



Life Lesson

THE PRODIGAL SON

PURPOSE: To show the cycle in man's relationship to God and determine where we are on that cycle and how we can return to God.

PLAN: To study the parable of the prodigal son. Luke 15:11-24

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever felt like your life goes in cycles? Have you experienced times when you felt close to God, and then other times when you felt distant?

This study tells us why we experience these cycles and how we can return to a close relationship with God.

These are the phases of the cycle in this parable: REBELLION, ROCK-BOTTOM, REPENTANCE, RETURN, REUNION, REWARD.

LUKE 15:11-24

This story is a parable. Do you know what a parable is? *A story that teaches a lesson.*

To understand a parable, you must identify the major characters, determine who they represent, analyze the events, discover the lessons Jesus is teaching and apply them to yourself.

In this parable who are the main characters? *the father and two sons*
Who do they represent? *God and us*
Where was the son at the beginning of this story? *at home*

PHASE ONE: **REBELLION** LUKE 15:11-13

What was the son's request? *"Give me my share."*
Who is his main concern? *himself*
What are his priorities? *good times, etc.*
Why do you think he would want to leave home? *freedom*
What are some words that would describe his attitude and actions?
greedy, selfish, arrogant, proud, undisciplined, rebellious
What was his attitude toward his father? *rebellious*

Sin always begins with a wrong attitude that results in actions that hurt others and ourselves.

Make it clear that the first sin the boy committed was not wild living in a distant country, but a rebellious attitude toward his father right at home.

PHASE TWO: **ROCK-BOTTOM** LUKE 15:14-16

Tell me in your own words what happened to the boy.
Who or what could he have tried to blame for his situation? *Suggest the following: father, friends, bad luck, economic conditions?*
Who should he blame? *himself*
Did he find his freedom?
Why did he stay in the pigpen so long? *pride (Share with your student, in a specific and personal way, some of your own struggles with pride.)*
What other kinds of pigpens might we find ourselves in?
You might suggest that a marriage of two selfish people, a materialistic lifestyle, a low self-esteem, guilt over past failures can all have the same effect as living in a pigpen.
What kind of "pigpen" have you found yourself in?

It's easy to see what got him into this mess. **Pride!** It isn't so easy to see it in ourselves. Remember, he was thinking: "I want," "I need," "I deserve." Pride is saying: "Give me MY share." This story makes it clear that pride destroys my relationship with God and when it does--my life is a mess.

PHASE THREE: **REPENTANCE** LUKE 15:17-19

What does it mean "came to his senses"?
What did he see about himself? *starving and far away from home*
Where does this parable say our starting point is? *when we realize that we are starving and distant from God*
What did he see about his father? *better conditions and opportunity for reunion*
Why must we admit our condition before we can improve? *Clarify that it is easiest to give directions to others if you know where they are starting from.*

At this point in the story point out some of the options available to our friend in the pigpen. He could stay there, feel sorry for himself, starve to death and die. He might blame all the people who have let him down and allow resentment to cause him to become bitter and judgmental. He could just go somewhere else and start over again, pretending that nothing went wrong and never resolving the conflict with his father.

PHASE FOUR: RETURN LUKE 15:20a

What did he decide to do? *Go home.*
What is the difference between his attitude as he returns compared to the attitude he had when he was leaving?
How would you define repentance according to this story?

Note how this parable illustrates the attitude of repentance: 1. You realize how your sins have affected your relationship with God. 2. You realize how they have affected your own life and the lives of others. 3. You decide to do something about it.

PHASE FIVE: REUNION LUKE 15:20b-21

Is there anything in the story that would suggest that the father was looking for his son to come home?
How did the father feel when he saw his son?
How did the father receive him?
Have you ever pictured God looking for us to come home?
According to this parable, how does God feel when He sees us coming home? Does He want us back?
What was the son going to do in order to make things right?

PHASE SIX: REWARD LUKE 15:22-24

How did the father respond to the son's confession of guilt: *robe, ring, sandals, fattened calf, feast, celebration*

The review step which follows may be omitted depending upon the needs of the person you are studying with and the amount of time available. If the review section is omitted, proceed to the conclusion.

REVIEW: ACTS 2:22-38

Unlike the prodigal who deliberately rebelled against his father, these are religious people who thought they were doing God's will. In reality they had killed Jesus and now have come to understand how very sinful they are. Let's compare their response with the prodigal son's "coming to his senses."

What brought them to their senses? *the gospel message*
How did they feel when they came to their senses? *They were cut to the heart.*
What did they say to the apostles? *"What shall we do?"*
Where would they be on the cycle?
What were they told to do? *Repent and be baptized.*

When the prodigal son came home, the father did two things -- He embraced the son and gave him some gifts: a robe, ring, sandals, and a celebration. Baptism is like the father's embrace. It is my reunion with God.

What would you say is the purpose of baptism as described in verse 38? *forgiveness of sin*
What gift does God give us? *the gift of the Holy Spirit*

CONCLUSION:

There's the whole cycle. The main phases of this cycle are Rebellion, Rock Bottom, Repentance, Return, Reunion, and Reward.

Where do you see yourself on this cycle?

II PETER 3:9

What is God waiting for you to do? *repent*

It is not God's will that you be separated from Him. Therefore, it is very important for you to understand how to come back.

WORKSHEET The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-24



5) Reunion
Lk. 15:20b-21

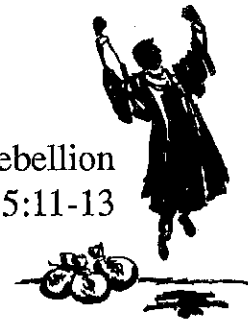


6) Reward
Lk. 15:22-24

4) Return
Lk. 15:20a



1) Rebellion
Lk. 15:11-13



3) Repentance
Lk. 15:17-19

2) Rock-bottom
Lk. 15:14-16



Review: Acts 2:22-38
II Peter 3:9