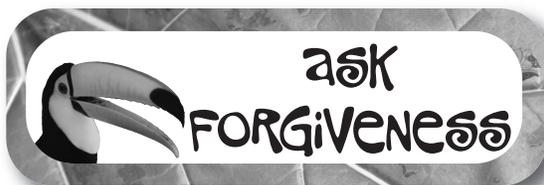


PRODIGAL SON

LUKE 15:11-32



Teacher's Devotional

Can you imagine what might happen worldwide if people everywhere began to forgive each other? A number of wars would cease; murder cases would nearly disappear. A host of angry, bitter feelings would dissolve and the amount of peace and understanding would increase exponentially! Sadly, forgiveness doesn't flow all that easily, does it? Even in Jesus' story of the forgiving father, forgiveness stops at the older brother! He is unwilling to forgive a little brother whom he feels doesn't merit forgiveness; in fact, he's angry because his younger sibling is so readily forgiven by his loving father!

No matter how much we want to be forgiven ourselves, we often think that for others forgiveness must be deserved. We term some offenses "unforgivable" and are disturbed to see forgiveness extended to mass murderers, gross polluters, child molesters or those who deeply hurt us, to name a few. (If your particular "unforgivable" category wasn't named, fill in the blank. You know which one it is!) We have a tendency to want to take God's place when it comes to others' sins, weighing in on whether or not they should be forgiven!

The good news is that we are all hopelessly, equally sinful in the eyes of a perfect, holy God. What makes that good news is that we can freely confess our sin of judging others—or any other sin! Our loving Father is faithful to His promise to forgive us. He is just and perfect in His mercy to forget our sin. And then, like the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears (see Luke 7:36-38), we can remember how much we have been forgiven and can pray for other sinners rather than judge them—for we're all in need of the same forgiveness!

GOD'S WORD

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, he will forgive us."

GOD'S WORD & ME

When we've disobeyed God, if we ask for forgiveness, God's constant love is shown by His forgiveness.

PLANNING PAGE

Choose which centers you will provide and the order in which children will participate in them (see pp. 14-18 for schedule tips and pp. 24-25 for guidelines in combining older and younger children). Also plan who will lead each center (for staffing tips see pp. 19-21). Use the reproducible planning sheet (p. 238) to record your plans.

BIBLE STORY CENTER

BIBLE STORY

Prodigal Son • Luke 15:11-32

ADVENTURE BOX (YOUNGER CHILD)

Use props (sack of real or plastic coins, several party items [hats, streamers, cups, plates, etc.] and stuffed animal pig) to demonstrate story action

ADVENTURE BOX (OLDER CHILD)

Use props (sack of plastic or real coins, several party items [hat, streamers, cups, plates, snacks], stuffed animal pig, Bible-times robe and a fancy ring) to demonstrate story action

GAME CENTER

YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Play a musical game with fast and slow movements and then talk about how fast the father in Jesus' story forgave His son

MATERIALS

Bible, rhythm instrument (shaker, tambourine, drum, etc.)

OLDER CHILD OPTION

Walk on a "trail" of footprints to repeat 1 John 1:9 and talk about what it means to confess sin to God

MATERIALS

Bible, construction paper, scissors, marker, masking tape

ART CENTER

YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Make and decorate flags as reminders of God's love and forgiveness

MATERIALS

Bible, small and large construction paper in a variety of colors, scissors, tape, markers, stickers, adhesive craft foam shapes

OLDER CHILD OPTION

Make and decorate bookmarks about 1 John 1:9 and talk about the importance of knowing God's forgiveness for sin

MATERIALS

Bible, Lesson 11 Pattern Page (p. 196), clear Con-Tact® paper, card stock, scissors, paper, thin-tip markers

COLORING/PUZZLE CENTER

YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Review the Bible story while completing coloring page

MATERIALS

Lesson 11 Coloring Page (p. 197) for each child, crayons

OLDER CHILD OPTION

Review 1 John 1:9 while completing puzzle page

MATERIALS

Lesson 11 Puzzle Page (p. 198) for each child, pencils

WORSHIP CENTER

FOR THE YOUNGER AND OLDER CHILD

Participate in large-group activities to review Bible verse and to worship God together

MATERIALS

Bibles, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, song charts (pp. 249, 251), large sheet of paper, marker

BONUS THEME IDEAS

Bonus Theme Ideas can be used at any time during this session: as an additional activity center, to extend the session for a longer time, or for added theme excitement.

RAINFOREST FLOWERS

Each child places a shoestring licorice on a plate as a flower stem and then creates flowers. Provide sliced bananas or kiwis for flower centers. Provide raspberries, strawberries cut in half and orange sections as flower petals. If desired, real mint leaves can be added to the stems.

Post a note alerting parents to the use of food. Also, check registration forms for possible food allergies.



FAMILY FUN EVENT

Plan a special event designed to build relationships among families and between the church and the community. Send home invitations (see p. 233) several weeks ahead of time. Ask families to bring their favorite outdoor sports equipment (soccer balls, footballs, jump ropes, Frisbees, etc.). Have several parents as designated game leaders. Game leaders guide families in playing games and beginning new games at appropriate times. (Optional: Plan an egg toss or water balloon toss in which all families can participate at the same time.) After 30 to 40 minutes of game time, serve a pizza meal, barbeque hotdogs or enjoy one of the snacks suggested in the Bonus Theme Ideas for each lesson.

THE PARROT GAME

Parrots live in the rainforest and they are very good at imitating the sounds they hear. The object of this game is for you to be rainforest parrots! The challenge is to accurately mimic what I say and do. Ready? Repeat after me! Begin a variety of actions, repeating each action for 10 to 12 seconds: clap in patterns, make funny noises and move in silly ways. Children imitate you. As children catch on to the game, make your moves, claps and sounds more and more complicated and harder to follow.

BIBLE STORY CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • LUKE 15:11-32

INTRODUCTION

Hold an item from the rainforest (stuffed animal jaguar or monkey, rain stick, artificial flower, etc.). Welcome your rainforest explorers by saying **I'm going to pass the (monkey) to someone who is wearing blue tennis shoes.** Children look to find the person. When person is identified, give him or her the (monkey). Then describe another child. Continue until each child has been identified. End the game by describing a characteristic of yourself, so that children will pass the (monkey) back to you. Then show Adventure Box. **What do you think is in our Adventure Box today? Let's find out!** Untie box. Remove items from box and use them to demonstrate story action as you tell the story and/or lead children in suggested motions.



ADVENTURE BOX

In a cardboard or wooden box labeled "Adventure," place a Bible, a sack of real or plastic coins, several party items (hats, streamers, cups, plates, etc.), stuffed animal pig. Tie rope or brown yarn around the box or crate.

TELL THE STORY

Let's listen to a story Jesus told of a brother who went far from his home and family.

Once there was a father with two sons. They lived on a big farm. The father loved his sons. One day the younger son said, "Father, you promised to give me money some day. I want it NOW!" So the father gave his son the money. *(Hold sack of coins, stand and walk in place. Invite children to join you in story actions.)*

The son packed his clothes and left home. The father felt sad. *(Wave and look sad.)*

When the son got to a new place, he spent lots of money. *(Set out party items.)* He had lots of parties and made lots of new friends. His new friends helped him spend his money until it was all gone! *(Remove coins from sack and place in Adventure Box.)* His nice clothes became dirty and torn. Soon he didn't have enough food to eat. *(Rub tummy and look sad.)*

The son was so hungry, he went to work feeding some pigs. *(Show stuffed animal pig.)* It was NOT a job he liked to do! As he worked, the son thought, *Even the men who work for my father have food to eat.* The son decided, *I'll go back home. I'll ask my father to make me one of his servants!*

So the son began walking toward home. *(Walk in place.)* When he could see his father's farm, he could see someone running down the road toward him! *(Run in place.)* It was his FATHER. His father was running to meet him!

"Oh, Father," the son said, "I spent ALL the money you gave me. I am very sorry." His father grabbed him up in a big HUG! *(Hug self.)* He told the servants, "Make a big dinner. I want to CELEBRATE! I am very GLAD my son has come back home!"

The father gave his son new clothes and shoes. The son was so VERY glad that his father loved him and forgave him!

GOD'S WORD & ME

Jesus told this story to help us learn that God is good and kind, just like the father in the story. He will forgive us when we ask Him to. The Bible says, "If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, he will forgive us." We are glad God forgives us when we tell Him that we have done wrong. Pray, Dear God, thank You for loving us and forgiving us when we are sorry and ask forgiveness. We love You. In Jesus' name, amen.



BIBLE STORY CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • LUKE 15:11-32

INTRODUCTION

Let's play "Walk this way." It's a game where you show how you feel by the way you walk. Walk like you're really happy. Very good! Now, walk in place like you're sad. Children respond. Walk in place like you're proud of yourself. Children respond. Walk like you are hungry. Children respond. Walk in place as if you're afraid. Children respond. How would you walk if you saw someone you were REALLY glad to see? Listen to find out how each of these actions is part of our story today!

What do you think is in our Adventure Box today? Let's find out! Untie box. Remove items from box and use them to demonstrate story action as you tell the.



ADVENTURE BOX

In a cardboard or wooden box labeled "Adventure," place a Bible, sack of plastic or real coins, several party items (hat, streamers, cups, plates, snacks), stuffed animal pig, Bible-times robe and a fancy ring. Tie rope or brown yarn around the box or crate.

TELL THE STORY

Jesus once went to eat dinner with some people who were considered sinners by the religious leaders. Those leaders began to say that Jesus was wrong to be friendly to people who did bad things. Well, Jesus knew that everyone needed to know about God and His love. So after dinner He told a story to help those leaders think about how much God loves every single person!

The story was about a father with two sons. The father loved both of his sons very much. He planned to divide his money between his sons when they were older, according to the custom of that land. But the younger son didn't want to wait for his share of the money. (Choose a volunteer to play the part of the younger son.)

"I want my money right NOW, Dad," the younger son said. He wanted the money so that he could leave home.

So the father gave the younger son his part of the money. The younger son told his dad good-bye, took his money and headed down the road to a faraway city. (Give sack of coins to volunteer, who walks in place, carrying the money.)

When the younger son arrived at the distant city, he spent his money VERY foolishly. He spent money on lots of parties and anything else he could think of to have a great time. (Set out party items and distribute snacks. Volunteer pretends to have a party.) And he had lots of new friends now! But what do you think happened after a while?

One day the younger son looked in his money bag. It was completely EMPTY! (Take sack of coins, empty it and return empty sack to volunteer.) And now his friends didn't come to see him anymore. The younger son was in big TROUBLE. He didn't have any money or a job or any food!

At last he found a job, but it wasn't a very good job. The son had to take care of pigs! (Give stuffed animal pig to volunteer.) And because he was SO HUNGRY all of the time, he was just about ready to eat the pigs' food!

One morning the hungry younger son thought, *I am starving to death while the people who work for my father have plenty of food to eat. I'm going to go back home. I'll tell my father I was wrong. I'll tell him I don't deserve to be treated like his son anymore. I'll ask my father if I can work for him as a servant.* So the younger son decided to stop trying to do things his own way. He decided that he was going HOME—even though he wasn't sure how his dad would feel about him! (Ask volunteer to walk in place with sad or nervous facial expression.)

Meanwhile, back at home, the father still missed his younger son very much. Day after day, the father patiently looked down the road, hoping to see his son. FINALLY, one day, he saw his son walking down the road! The father was SO EXCITED that he couldn't wait for his son to reach him. He RAN to meet his son! He was GLAD to see his son, and didn't even wait for his son to make the speech about being the servant. Instead, he told the servants to make a big party!

The father told other servants to bring his son some new clothes and sandals and a ring of his own. (*Put robe and ring on volunteer. Ask volunteer to show how the younger son may have felt now.*) The father had a BIG party to celebrate! The son was so glad he had come home. Even though he had disobeyed and done wrong things like being selfish and spending his money foolishly, his father still loved him and forgave him!

GOD'S WORD & ME

Jesus wanted people to know that God is like that father, and we ALL are like that son. We ALL disobey God when we lie, say mean things to our friends or act rudely to our parents. But God still loves us. He will forgive us when we admit to Him that we have disobeyed and ask Him to forgive us. Then He helps us change our actions. Those are good reasons to celebrate!



- **Which people does God love more, good people or sinners?** (Neither. God loves sinners just as much as He loves good people.)
- **What's another way God shows His love?** (God sent Jesus, who died to take the punishment for our sin. Because Jesus died and rose again, we can be forgiven and can join God's family.)
- Invite a child to read aloud 1 John 1:9. **What does this verse say God will do if we confess our sin?** (Forgive us.) **God is always ready to forgive our sins when we admit we have done wrong and ask Him to forgive us!**
- **Take a moment to think. Is there anything you need to ask God to forgive? Let's pray silently for a minute or two. God loves you. He wants to forgive you when you ask!** Pray, thanking God for His forgiveness and for sending Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins. Invite children interested in talking about joining God's family to meet with you after class (see page 12 for "Leading a Child to Christ").

GAME CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • LUKE 15:11-32

COLLECT

Bible, rhythm instrument (shaker, tambourine, drum, etc.).

DO

1. Children stand in a large circle and pretend to be monkeys.
2. Stand in the middle of the circle and play a rhythm instrument. "Monkeys" make monkey sounds and move around circle to the beat of the rhythm instrument, moving quickly when instrument is played quickly and slowing down when instrument is played slowly.
3. Repeat activity, with children pretending to be different rainforest animals (jaguars, parrots, fish, snakes, etc.).

TALK ABOUT

- We're having fun moving slowly and then quickly. In our Bible story today, a father was so glad to see his son that the Bible says the father ran to give him a hug. The father loved his son so much! God loves us even more!
- Sometimes we might do something wrong. We might say something mean or tell a lie. But God still loves us! When we are sorry for doing wrong, God will forgive us. What can we say to God when we've done something wrong? (I'm sorry.)
- The Bible says, "If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, He will forgive us." I'm glad to know that God forgives us. Let's say the names of our friends here today who God loves and forgives. Lead children in saying each others' names.
- Pray briefly, **Dear God, thank You for Your love. Thank You for forgiving us when we disobey You. In Jesus' name, amen.**

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Children move across the room and back, instead of moving in a circle.

GOD'S WORD

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, he will forgive us."

GOD'S WORD & ME

When we've disobeyed God, if we ask for forgiveness, God's constant love is shown by His forgiveness.



GAME CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • LUKE 15:11-32

COLLECT

Bible, construction paper, scissors, marker, masking tape.

PREPARE

Trace around your feet on construction paper and cut out a total of 24 footprints. Print words from 1 John 1:9 on 12 footprints (combine shorter words) to make two sets of printed footprints. Use masking tape loops to attach footprints to floor in order, making two separate verse trails through the "rainforest." (For more than 16 children, make additional verse trails.)

DO

1. Divide group into two teams of no more than eight players each. Each team lines up behind a verse trail.
2. From your Bible, read 1 John 1:9 to children. All children say words of verse together as team members take turns stepping on foot prints. With each repeat, remove one footprint from each trail, until last player can follow the trail without reference to any footprints.
3. Play game again, with children taping footprints to floor to form trails.

TALK ABOUT

- Read 1 John 1:9 with children. **What are some of the important words in this verse? Why do you think they are important?**
- **What does the word "confess" mean?** (Say or tell something.) **When we confess what we've done wrong to God, what does He promise to do?**
- **How do kids your age usually feel when they've disobeyed God?** (Guilty. Sad. Worried. Afraid.) **God understands when we feel sad or guilty. Because God loves us so much, however, He promises to forgive us if we are sorry for doing wrong. God's love doesn't stop, even when we've done wrong.**
- **Think about a time you need to ask God's forgiveness. Right now, you can tell God you are sorry, and ask His help in obeying Him.** Lead children in prayer, allowing time for children to pray silently, and then closing the prayer time by thanking God for His love and forgiveness.

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

After a word has been removed, replace it and remove another word. You may also use the verse as simplified for younger children.

GOD'S WORD

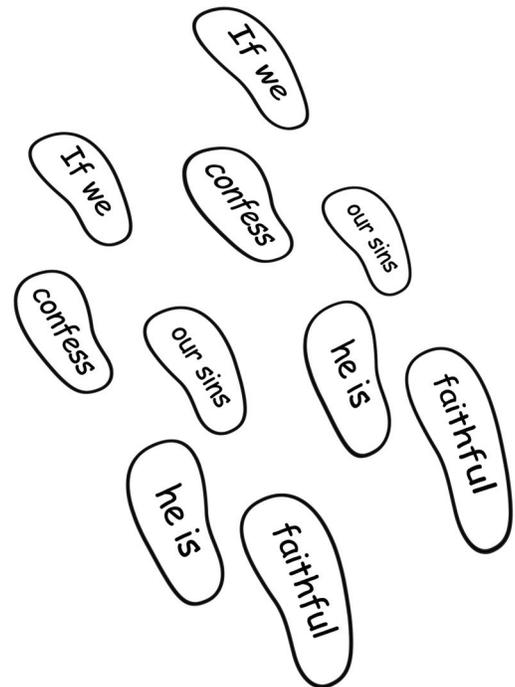
"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, he will forgive us."

GOD'S WORD & ME

When we've disobeyed God, if we ask for forgiveness, God's constant love is shown by His forgiveness.



ART CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • LUKE 12:13-21

COLLECT

Bible, small and large construction paper in a variety of colors, scissors, tape, markers, stickers, adhesive craft foam shapes; optional—cardboard tubes for flag handles.

PREPARE

Roll and tape large sheets of paper as shown in sketch a. Make one for each child. Cut some small sheets of paper into triangle shapes. Make a sample flag following directions below.

DO

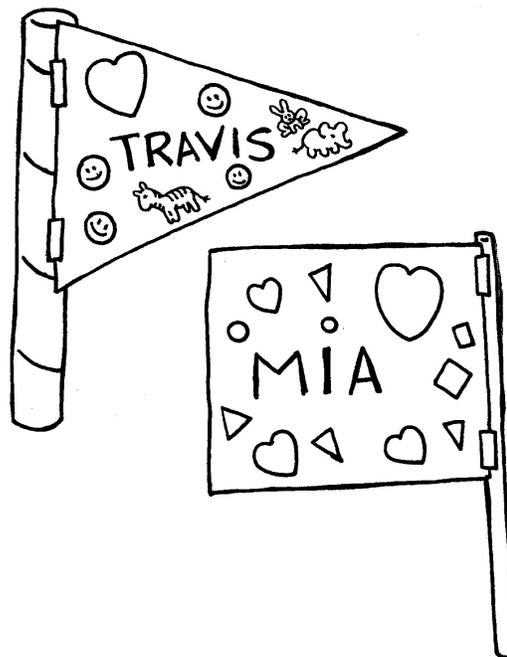
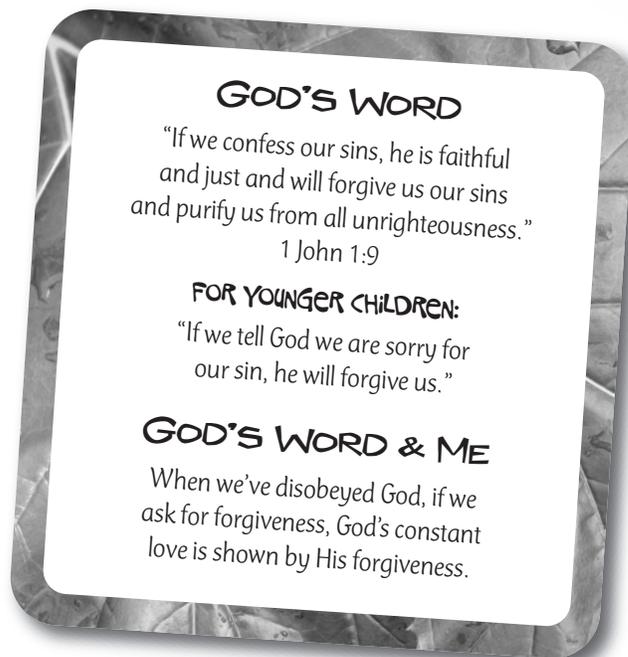
1. Show your flag to children. **The heart on this flag reminds me that God loves me.** Each child chooses a flag.
2. Child draws one or more heart shapes and writes his or her name on flag. (Be ready to draw hearts and write names if needed.) Children decorate flags by drawing with markers and attaching stickers and craft foam shapes.
3. Help each child tape edge of flag to a handle. Children hold flags high as they march around the room.

TALK ABOUT

- I'm so glad to know that God loves and forgives me. The Bible says, "If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, He will forgive us." When I've disobeyed God and done something wrong, I can say "I'm sorry." God doesn't stop loving me; He forgives me!
- When we're playing with friends, we might disobey God by saying something mean, or not taking turns. But what can we say to God when we've disobeyed? ("I'm sorry.") When we say "I'm sorry" to God, He forgives us and helps us obey Him. Let's say thank-You to God. Lead children in a prayer of thanks to God for His love and forgiveness.
- Let's hold our flags high to show how glad we are that God loves us! Who would like to say "God loves me"? Lead children to repeat sentence with you. Repeat for "God forgives me."

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Encourage children to design symbols representing God's love and forgiveness (open hand, heart pattern, gift labeled forgiveness, etc.) to draw on their flags.



ART CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • LUKE 15:11-32

COLLECT

Bible, Lesson 11 Pattern Page (p. 196), clear Con-Tact® paper, card stock, scissors, paper, thin-tip markers.

PREPARE

Copy Lesson 11 Pattern Page onto card stock and cut apart the bookmarks, making enough copies so that children may choose which bookmark they want. Cut Con-Tact paper into strips slightly larger than bookmarks, making two strips for each child.

DO

1. Read 1 John 1:9 and ask children to say this verse in their own words. Then show the bookmark choices from the Lesson 11 Pattern Page. Each child chooses a bookmark.
2. Child uses markers to color in the bookmark design. (Children may draw their own decorations and pictures on the other side of the bookmark.)
3. Help each child peel backing off of Con-Tact paper strip, place decorated bookmark onto Con-Tact paper and then cover with second Con-Tact paper strip.
4. Children take home bookmarks to mark 1 John 1:9 in their Bibles as reminders of God's promise of forgiveness.

TALK ABOUT

- **Why is it so important for people to know about asking God's forgiveness?** (God's forgiveness makes it possible for us to join God's family. God's forgiveness helps us stop feeling sad because of our sin and wrong actions.) **What does God promise to do when we say we're sorry for our wrong actions?**
- **What would you say to explain what it means to be forgiven by God?** (Being forgiven by God means that we can know He always loves us. It means that God doesn't give up on us when we do something wrong.) **What is an example of a time a kid your age needs to ask forgiveness from God?**
- **How does God help us after we've sinned?** (He listens to us when we pray. He forgives us. He will help us obey Him, instead of doing wrong.) Pray, thanking God for His love and forgiveness.

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Unless you have an adequate number of helpers, do not cover bookmarks with Con-Tact paper.

GOD'S WORD

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, he will forgive us."

GOD'S WORD & ME

When we've disobeyed God, if we ask for forgiveness, God's constant love is shown by His forgiveness.



WORSHIP CENTER

Luke 15:11-32

COLLECT

Bibles, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, song charts (pp. 249, 251), large sheet of paper, marker.

PREPARATION

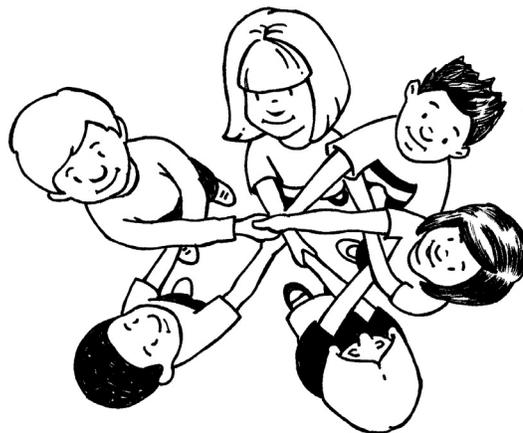
Print 1 John 1:9 on large sheet of paper. Prepare questions to help children guess words of the verse (see suggestions below). Use a Post-it Note to mark Psalm 145:1-3 in a Bible.

Team Game

Children play a game like Knots. Help children form circles with no more than eight children in each circle. Have each child hold up his or her right hand, and then grasp the right hand of the person across from him or her in the circle. Then each child uses left hand to grasp the left hand of someone else in the circle, representing a twisted rain-forest vine. At your signal, "vines" try to untangle themselves as much as possible without letting go of each others' hands. Repeat as time permits.

BIBLE VERSE GAME

Display 1 John 1:9 for children and read it aloud with them. Then lead children to play a guessing game in which they try to identify words of the verse in response to your questions. (When children catch on to how the game is played, allow them to think of the questions.) As words are guessed, have a child circle or underline the word on the paper. Ask, **Which two-letter word refers to God?** (He.) **Which two-letter word refers to all of us?** (We.) **Which word means the same as "fair?"** (Just.) **Which word starts with the letter F and tells what God will do?** (Forgive.) **Which four-letter word refers to the ways we disobey God?** (Sins.) **What is the longest word in this verse?** (Unrighteousness.)



GOD'S WORD

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"If we tell God we are sorry for our sin, he will forgive us."

GOD'S WORD & ME

When we've disobeyed God, if we ask for forgiveness, God's constant love is shown by His forgiveness.

SONG

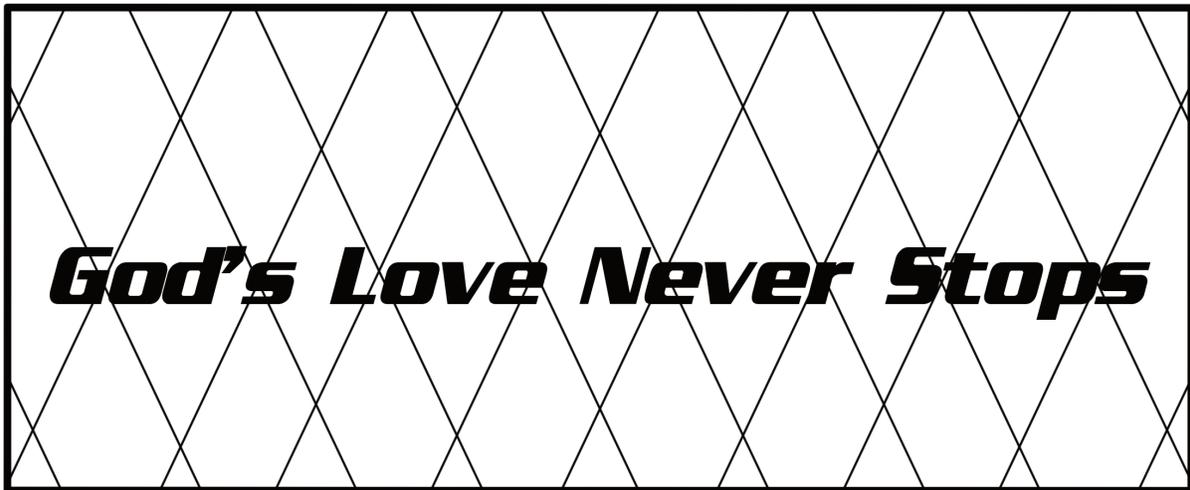
You, or another leader, lead children in singing "God Forgives Us," adding motions and/or clapping if desired.

PRAYER

Listen to these words that tell us about God's amazing love and forgiveness. Have a child who is a good reader read aloud Psalm 145:1-3 from the Bible you marked. Then invite all children to repeat in unison, "Thank You, God, for Your love and forgiveness."

SONG

You, or another leader, lead children in singing "Call Upon Me," adding motions and/or clapping if desired.



Jesus tells about a loving father.

Luke 15:11-32

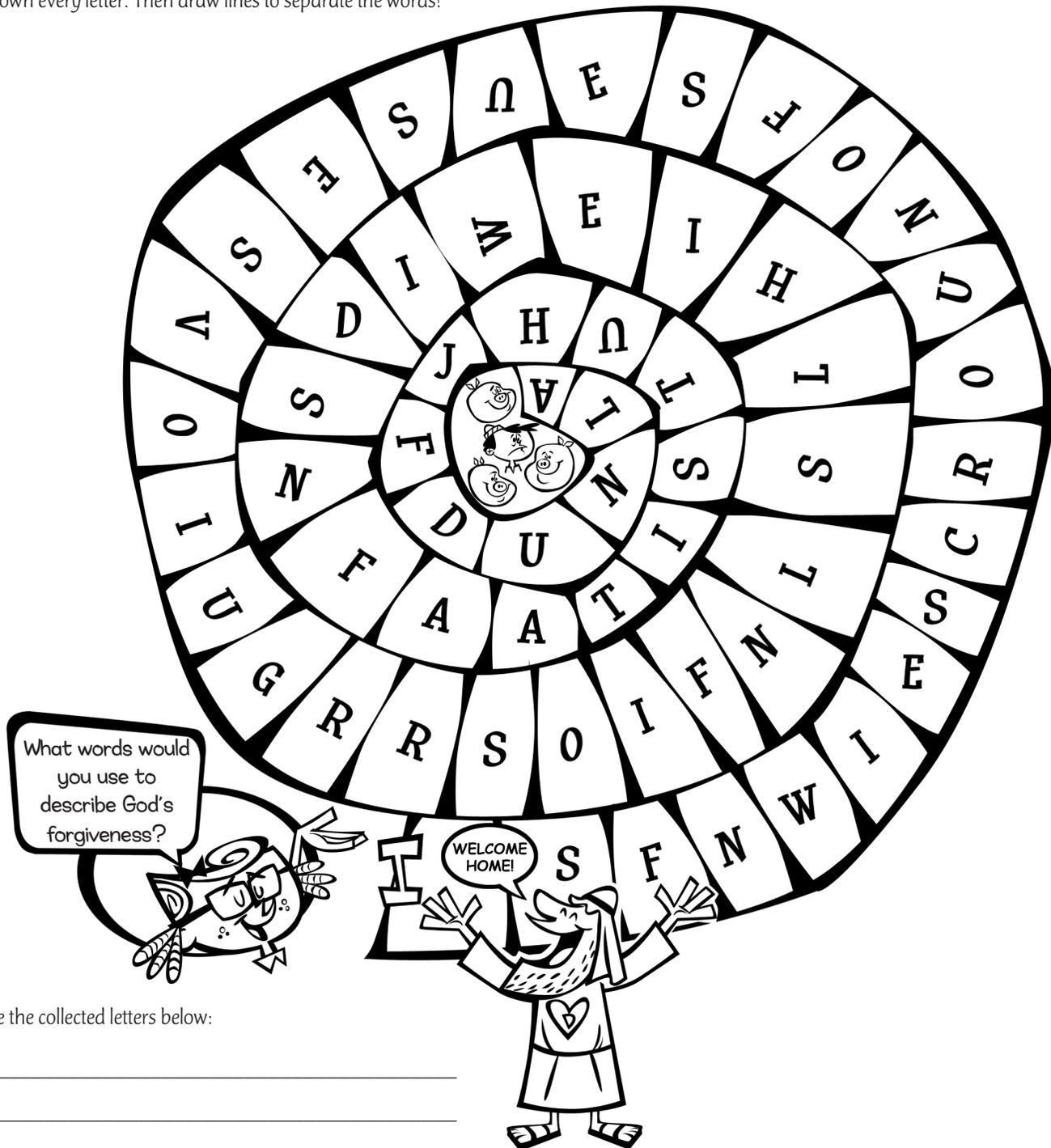


What can we say to God when we've disobeyed Him? God will love us and forgive us.

a STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

Help the lost boy get home—and discover an important message!

Starting at “I,” collect every other letter. When you get to the pigpen, turn around! Start with “A” to collect every other letter. As you go, write down every letter. Then draw lines to separate the words!



Write the collected letters below:
