

May Week 2, 2025 Learning Together

Greetings! Thanks for joining me for the second and last lesson of this month of May. This is also the last Learning Together lesson of the 2024-2025 term. Learning Together will resume in September 2025.

"Running Away" is our story name and is located on pages 272-279 of The Jesus Storybook Bible written by Sally Lloyd-Jones. You and your family are invited to listen and read and create and pray around this selection.

If you would like your own The Jesus Storybook Bible, visit our church for a free copy. It can also be ordered on line by you.

Below you will find a Children section, an Adult section, and a wrap-up section for Children and Adults together.

If you have questions and/or comments, please use this blog to submit them to Pastor Matt, who welcomes discussion.

Children

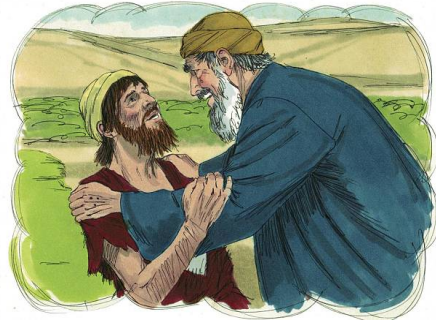
Time to review the story! There are a couple of choices here. If you have a copy of the book, you could read the story to yourself or to another family member or a friend. Look at all the pictures carefully. They help us to understand the story more deeply. You could also listen to the video recording again. The pictures will also be shown in the oral read video.

We pick up on the story where we left off - in the pig pen where the younger son has just decided NOT to eat piggy food and to HEAD BACK home to his father and family!

It takes a while for him to get home, and all of the way, he is thinking about how much he goofed up, about how stupid he was, about how bad his choices had been with his dad's money, His father sure had a right to be very angry with him. In fact, he didn't think he had the right to be called "son" anymore, but if he were lucky, maybe he would be allowed to work for free as a slave for his father. The burden he carried weighted his footsteps down, but he kept going.

Meanwhile, back at his father's farm, the father was spending his time standing on his porch and watching intently for any sign of his son. This father loved his son, always did and always would, and had been hoping, praying for his return.

To see his son finally coming from a distance, the father was overjoyed and ran to the son. He loved his boy so very much and was so very happy to have him back again. Yippee! What a great reason to have a party - to celebrate his son who had been dead and now was alive!



Remember that this story is a parable told by Jesus and is meant to teach a lesson. In the story, Jesus is telling us that God is like the father who feared his son was lost, and his son was the boy who messed up but was forgiven.

People can sometimes lose their way in life and sometimes make poor choices, but God is always happy to receive sinners back into His heavenly family. God gives us great things in heaven even though we have messed up and deserve bad things.

Adults

The Biblical reference is Luke 15.

We continue with a look at the older son and end with the role of the father.

The Older Son

The final, tragic character in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is the older son. As the older son comes in from the field, he hears music and dancing. He finds out from one of the servants that his younger brother has come home and that what he hears is the sound of jubilation over his brother's

safe return. The older brother becomes angry and refuses to go into the house. His father goes to his older son and pleads with him to come in. "But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'" ([Luke 15:29-30](#)). The father answers gently: "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad" (verses 31-32).

The older son's words and actions reveal several things about him: 1) His relationship with his father was based on works and merit. He points out to his father that he has always been obedient as he's been "slaving away"; thus, he deserves a party—he has earned it. 2) He despises his younger brother as undeserving of the father's favor. 3) He does not understand grace and has no room for forgiveness. In fact, the demonstration of grace toward his brother makes him angry. His brother does not *deserve* a party. 4) He has disowned the prodigal as a brother, referring to him as "this son of yours" (verse 30). 5) He thinks his father is stingy and unfair: "You never gave me even a young goat" (verse 29).

The father's words are corrective in several ways: 1) His older son should know that their relationship is not based on performance: "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours" ([Luke 15:31](#)). 2) His older son should accept his brother as part of the family. The father refers to the prodigal as "this brother of yours" (verse 32). 3) His older son could have enjoyed a party any time he wanted, but he never utilized the blessings at his disposal. 4) Grace is necessary and appropriate: "We had to celebrate" (verse 32).

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, mentioned in [Luke 15:1](#), are portrayed as the older brother in the parable. Outwardly, they lived blameless lives, but inwardly their attitudes were abominable ([Matthew](#)

[23:25-28](#)). They saw their relationship with God as based on their performance, and they considered themselves deserving of God's favor—unlike the undeserving sinners around them. They did not understand grace and were, in fact, angered by it. They had no room for forgiveness. They saw no kinship between sinners and themselves. They viewed God as rather stingy in His blessings. And they considered that, if God were to accept tax collectors and sinners into His family, then God would be unfair.

The older brother's focus was on himself and his own service; as a result, he had no joy in his brother's arrival home. He was so consumed with justice and equity (as he saw them) that he failed to see the value of his brother's repentance and return. The older brother had allowed [bitterness](#) to take root in his heart to the point that he was unable to show compassion toward his brother. The bitterness spilled over into other relationships, too, and he was unable to forgive the perceived sin of his father against him. Rather than enjoy fellowship with his father, brother, and community, the older brother stayed outside the house and nursed his anger. How sad to choose misery and isolation over restoration and reconciliation!

The older brother—and the religious leaders of Jesus' day—failed to realize that "anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him" ([1 John 2:9-11](#)).

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one of Scripture's most beautiful pictures of God's grace. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God ([Romans 3:23](#)). We are all prodigals in that we have run from God, selfishly squandered our resources, and, to some degree, wallowed in sin. But God is ready to forgive. He will save the contrite, not by works but by His grace, through faith ([Ephesians 2:9](#); [Romans 9:16](#); [Psalm 51:5](#)). That is the core message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

The Father

The father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son was waiting for his son to return. In fact, "while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him" ([Luke 15:20](#)). He runs to his wayward son, embraces him, and kisses him. In Jesus' day, it was not customary for a grown man to run, yet the father runs to greet his son, breaking convention in his love and desire for restoration (verse 20). The returning son begins his prepared speech (verse 21), but his father cuts him off and begins issuing commands to honor his son—the best robe, the best ring, the best feast! The father does not question his son or lecture him; instead, he joyfully forgives him and receives him back into fellowship.

What a picture of God's love, condescension, and grace! God's heart is full of compassion for His children; He stands ready to welcome the returning sinner back home with joyous celebration.

The prodigal son was satisfied to return home as a slave, but to his surprise and delight he is restored back into the full privilege of being his father's son. The weary, gaunt, filthy sinner who trudged home was transformed into the guest of honor in a rich man's home. That is what God's grace does for a penitent sinner ([Psalm 40:2](#); [103:4](#)). Not only are we forgiven in Christ, but we receive the Spirit of "[adoption](#) to sonship" ([Romans 8:15](#)). We are His children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ ([Romans 8:17](#)).

The father's command to bring the best robe for the returned son is a sign of dignity and honor, proof of the prodigal's acceptance back into the family. The ring for the son's hand is a sign of authority and sonship. The sandals for his feet are a sign of his not being a servant, as servants did not wear shoes. The father orders the fattened calf to be prepared, and a party is held in honor of the returned son. Fatted calves in those times were saved for special occasions. This was not just any party; it was a rare and complete celebration.

All these things represent what we receive in Christ upon salvation: the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness ([Isaiah 61:10](#)), the privilege of partaking of the Spirit of adoption ([Ephesians 1:5](#)), and feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, prepared to walk in the ways of holiness ([Ephesians 6:15](#)). The actions of the father in the parable show us that "the LORD does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him" ([Psalm 103:10-13](#)). Instead of condemnation, there is rejoicing for a son who "was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" ([Luke 15:32](#); cf. [Romans 8:1](#); [John 5:24](#)). Those words—*dead and alive*, *lost and found*—are terms that also apply to one's state before and after conversion to Christ ([Ephesians 2:1-5](#)). The feast is a picture of what occurs in heaven over one repentant sinner ([Luke 15:7](#), [10](#)).

Children and Adults

Learning Together (formerly Sunday School) will gather in person one more time before our summer break on Sunday 18, 2025, at 11 am-12pm right after church services. All are invited for a snack, a story reading and discussion, a fun craft, and a send-off prayer.

~This Week's Prayer~

God's love for us is as high as the heaven
is above the earth. Thank you, Jesus!

Have a safe, fun summer!

Margo Greer