**The Lost Son: Jesus Teaches About Forgiveness**

“Jesus spends too much time with bad people,” the Jewish religious leaders muttered to each other.

Jesus responded to their grumbling by telling three parables, or stories with a meaning, about things that were lost. He wanted to show what God the Father is really like. The Parable of the Lost Son is one of these stories.

The main characters in the story are a father and his two sons. One day the younger son said: “Dad, I’d like my share of your land and property now rather than waiting until you die.” His father agreed, but the son took the money and left home for a country far away to have a good time. We can imagine that he wasted money on drink and parties, until he had spent everything his father had given him.

“Now, what shall I do?” the young man thought. To make matters worse there was a famine in the country where had had gone and it was difficult to get food to eat. In desperation he found himself a job with a farmer of that country, feeding the pigs. For a Jewish man this was a terrible disgrace, because Jews think of pigs as unclean animals. The son was so hungry he would have eaten the pig food to prevent himself from starving.

At last he did some serious thinking and said to himself, “Even my father’s servants have plenty to eat but I’m starving to death. I will go back home and say, ‘Dad, I know I’ve done wrong and I don’t deserve to be your son any more. Please make me one of your servants.’”

You might expect the father would want nothing more to do with this son. However, when he saw him coming home he was so happy that he ran to meet him, threw his arms round him and kissed him. He even gave him the best robe, a ring and sandals – these gifts showed that the father accepted his son back home as an honored guest. He asked his servants to kill a calf for a special party to celebrate the lost son’s return home. “I thought my son was dead, but he’s turned up safe and sound!” he exclaimed joyfully.

At this point the third character in the story entered – the older brother. How do you think he felt about all the fuss their father was making of his ‘good-for-nothing’ brother? Well, he was extremely angry and jealous and refused to join in the celebrations. “I’ve slaved away for you for years and never disobeyed you, but you never killed a calf and gave a party for me and my friends”, he complained to his father. “My brother wastes all his money and gets welcomed home like a hero”.

The father was sad that his older son felt like this. “You know I appreciate you and everything I own belongs to you,” he told him. “We must celebrate the safe return of your brother who was lost but has been found again.” Jesus told this story to show the people, especially the religious leaders, that God is a loving and forgiving Father. Just as the father in the story welcomed back the son who admitted his mistakes and asked for forgiveness, so God will forgive us for our sins or wrongdoings if we are truly sorry. The elder son who was jealous of his brother is just like the religious leaders who disliked Jesus taking an interest in bad people.

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**Lost Son Parable Comprehension Quiz**

**1. Why did the Lost Son decide to return home?**

a. he missed his family

b. he got fired from his job

c. he realized life was better at home

**2. When the lost son returned home, what did his father do?**

a. lectured him on his bad behavior

b. ignored him

c. joyfully welcomed him

**3. What did the father give his son when he returned home?**

a. a robe and a ring

b. bread and water

c. nothing because he was angry

**4.) How did the brother feel about the lost son’s return?**

a. he was happy to see him

b. was jealous of him

c. he did not care at all

**5. Why did Jesus tell this story to religious leaders?**

a. to show God’s forgiveness

b. to show that they acted like the jealous brother

c. both A and B

**6. Rewrite the story of the Lost Son from the older brother’s point of view. Must be at least four sentences long.**

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Picture

**6. Draw a picture of a time you had a hard time forgiving someone. Then write a short explanation of your picture.**

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**7. Based on what your learned about the Christian idea of forgiveness. Design a bumper sticker that shows how Christian feel about Forgiveness. Your bumper sticker must have words (could be a quote or common saying) and include a picture.**

