**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 4 of 4

# Jesus tells parables

### MEETING AIM

To explore feeling lost, and the value of God’s forgiving love.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 15:11-32

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

This is a well-known story, but there may well be people in the group who have never heard it. As you prepare, try to approach this story as if you have never read it before. And when you get to the session, ask everyone to do the same. The power of this story can be dulled by our familiarity with it, and we can lose the shocking nature of many aspects of what Jesus says. Try to bring this story of grace, forgiveness and new revelations about God to life for your group.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

As the young people arrive, serve them the refreshments you have provided. Try to have something a bit more interesting than biscuits and squash – is there someone in your congregation who could make a cake? Do you have the facilities to make toast and tea? As you eat and drink together, go around the group with each person saying two positive things from their past week and two things that didn’t go so well or that they are unhappy about.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

Invite the group to think of all the things they hate (but keep it quite light-hearted). Ask them these questions:

* What would be the worst place to go out for dinner?
* What would be the worst job you could ever have?
* What would be the worst thing that your sibling (or other relative, if there are those in your group who are an only child) could do to you?
* What would you find it most difficult to forgive?

After each question, compare everyone’s answers and decide who in the group has given the ‘best’ answer. What would happen if two or three of these things were to be true for you in your life today? How easy would it be to put up with them? What would you do to change things?

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles; paper; art materials

Break the group up into pairs or threes. Try to pair those who are good artists (or who at least like drawing) with those who are less keen. Challenge the small group to read through the story of the lost son from Luke 15:11-32 and pick out the six main events that happen in this story. The pairs should then create a cartoon strip with six frames, each with one of the main events the young people have identified. Those who are less keen on drawing could write the text to go with the frames. As the groups are working, circulate around them and chat about what they have chosen to depict and why.

Once everyone has finished, compare the different cartoon strips and discuss the differences between them. Ask the pairs / threes to share why they chose those events from the story.

Hand out some paper and pens and, using one of the cartoon strips, ask the young people to think about what each key character (the younger son, the father and the older son) might be thinking or feeling for each frame. Ask them to write down one word for how that character felt. On the count of three, get everyone to reveal their word. Chat about why the young people chose those words.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

* Has anyone had an experience of going away from God (and coming back to him)?
* When was the last time you got lost? How did you feel when you got back home?
* What parallels can you draw between how you felt when you lost that thing and how the father in the story felt? And how God feels about his lost children?
* How do you feel about knowing God views you the way the father in the story viewed his lost and returning son?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** playdough or home-made salt dough (you can find recipes online, such as [this one](https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-make-salt-dough-recipe))

Give each young person a lump of playdough and give them time to make a shape or object that represents what they feel God is saying to them or that illustrates something that stood out for them from the story. You should also create something from the dough. As you work together, chat about the story and what they have discovered about God. Give them space to ask you any questions about the story that they’re not clear about.

Go around the circle and ask each person to explain what their object means or represents. If they would like to, encourage the young people to take their model home at the end of the session, as a reminder of what they have discovered today. Say that every time they look at the model, they should recall the story and talk to God about the story they have explored. If they like, they could read the story again during the week to explore it some more.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** models from ‘Creative response’

Ask each person to hand their object to the person on their right. Spend two minutes using the objects as a focus to pray for the person who made them. If you have time, do the same for the person on their left. Remember to return the models to their maker, so that they can take them home at the end of the session.

**JOEL TOOMBS**

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