



LOVED

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils and pieces of paper; small container
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Clock or watch with second hand for timing
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: STORIES FROM THE ORDINARY

As the teens arrive, give them a pencil and some small pieces of paper and ask them to write down a common-place noun—a person, place or thing—one item on each separate piece of paper (for example: tooth paste, animal shelter, dentist, etc.). You may want to add a few yourself. Gather in a circle with the papers in an opaque container for this story-telling improvisation game. The first person selects two pieces of paper and begins to tell a story that incorporates both words they have selected. After thirty seconds the storyteller stops and the next person selects two new pieces of paper and continues the story, incorporating the newly selected words.

FOR SMALL GROUPS HAVE THE TEENS WRITE AS MANY OF EACH CATEGORY OF NOUN ON DIFFERENT PIECES OF PAPER AS THEY CAN THINK UP. DEPENDING ON YOUR GROUP, YOU MAY HAVE ONE LONG STORY OR SEVERAL SHORT ONES. THERE ALSO MAY BE TIME FOR EACH PERSON TO HAVE MULTIPLE TURNS. YOU MAY FIND IT SMOOTHER WITH SMALL OR SHY GROUPS TO ALLOW EACH PERSON TO TELL THE STORY UNTIL THEY EITHER GET STUCK OR HIT A NATURAL BREAK POINT RATHER THAN TIMING EACH PERSON.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE LOVED?

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to read together the following quote, and then invite them to comment on it. The goal of the discussion is to get teens thinking about what it is like to be loved. Use the questions below to draw out further discussion as needed.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

“To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved... is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.” - Timothy Keller

- Do you agree with the quote? In your own words, what is the difference between being loved but not known, being known but not loved, and being both known and loved?
- What does love look like? Is it something you have experienced? How did you know it was real?
- Are there different types of love?
- Do you think of love as a feeling or as a way of acting towards someone?
Can our actions towards someone change how we feel about them?



LOVED

LEADER
NOTES

2 OF 4

- Is there a difference between how the world talks about love, and how the Bible talks about love?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *The Bible gives a description of the things that characterize love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."*
- *Note that this "love passage" was not written about romantic love, but about how we in the Church should love one another! In spite of this, the passage is often read at weddings in recognition that this is what Biblical love—including married love—should look like.*

THE LESSON: LUKE 15

The first part of the lesson begins with a few notes about the Gospels in general and the parables in particular which can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together). This is followed by additional questions for discussion.

Today's lesson comes from a part of the Bible called "the Gospels". There are four Gospels in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and they give accounts of the life of Jesus. This particular passage comes from the Gospel of Luke, which is traditionally believed to have been authored by Luke the Physician, a Gentile (which means a non-Jewish person), who was a missionary companion to Paul on some of his journeys.

+++

Jesus was a master story-teller, but unlike many of our stories, his parables had a divine message to relay. They were told in specific situations to explain truths about God in terms that his hearers could relate to. The parable we're going to look at today is a very famous one and you may have heard it before. If that's the case, try to imagine that you are there in the crowd hearing Jesus tell it for the first time.

Refer to Luke 15:1-3, 11-32.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What is the younger son like at the beginning of the story? At the end?
- What do you think the father's feelings are when the son leaves? When he sees his son returning?
- Take a look at the context—the situation that prompted Jesus to tell the story. How does this parable address that situation?
- To whom do you relate more? The younger son or the older one? Is it possible to relate to both?
- What meaning for our own lives can we take from this story? What does the story tell us about the kind of God we have? What does it tell us about what God wants from us?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *This story was told in the hearing of both the sinners and the religious elite—and both groups get a lesson through it. The younger son was profoundly disrespectful to ask for his inheritance while his father was living. What he did with the money was wasteful and immoral. But the older son needs to learn to see his brother through the eyes of his father—with love.*



LOVED

- The “prodigal” son in the story realizes that he has made a colossal mess of things—and the value of what he rejected in leaving his father. He does not feel worthy of his father’s forgiveness, but he resolves to return and to repent.
- Like the older son, we need to be ready to forgive—not ignoring what has taken place, but desiring reconciliation and restoration rather than adopting an attitude of resentment. In a sense, both sons are “prodigals”.
- We don’t find out how the older brother responds to his father—because the original audience (the Pharisees and scribes Jesus was speaking to when he told this story) is like that older brother, so the question to them is: How will YOU choose to respond?
- The climax and point of the story is the father’s love. No matter what the “prodigal” has done, the father’s overwhelming response to his return and repentance is complete forgiveness and joyful love. This is true of our relationship with God. He loves us in this way. When we sin, he is always wanting us to return and repent so that we can be restored to a right relationship with him.

Return to the Keller quote that was read earlier. Read it again, asking the teens to listen to the words again, but this time remembering that we have a Father in heaven who fully KNOWS us, and truly LOVES us.

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

At home, find a quiet space and spend some time imagining what it is like to be the son or daughter who leaves. Reflect on these questions:

Why did you leave?

What was it like to be away?

What happened while you were away?

Why did you come back?

What was it like to be greeted with love and forgiveness by the parent you had hurt?

Spend some time thanking God, your loving Father, for his complete forgiveness and unconditional love.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer of thanksgiving, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O God, our loving Father, we thank thee for all the blessings thou hast given us, and above all for our salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to show forth our thankfulness by trying in everything to please thee; for the sake of the same our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. (FROM THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, PAGE 626)

622 (AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

LOVED

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

LUKE 15: THE FATHER'S LOVE

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." ³So he told them this parable...

¹¹And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'"

²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.'

²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"