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

# Prayer and Praise

## C

YOU NEED:
- ☐ recipe on card
- ☐ *various fruits
- ☐ eating utensils

### Lavish Love Fruit Salad

If you have the right-sized group and are comfortable with food at church, you might try the following in order to make a startling point about the lavishness of God's love.

***Note:** Before planning to do this activity, inquire from the students if any of them has food allergies. Avoid using fruits and nuts to which one or more of the students have allergic reactions.

Prior to Sabbath School, have a variety of fruits washed, peeled, and sliced. Put the different types of fruits in separate containers. Have several types of nuts available to be mixed with the fruits. Place the various containers on a table along with a large mixing bowl. While the students are doing Activity A, write your lavish love description on your own card. After everyone has shared their "recipe" cards, share the contents of your card while an assistant builds the "Lavish Love Fruit Salad" described below (or some other food that everyone in your class likes):

Have the volunteer start pouring into the mixing bowl the contents of the various containers with fruits. Next the student will sprinkle lavishly nuts or other healthy ingredients on the fruit salad. Then the volunteer will mix all the ingredients and portion the fruit salad in plastic bowls for each of the students present in Sabbath School.

***Debriefing***

Ask: **How does something so delicious help us think of God's lavish love?** Distribute spoons and/or bowls to each student and invite them to come and enjoy the Lavish Love Fruit Salad and remember to thank God for His lavish love for them.

**Our power point reminds us that**

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

### Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.

### Suggested Songs

"I Like Bananas" (*Praise Time*, no. 17)
"Jesus Is a River of Love" (*Praise Time*, no. 33)
"Behold, What Manner of Love" (*He Is Our Song*, no. 42)
"Children of the Heavenly Father" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 101)
"Lord, I'm Coming Home" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 296)

### Mission

YOU NEED:
- ☐ world map
- ☐ pushpins

Say: **Our mission is to tell the whole world the good news of the Father's lavish love. Our mission stories report about the people who still need to hear.** Use *Adventist Mission* for youth and adults, (go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION), or another mission report available to you. Using a world map, have the students identify and mark with pushpins the location where the mission story is taking place.

### Offering

YOU NEED:
- ☐ note paper
- ☐ pens/pencils
- ☐ offering plate/basket

Say: **Our offerings are one way to tell God "Thank You!" for His lavish love.** Give students note paper and pens/pencils to write notes to God expressing their love. **Bring your notes and your offerings to the basket up front.** Say: **We worship God when we bring our tithes and offerings to Him. These money gifts make it possible for others to be able to worship together as well.**

### Prayer

Have the students form class groups, each placing a hand on the shoulder of the person to their left. You begin the prayer by praising God for His lavish love, and confess our continuing need for God's forgiveness, guidance, and grace. Pray for the special requests and then ask each person to pray silently for the person to their left that they will understand and choose to accept God's lavish love for them. At the end, pray for the students' joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors. Close by singing "God Is So Good."

2

BIBLE LESSON

## Introducing the Bible Story

Ask: **Have you ever had a pet that got lost? How did you feel about it? What did you do? How did you react when you found it, or it came back? Our story today is about some of the feelings and behaviors you have just described.**

YOU NEED:

- ☐ Bibles

## Experiencing the Story

Ask everyone to sit in a circle, and take turns reading Luke 15:11-32. (Large church: Form several circles of class groups.) Stop after verses 12, 13, 16, 20, 24, 31, and ask: **What do you hear (or see or feel)?** Encourage several to respond. The students will imagine the story and tell what they imagine to answer that question. Affirm their responses. A response after verse 12 might be: "I could imagine hearing the father pleading with his son to wait until he is older."

***Debriefing***

**Where is grace in the story of the lost son?** (The father celebrates the return of the son; the son is reinstated in the family, though he does not deserve it.) **Where is love in this story?** (Accept their answers.) **Actually, the story is all about lavish love, but neither the word "lavish" nor "love" is used. Where is the willingness to serve expressed in this story?** (As the prodigal son recalls the unconditional love of his father, he determines to return home and respond to his father's love by serving him.)

**Just as the power point reminds us,**

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

YOU NEED:
□ Bibles

## Exploring the Bible

While they still have their Bibles open, ask your students the following questions:

**1. The word "prodigal" means recklessly extravagant or lavish to the point of being wasteful. What word in Luke 15:13 indicates that the younger son is prodigal?** (squandered, wasted, etc.)

**2. What besides money does he squander?** (his family relationships, his health, his self-respect, his opportunities, his youthful years, etc.) Ellen White says, "Every life centered in self is squandered. Whoever attempts to live apart from God is wasting his substance. He [or she] is squandering the precious years, squandering the powers of mind and heart and soul, and working to make himself bankrupt for eternity" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 200). **What might this say about you and me?** (I am the prodigal in this story.)

**3. But wait; there are two more prodigals in the story. We find one in verse 28. Who is he?** (the big brother) **He doesn't get it. He thinks that it's about what you do; but it isn't. God does everything to save us. So at the end of the story, this son is outside. He is relying on his works.**

**4. Now let's find the third prodigal. Look at verses 22, 23. Who is it?** (the father) **In what way is he wasteful or extravagant?** (with his love)

**5.** So is this a story about the prodigal son, or is it really **about the prodigal father?** (It's about both, but Jesus told it to make a point about God.)

**6. What did the father do after the prodigal left? Look at verse 20.** (He waited and watched for him to return. Then he ran to meet him.) **Remember, no matter where you have gone or what you have done, God is waiting for you with open arms. Read Luke 15:7.**

**7. Now let's revisit the power text, Luke 15:18, 19.**

***"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).***

**Now we understand what the power point states, that is,**

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

## *Lavish Love Scenarios*

Ask: **How could you lavish God's love on children in the following situations?**

**1. A little person your folks are babysitting for the weekend has deliberately trashed your room. When he sees that you are mad, he acts really sorry. But it's too late to save your stamp collection**.

**2. Yesterday a little neighbor rode her bike through your dad's flower bed and talked back when you asked her to stop. You had to replant the flowers. Today she wants you to play ball with her. How could you tell her about God's lavish love?**

### *Debriefing*

Ask: **How does it feel to receive lavish love?** (great) **It feels even better when you help someone else experience it. This is what we learned from the power text. Let's say it together:**

***"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).***

**Remember our power point,**

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

# 4

## SHARING THE LESSON

YOU NEED:
- ☐ household items

### *Lavish Love Reminders*

Invite students to share with the class if they did something meaningful last week to reflect God's lavish love by serving someone. Ask: **What are some ways that you could serve and show someone how much you appreciate God's love? What special thing did you decide to do to demonstrate through action God's abundant grace and love as illustrated in the story of the prodigal son? Who was the person whom you served out of love for God?**

Bring from home lots of common household items that could remind students about God's lavish love. For instance: an ice-cream scoop (God scoops the returning sinner up in His arms), a dustpan (God's love spills over), a hammer (God is building a house for me), a facial tissue (God weeps for the prodigal), a party hat or cake pan (God wants to throw a party for me), grapes (God is waiting to eat them with me), flat bread (God died for me), nails (He died for me), etc.

Arrange the items on a table and have everyone come up and choose one to take back with them to their seat. Then ask the students to tell how this item is going to remind them of God's lavish love. (Large church option: Have each teacher bring a brown bag with enough items for the students in their class. Do the activity in class groups.)

***Debriefing***

Ask: **How could you use one of these objects to share God's love with someone in your home or school or neighborhood?** (Have a volunteer demonstrate how to use the object to draw someone else's attention to God's lavish love.)

**Let's remember,**

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

**Reminder: Next week is Global Youth Day. Are you ready?**

# Closing

### Prayer and closing comments:

Have everyone form a circle, placing a hand on the person to their left. Ask each person to pray silently for the one on his or her left that they will choose to live in the Father's house and enjoy His lavish love. Pray Jude 24, 25 as a blessing to close.

### Reminder to parents:

Say: **Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents' Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.**

### Coming up next week:

Say: **Jesus sets an example for us. We serve others when we share God's love with them through acts of kindness.**

## Notes

# Student lesson

## The Real Prodigal

*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. 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. 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.

**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

**POWER TEXT**

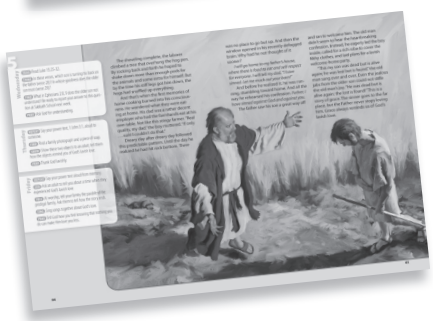
"I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18, 19).

**POWER POINT**

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





## Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 75.

## 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.

## 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.