

LESSON 4

JESUS TEACHES FORGIVENESS

A FATHER FORGIVES HIS SON

Jesus tells a story

Jesus often told short stories called parables to teach spiritual truth. Here is one of them:

Luke 15:11-32. “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger one said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the property now.’ So the man divided his property between his two sons. After a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living. He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over that country, and he was left without a thing.

“So he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. At last he came to his senses and said, ‘All my father’s hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! I will get up and go to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers.’” So he got up and started back to his father.

“He was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. ‘Father,’ the son said, ‘I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.’

“But the father called to his servants. ‘Hurry!’ he said. ‘Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate

with a feast! For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.’ And so the feasting began.



“In the meantime the older son was out in the field. On his way back, when he came close to the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him, ‘What’s going on?’ ‘Your brother has come back home,’ the servant answered, ‘and your father has killed the prize calf, because he got him back safe and sound.’ The older brother was so angry that he would not go into the house; so his father came out and begged him to come in. But he spoke back to his father, ‘Look, all these years I have worked for you like a slave, and I have never disobeyed your orders. What have you given me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friends! But this son of yours wasted all your property on prostitutes, and when he comes back home, you kill the prize calf for him!’ ‘My son,’ the father answered, ‘you are always here with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.’”

For You to Do

1. Fill in the blanks: Jesus told to help the people understand important truths.

Lessons from the story

There were two ways to leave an inheritance: by a will, or by gifts to the heirs while the owner was still living. The younger son was anxious to get away from home to enjoy life in his own way. He wanted to choose his own friends. He didn’t want his father or brother telling him what to do. So the father gave him his part of the inheritance, and he left home.



As long as his money lasted, he had “friends.” When his money was gone, so were his “friends.” Finally, half starved and envying the pigs that he was taking care of, he realized what a fool he had been. He went home sorry for his sins, confessing them, and asking for forgiveness. He hoped that his father would give him a job.

What a surprise when his father welcomed him home and gave him back his place in the family! He didn’t deserve this treatment, but his father still loved him in spite of his sin.

In this parable the father represents our heavenly Father—God. The sons stand for two kinds of people who are lost. The younger boy is the sinner who is sorry for his wrongdoing and comes back to God for forgiveness.

The older son, proud of how good he was and ashamed of his younger brother, had worked for his father. But his angry, disrespectful words show what was really important to him. In his heart he was as far from home as the brother in the far country. He represents those who are proud of their goodness and don’t realize that they too are sinners who need God’s forgiveness. Pride, criticism, and an unforgiving spirit may be worse sins than those of the brother in the far country.

We have all disobeyed our heavenly Father and done wrong. We don’t deserve a place in His wonderful home in heaven. But He invites us to turn our back on sin and come to Him for forgiveness.

Romans 6:23. For sin pays its wage—death; but God’s free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.

For You to Do

2. Why did the younger son leave home?
 a) To get a good job
 b) To serve humanity
 c) To have his own way
3. Why did he come home?
 a) To ask for more money
 b) To ask for his father’s forgiveness and a job
 c) To tell about the city
4. Who needs God’s forgiveness?
 a) Everyone, for all have sinned
 b) Only very bad people
 c) Only those who live in a city
5. Memorize Romans 6:23.
6. Have you sinned? Do you need God’s forgiveness?
7. Memorize these words: “Father, . . . I have sinned against God . . . I am no longer fit to be called your son.” You can make these words of the younger son your prayer now. No matter what you have done, God will welcome you home and forgive you because He loves you.

WE MUST FORGIVE

Jesus taught that if we want God to forgive us, we must forgive those who wrong us. Resentment is a sin and a root for other sins. It produces bitterness, criticism, hatred, fighting, and even murder. As long as we hold onto our sins, we can’t be forgiven of them. We must let go and let God take them away. Jesus said:

Matthew 6:15. “If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done.”

For You to Do

8. Has someone wronged you? Ask God to help you forgive and forget it.

JESUS FORGIVES SINNERS

Jesus came to the world for two reasons:

1. To teach us about God and His love.
2. To take the blame for our sins and die in our place so that we can be forgiven.



Since Jesus was going to die for all sinners, He had the right to forgive anyone who came to Him wanting forgiveness for sin. Jesus forgave many sinners and changed their lives completely. One of these was a sinful woman who had probably heard him preach and wanted to show her appreciation. She went into the house of Simon who had invited Jesus and His disciples to dinner. At the feet of Jesus, she cried in repentance for her sins. Simon was shocked that Jesus would let such a bad woman touch His feet. Jesus told him:

Luke 7:41-50. “There were two men who owed money to a moneylender,” Jesus began. “One owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other one fifty. Neither of them could pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Which one, then, will love him more?”

“I suppose,” answered Simon, “that it would be the one who was forgiven more.”

“You are right,” said Jesus. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your home, and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears The great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love.”

Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

The others sitting at the table began to say to themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”

But Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”



How glad the woman was when Jesus forgave her! The Pharisee and his friends could have this same joy and forgiveness, but they didn't want to admit that they were sinners. They were proud of themselves and of their good works.

The Pharisees asked, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” Who is it that forgives sins? The Son of God—the Lord Jesus Christ. He still forgives all those who come to Him. We go to His feet in prayer confessing that we are sinners, that we are sorry for our sins and want to get rid of them. In our hearts we hear Him say: “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Jesus' forgiveness brings us joy, peace, and a new life.

Or we can be like the Pharisees and pretend that we aren't sinners. As long as we do this, we can't possibly receive forgiveness for our sins. We must confess them to Jesus and ask for His forgiveness. You must have your sins forgiven before you can have eternal life.

For You to Do

9. Memorize the words of Jesus: “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”
10. Has Jesus forgiven your sins? Thank Him for it. Think: What am I doing to show my love for Jesus?