

# The Lost Son

*by Sharla Guenther*

This week's parable is about the lost son. This story is also called the prodigal son. Prodigal means to spend a lot of money on things you don't need and being very wasteful with what you have. You will see that, that is exactly what this son does.

This is the parable that Jesus told: There once was a father that had two sons. One day the younger son said to his father, "Father, could you give me my inheritance?" (Inheritance is money the father would give his children after he had died.) So the father thought about it and decided his sons could have the money now, and he split it evenly between them.

Very soon after the younger son received the money, he decided that since he had so much money he would move to a different country and have some fun with it.

When he left, he left for good. He took every last thing he had and didn't plan on returning. He wanted to be grown up and spend all his money how he wanted with no one to tell him what to do.

So he just left. He left a big farm with many hired men with everything he needed, he left his family, and more importantly he left his father who trusted him enough to give him the money. This probably made his father very sad and I'm sure he missed him very much.

While the son was gone he spent all the money he had right away. He didn't think to save any of it. He ate out every meal every day, he bought fancy cars, he threw wild parties and spent money on many other things that God wouldn't be happy with.

After he had spent all his money, the country he was living in became very poor and they hardly had enough food for everyone. It was even worse for people who had no money because food became even more expensive, so it was very hard for poor people to get any food.

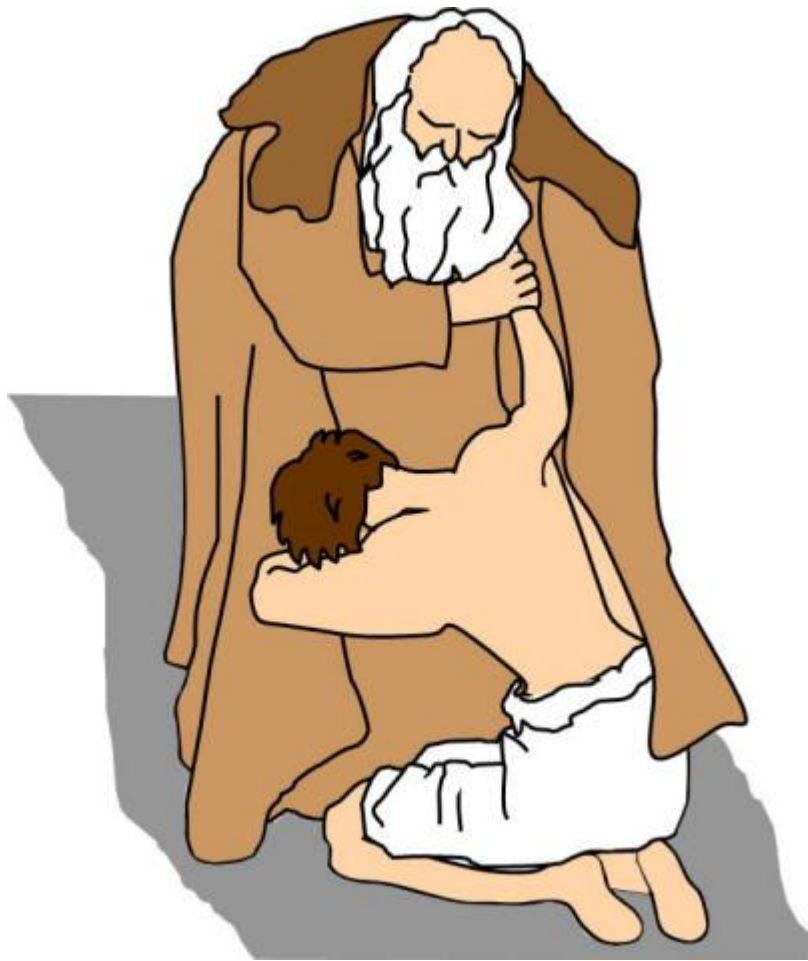
The son was in trouble. He had no money, no place to live, he had nothing to eat, so he had to get a job. The only job he could find was feeding pigs. He was so hungry he tried to eat the food that the pigs were eating but his boss caught him and told him if he ever saw him doing that again he would lose his job.

That night as the son was walking home his stomach wouldn't stop growling, he was so hungry. He saw some people walking towards him and he asked them if they could give him any money for food, but no one would give him anything. Everyone was so poor it was hard to share with anyone.

The son went to bed hungry and when he woke up he realized something. When he lived with his father even the hired men had more food than they needed, and now he was starving to death. At that moment he made a plan. He would go back to his father's house and say to him, 'I have sinned against God and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son, so hire me and I will work for you.'

He knew that if he became like a hired man on his father's farm he would still be better off than he was right now. He would always have a warm place to stay and food to eat. So he headed for home.

It took the son a long time to get home, he was just hoping that his dad would let him work at the farm and let him be a hired man. The son was walking up the to farm but while he was still a long way off and he could see someone notice him and start to run towards him. He was sure that they must have been expecting someone else, no one would be excited to see him.



As the person got closer he realized it was his father and he was yelling, "My son! My son! You are finally home!" He couldn't believe it. His father threw his arms around him and kissed him. But the son quickly said, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son..." The son wanted to continue but the father said to one of his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the biggest calf and kill it. Let's have a party and celebrate because my son was lost and is found!"

A little while later, the older son was working in the field and heard music and dancing. So he called to one of the servants and asked what was going on. "Your brother has come home and your father is having a party for his return."

This upset the older brother and he refused to go join the party. The father heard that he was upset, so he went to talk to him and invited him to join the party. But the son refused saying, "Look! I have been working for you all these years and I've never disobeyed you. Yet you never had a big party for me to celebrate with my friends. But now my younger brother has come home, spent all the money you gave him, and you kill the biggest calf for him!"

"But, my son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was lost and now he is found."

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In this parable the father in the story is just like God. This is how God would be if we ran away from him and we started doing things we shouldn't. He doesn't give up on us when we do things that are wrong, and he will always forgive us if we've truly changed and repent for what we've done.

Now the older brother in this story just shows how most of us would act if this happened to us. I think we would all be upset if our younger brother or sister ran away for a long time and did a whole bunch of bad things and then came home and your parents threw a big party for him.

The father who had been wronged, was forgiving. But the eldest son, who had not been wronged, was unforgiving. In this parable Jesus gives a clear picture of God and what God is like. God is truly kinder than us.

# The Good Samaritan

*by Sharla Guenther*

This is one of the last parables we will be looking at. There are many other parables in the Bible, so if you want to hear more ask your parents to read them to you.

This next parable started with a man asking Jesus a question. The man who asks Jesus a question was very smart. Maybe he was trying to trick Jesus and see if he was a good teacher or not. This is what he asked: "Teacher, what should I do so I can go to Heaven and live forever?"

Jesus replied, "What is written in the Bible? What do you think?"

The man answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself."

"That is right!" Jesus said. "Do this and you will live forever in Heaven."

But the man wanted to know more so asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus decided to answer this question with a parable to help everyone who was listening understand.

Jesus said:

"There once was a Jewish man walking along a road. He was coming from Jerusalem and was heading to Jericho, which was a full day or two of walking.

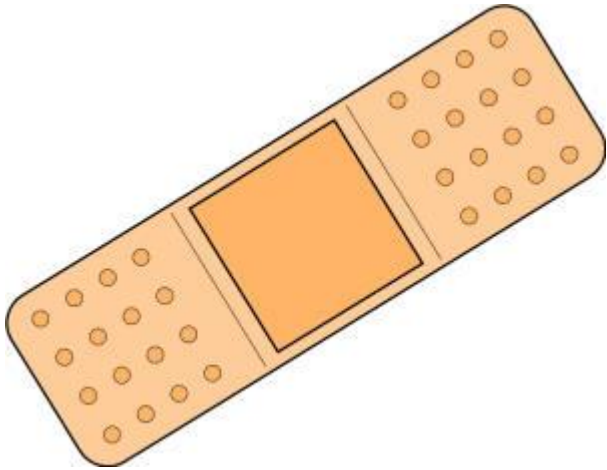
The road was rocky and there were small hills all around. The man was just humming to himself and enjoying the nice day when suddenly a group of men jumped out from behind a hill. They took all his belongings and tore off most of his clothes. They didn't want him to follow them so they beat him up very badly, and left him lying and bleeding on the side of the road.

A few minutes later, a priest was walking down the same path and noticed the man lying on the side of the road. Do you know what he did? You'd think he would run over and help the man. Instead he crossed the road and walked on the other side and acted like he didn't see the man.

About an hour or so later, another man, called a Levite, was walking down the road. Levites were people who assisted priests with their work. He would probably help the man. But you know what he did? He slowed down and walked a little closer to the man, but then kept walking without helping him at all.

You might be thinking that maybe the man lying by the side of the road looked like he was resting or something and that is why the priest and the Levite didn't stop to help. The trouble is, it was easy to tell he was badly hurt. The man was bleeding, had most of his clothes ripped off him, and he was bruised and hardly breathing.

Just a few minutes later, another man came walking. He was a Samaritan. One thing you should know about Samaritans is that Jews didn't like them. Jews usually didn't treat Samaritans very well, so they never got along. The man who was dying on the road was a Jew. So what do you think the Samaritan did? You would think he would walk by and maybe even laugh at the man.



But as soon as he saw the man, he went over to him and felt compassion for him. He put bandages on his sores and poured oil and wine (which were quite expensive) on the sores to prevent them from getting worse. Then he lifted the man on his own donkey and took him to a hotel to take care of him.

The next day the Samaritan took out enough money so the man could stay at the hotel until he was well enough to leave. He paid the man at the front desk and asked him to take care of the man. If he wasn't better after about two months the Samaritan would come back and pay for any extra cost."

After Jesus finished the story, he asked, "Which of the three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was left beaten on the side of the road?"

The man who asked him the question at the beginning replied, "The one who had compassion and helped him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do the same.