

Stories of God's Love

The Good Samaritan

Day One

1st to 3rd Grade

THEME:	"I will be a good servant"
BIBLE PASSAGE:	Luke 10:25-37
MEMORY VERSE:	"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." John 13:34 (NRSV)

Objective

The child will know who is our neighbor, identify him in today's story and will learn ways in which to be a good neighbor and show Christian love.

Preparation

- Prepare and study the day's class, reading the Bible passage several times.
- Prepare and have ready all the material you will use, so that you might be able to make the best out of the time allocated for the lesson.
- Always have your Bible in your hand so that the students will know and understand that all they are going to learn is coming from the Word of God.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance to meet the lesson's objective so that the lesson might be a great blessing for the children and may touch the hearts of those in need.

Material

- Pictures or illustrations where people are seen helping each other.
- Visual aids related to the Bible story.
- Adhesive bandages (like Band Aids) for each student
- Materials for the students to draw pictures (optional)
- Memory verse printed out on paper to post on the wall.

Introduction

- *Welcome all the children, making them feel glad for being with Jesus and his friends and to learn more about Jesus.*
- *Hand out nametags for the children and fill out the attendance sheet for the class.*
- *Offer a prayer thanking God for the day, asking for the Holy Spirit's direction to lead the lesson according to God's will.*
- *Introduce and practice the memory verse John 13:34. You may want to have them look up the passage in their Bibles. Print the memory verse and post it on the wall. You may want to cover it (partially or completely) when working on memorizing it. Every day, post the new verse next to the verses from previous days. Be sure to read them all every day*

- *Ask the students if they remember someone helping them lately or someone they have helped. Allow them to share their experiences and how they felt when they were helped or when they helped someone.*
- *Show the illustrations from the material you prepared and tell the children that they are not the only ones who help, but that many people around us who love us help us and help one another.*
 - ❖ *Optional Activity: Choose a couple of students to set up a little play, lasting only a few minutes, about an experience they have had which deals with helping people.*

Studying the Bible passage

You may want to define the following terms for the children before going on with the story:

- **Parable** is a type of story which Jesus told the people who followed him. In a parable, there is usually something that Jesus is teaching us
 - A **Neighbor** is not just someone who lives next door to you. A neighbor is really any one you might meet, whether you know them or not. Now, it is important to remember that when it comes to being nice to neighbors that you don't know, it is best to do so when you have mom or dad by your side.
 - A **Samaritan** is a person who lived in Samaria, a country right next to Israel. Jesus lived in Israel. Unfortunately, the people of Israel and the people of Samaria did not get along.
- ❖ *Optional Activity: You may have the children act out the story as you read it*

Tell the students: Today, the Word of God teaches us about how people must help one another and love one another (tell them the Bible is where we learn all that Jesus wants us to do in our lives).

Jesus was telling a story to explain what it means to love our neighbor:

Once upon a time there was a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was going along, riding on his horse, and he had a few coins in his pocket which he had saved to do some shopping and to pay some debts he had in the city of Jericho.

As he was traveling, robbers jumped out and surprised him (ask the children if they know who are robbers and what they do). The robbers beat him up pretty bad, hurt him and took all he had: his horse, his food, his money, even some of his clothes! The Word of God says they left him almost dead. A little while later, a priest was walking along the same road (a priest was a very special person who worked in God's temple); the priest was well dressed, had his own horse, plenty of food and water, and when he saw the beat up man, instead of helping, lifting him up or look after him, he rode by. A little while later, a Levite (a Levite was also someone very religious and was involved with the temple of God) came riding by also. He got close to take a look but continued on his way without helping the man who had been beat up. But a Samaritan, who was also traveling on that same road, came close to the man and seeing that he was hurt and in need, felt sad for him in his heart and so he came to him and cleaned and bandaged his wounds, added some medicine to them, lifted him up with all his strength to put him on his horse and took him to a little hotel, and he took good care of him all night. The next day, as the Samaritan was getting ready to keep traveling, he took out two valuable coins from his pocket and he gave them to the owner of the

hotel and said: take good care of this man, and whatever you have to spend on him, I'll repay you when I return from my journey on this very same road. Then Jesus told the people listening to his story "Go and do the same" which means, we should help our neighbors in any way we can, in order to show our love to one another.

- ❖ *Optional Activity: Get volunteers from the class to play the different roles in the story. As you read the Bible story (or re-read the paraphrase above), have children act out story. Help them not to focus on the part about beating up the man, but rather to focus on the other elements of the story.*

Reflecting on the Bible passage

Ask the students the following questions, so they can reflect on and realize what Jesus is teaching in this Bible story.

- *Of the three travelers, who was kind to the man who had been robbed and hurt? (let them give 2 or 3 answers).*
- *Of the three travelers, who did not show kindness to the man who had been robbed and hurt? (let them give 2 or 3 answers).*
- *Help them note that the man who was kind and helpful did so because the Spirit of God was making him feel that kindness in his heart. Through his good actions he was able to show love to his neighbor [define neighbor] and helped him in any way he could. Jesus told the people listening to his story "Go and do the same" which means helping our neighbors in any way we can, in order to show our love to one another.*

- ❖ *Optional Activity: Ask the students to draw a picture of how the Good Samaritan helped the person who was hurt.*

Applying the Bible passage to our life

Re-introduce the memory verse John 13:34 and help the students to say it from memory.

This love that Jesus is showing us and teaching us day to day is a love for the whole world. It doesn't matter who the other person is. Jesus wants us to show the love we have received from him, that is, to show that we are good Samaritans to anyone God puts on our way; we must love that person with the same love that God has for us.

Ask the children how they can help other people. Make a list on the board of what the kids say, for example:

1. *Invite a new kid in town or a new neighbor to your house even before you are friends*
2. *Be courteous and kind to everyone, even when they are not kind to you.*
3. *Helping anyone who needs help: our teachers, parents, neighbors.*

- ❖ *Optional Activity: Have the kids play charades using the activities they just wrote on the board. Write these activities on cards. Hand one out to the presenter and have the rest of the class guess watching the presenter's silent clues.*

Group the children in pairs. Take out the adhesive bandages (Band Aids) and give them one each. Tell the students: Jesus wants us to help those in need; to love them just like God loves us. To remember that Jesus tells us to love each other, I'm going to ask you to put the Band Aid on your partner while we all repeat the memory verse John 13:34.

- ❖ *Optional Activity:
Ask the children to make a drawing of how they would help those who are in need.*

Conclusion

Invite the children to return the next day and tell them that they may bring a friend with them so they might know Jesus and so they might have fun with the group.

Invite them to put in practice what they learned today, right there at home with Mom or Dad, with a person next door even with their own friends. Next day, the children can share an experience they had related to what they learned today.

Offer a final prayer asking God for God's help to be kind one with another and to show true Christian love.

Stories of God's Love

The Widow and the Unjust Judge

Day Two 1st to 3rd Grade

THEME:	"Pray Always: Nurturing our Relationship with God."
BIBLE PASSAGE:	Luke 18:1 -8
MEMORY VERSE:	"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." Matthew 7:7 (NRSV)

Objective

The student will learn that our loving God is nicer to us than the judge was to the widow in the parable, and that praying is our way to have a relationship with God.

Preparation

- Prepare for this lesson by reading Luke 18:1-8. Pray for understanding of what God would have you teach through His word.
- Read through the lesson and time it. Make sure your plans fill the time allotted without being rushed.

Material

- Make sure all of your physical needs are planned for well ahead of time.
- If you are using puppets to tell one of the stories (optional) and you do not already have puppets, see instructions at the end of today's lesson for how to make the puppets.
- An inflated balloon
- Memory verse printed out on paper to post on the wall.

Introduction

- *Welcome the students and say a prayer thanking God for them, for the way in which God speaks to us and listens to us through prayer.*
- *Make sure everyone has their name tag on and mark them present in the attendance chart*
- *Review the theme and memory verse from the previous day.*
- *Present today's theme and help the students practice today's memory verse Matthew 7:7.*
- *Tell the students: Today we are going to focus on what it means to talk to God. We are going to discover what it means to pray and how we can talk to God.*

Studying the Bible passage

Read today's passage (Luke 18:1 -8) to the class. After reading it, tell the class that you are going to help them understand today's parable by sharing and acting out this story:

Now we are going to act out this story together. I am going to read the story and you all are going to play the part of the widow. When I say "The widow marched right up to the judge and said," here you will answer... "help me, help me sir for my neighbor is mean to me." (*add facial*

expressions and motions to keep the kids involved and excited). Let's practice a few times. (Let the kids practice responding to your phrase)

The Woman with a Problem

Once upon a time in a land far away there lived a judge who was very powerful. He was not a nice judge; he did not care about his people or about God. In that same land lived a poor woman who was a widow, which means her husband had died. She had a very mean neighbor. The woman had a little dog that she loved very much and the little dog loved the woman too. In fact he loved her so much that when she would go away during the day the little dog would bark and bark. The woman's neighbor did not like the dog barking. The mean neighbor even warned her: "If you don't make that dog stop barking, one of these days I'm going to make him be quiet... really quiet..." One day, when the dog was barking and barking, the mean neighbor snuck into the woman's yard, crept over to her precious puppy, and took off the dog's leash. Next he took the little dog, put it in his car, drove way far out of town and then let the dog go. The widow was so sad to come home and see that her doggy was gone. She went and looked all over for him, but she just couldn't find him. This made the woman very sad and she knew she had to do something about it. So she gathered up her things and went to see the judge. The woman marched right up to the judge and said (*signal the kids to repeat their phrase*) "help me, help me sir for my neighbor is mean to me." The judge, not caring a bit about the poor widow, took one look at her and declared "I don't care: Fix it yourself."

So the woman went home very sad. But two days later the woman came home to find her doggy had come back. He had found his way home. She was so excited that she hugged and kissed him for hours.

But sadly the next day when the woman went out again the dog began to bark. The woman's neighbor did not like the dog barking. So he snuck into her yard, crept over to her precious puppy, and took off its leash. Next he took the little dog, put it in his car, drove way far out of town and then let the dog go. The widow was so sad to come home and see that her doggy was gone. She went and looked all over for him, but she just couldn't find him. This made the woman very sad and she knew she had to do something about it. So she gathered up her things and went to see the judge. The woman marched right up to the judge and said "help me, help me sir for my neighbor is mean to me." The judge, not caring a bit about the poor widow, took one look at her and declared "I don't care: Fix it yourself."

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So the woman went home very sad. But two days later the woman came home to find her doggy had come back. He had found his way home. She was so excited that she hugged and kissed him for hours.

But sadly the next day when the woman went out again the dog began to bark. The woman's neighbor did not like the dog barking. So he snuck into her yard, crept over to her precious puppy, and took off its leash. Next he took the little dog, put it in his car, drove way far out of town and then let the dog go. The widow was so sad to come home and see that her doggy was gone. She went and looked all over for him, but she just couldn't find him. This made the woman very sad and she knew she had to do something about it. So she gathered up her things and went to see the judge. The woman marched right up to the judge and said "help me, help me sir for my neighbor is mean to me." The judge, not caring a bit about the poor widow, took one look at her and declared "You know, I don't care one bit about your problem. But, just so you'll stop bothering me, I'll take care of this once and for all." So the judge had the mean neighbor captured and put in jail and that mean neighbor never bothered the poor widow again.

Reflecting on the Bible passage

- ✓ Was the judge a nice man? (*no*)
- ✓ But did he finally help the widow? (*yes*) Why? (*because she kept bugging him*)
- ✓ You should know that this judge in the story is *nothing* like God. You see, God loves us and really cares about us. So imagine, if even a mean old judge will help that old widow, don't you think that our loving God will help us willingly when we ask for help? (*yes!*)
- ✓ So if we were in trouble and needed help so much that even a mean judge would help us, do you think that God would help us too? (*yes*)
- ✓ What do we need to do to get God's help? (*ask God*)
- ✓ How do we do that? (*Pray*)
- ✓ What is prayer? (*Talking to God*)
- ✓ Can just anyone pray to God? (*Yes*) when? (*anytime*) Where? (*anywhere*)

Applying the Bible passage to our lives

You know, prayer is a very important way to talk with God. Talking with God is a good thing to do so that we can tell God how we feel, and what kinds of things we're doing. Talking with God is sort of like talking with our parents. Do you tell your parents about your friends, or what you did at school, etc? Well, let me tell you a little story about how it is important to talk about these things, both with our parents and with God.

When telling this next story, you may choose to tell it just by reading it or by telling it with the help of puppets. If you want to use puppets but don't have any, there are directions at the end of the lesson on how to make them:

Trouble Talking

Mom: OK, Joey. Now that we are finished with dinner, and since I see that you are finished helping me clean the table, before you go out to play with your friends, let's say a prayer together to remember Daddy, to ask God to help him while Daddy's away on his work trip.

Joey: You pray. I don't know what to say.

Mom: I'll be glad to start, but don't you want to talk to God, too?

Joey: (*shaking his head*): Not today

Mom: (*praying quietly*): Dear Lord, thank you so much for this time that Joey and I have together. Thank you for teaching us new things through your Word. Please be with Daddy today as he is far away from us and be with us as we finish our day. (Mom keeps mumbling quietly while Joey thinks out loud)

Joey: (*thinking aloud, without moving his mouth*): I wish mom would hurry up. I really want to go out and play; besides, God already knows everything, doesn't He? Why do we have to tell Him all this stuff that He already knows?

Mom: Amen.

Joey: Amen, now can I go out and play.

Mom: Yes Joey. Don't forget that Daddy is going to call later on this evening, so don't go too far, so I'll be able to give you the phone so you'll be able to talk with him.

Joey: Okay Mom.

Mom and Joey leave

Mom returns and is bustling about humming to herself. Joey comes hurrying in.

Joey: I didn't miss Dad's call, did I?

Mom: Well actually yes, he called a little while ago.

Joey: Oh, man I wanted to talk to him. I wanted to tell him about Billy getting mad at me at school today and ask him what he thinks I should do.

Mom: Daddy wanted to talk with you, too, but at least he knows about Billy. I told him all about what happened.

Joey: It isn't the same as me telling him. And besides, we haven't talked today. I wanted to talk with Dad.

Mom: Well, let's call him back so the two of you can talk. Use the phone in my room, the phone number is lying right there by the phone.

Joey leaves - then comes back.

Joey: Dad was glad I called back. He said he liked having me tell him about all the stuff I've been doing, even though he already knew about it.

Mom: Daddies love to have conversations with their children. You know, God, who is our Heavenly Father, also likes to have conversations with us, too.

Joey: I . . . I guess God would like to hear about Billy from me, too, wouldn't He?

Mom: I would say that God wants to hear about Billy and about any other thing you want to talk about.

How About You? Do you have trouble knowing what to say when you pray? Just share with God what is going on in your life. God loves you and wants you to talk with Him. God wants to be included in your daily routine. The widow or old woman in our Bible story today wasn't afraid to talk

to the judge, and he was mean. We know that God loves us and wants to know us, just like Joey's daddy wanted to know all about his son's day. So we don't need to be afraid to talk to God, God doesn't care what words we use; God just wants to know us.

Let's sing this song to Jesus: Jesus Taught Us How to Pray (To the tune of "Jesus Loves Me").

Jesus taught us how to pray, to God our Father everyday;
Morning, noon, and night-time, too, we can pray and so can you.
Yes, we can pray! Yes, we can pray!
Yes, we can pray; to God through-out the day.

❖ *Optional Activity 1: Learning How to Pray*

*First, have children hold up one hand and learn this rhyme:
"God gave me hands to help me pray. My fingers show me what to say."*

Then have children point out with their left index finger each finger on the right hand (which is outstretched with all fingers out) and pray a specific prayer for each finger:

- ☞ *My thumb is closest to me. It reminds me to pray for those that are closest to me. Pray for your parents and your brothers or sisters.*
- ☞ *My index finger is used for pointing. This finger reminds me to pray for those that point me in the right direction. Pray for your teachers at school, your Sunday School teacher, and your pastor (Ephesians 6:19-20).*
- ☞ *My middle finger is the tallest finger. This finger reminds me to pray for our leaders. Pray for the president and other leaders in our government and those who are leaders in our town (1 Timothy 2:1-2).*
- ☞ *My next finger is my ring finger. Did you know that this is the weakest of all the fingers? Just ask any one who plays the piano and they will tell you that is true. This finger reminds me to pray for those who are sick (James 5:14).*
- ☞ *My little finger is the smallest. The Bible says, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought." (Rom. 12:3) The little finger reminds me to pray for myself.*

❖ *Optional Activity 2 : Prayer Balloon*

(You will need an inflated balloon.)

Ask your students to form a circle in an open area in your classroom.

Say: Today we are going to talk about praying. One way to pray is to give God thanks. We are going to thank God for things that God has created. When I mention a category, I am going to throw the balloon to one of you. That person will then have to think of something to thank God for and will say aloud: Thank you God for _____. Then that person will throw the balloon to another person.

As you go through each category, continue until the balloon has gone around the circle. It's OK if a child cannot think of an answer or if they repeat one already given. But if there are many being repeated, you might want to whisper one in their ear

- * Thank you, God, for our families...*
- * Thank you, God, for our friends...*

- * Thank you, God, for food...
 - * Thank you, God, for nature...
 - * Thank you, God, for colors...
 - * Thank you, God, for animals...
 - * Thank you, God, for toys...
- Say:* There are so many things to thank God for!

Conclusion

Boys and girls, how many of you have a very best friend? (*Let them tell you.*) Do you talk to your friend? How often do you talk to your friend? (*They will offer lots of reasons.*) Do think if you never talked to your friend that they would still be your very best friend? Why not? (*Talk about this.*) If you never talked to your friend you wouldn't know anything about them and they wouldn't know anything about you either. That would make it really hard to be very best friends. God wants to know us like we are God's very best friend. That's why God likes it when we talk to him. God wants us to tell him what is happening and to help us when we feel alone or afraid. Do you worry about what words you will say when you talk to your best friend? Why not? (*Let them offer some answers*) Do you worry about what to say to God? You don't have to. God loves you so much and he loves to hear us. Just like Joey's dad wanted to hear him talk about his day so that he could know Joey even better and just like you like to listen to your very best friend so that you can know them better, God loves to listen to us. He wants to know us. He wants to know you.

Review today's memory verse and close with a brief prayer.

Instructions for making your own puppets:

You will need the following materials:

Tube/Athletic sock (preferably light in color) or a lunch paper bag

Scrap fabric, felt or construction paper

Hot glue gun and glue or all purpose glue

Buttons and markers

Needle and thread

Yarn (any color)

Sock puppet:

Take the sock and draw eyes or sew buttons on the toe of the sock. (This is where you will be drawing or creating the face of the puppet.) You can then use scrap fabric, felt or markers to make a nose, mouth, and ears. If using fabric or felt, you can sew these pieces on using the needle and thread or you can glue them on. For the hair, you can use yarn. Cut it the desired length and then sew or glue on to the sock. Then for girls, you can add bows or ribbons for accessories. You may want to tie a ribbon or piece of fabric around the neck of the puppet for clothes. Let your imagination go wild!

Paper bag puppet:

The bottom of the paper bags becomes the face of the puppet and the fold by the bottom becomes the mouth. You can decorate using fabric, felt or construction paper and glue. A bag may make it easier to create clothes for your puppet. Construction paper can be used for hair by cutting it into strips and gluing it to the bag. You can take a pencil and roll the paper creating curly hair.

Stories of God's Love

The Prodigal Son

Day Three

1st - 3rd Grade

TEMA:	"God Loves Me and Forgives My Sins"
BIBLE PASSAGE:	Luke 15:11-32
MEMORY VERSE:	"If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9 (NRSV)

Objective

The student will know the story of the prodigal son, and will see the connection between the love of the father in the parable and the great love God has for us.

Preparation

- Pray that God will give you understanding and wisdom to understand God's word and pray for the children who'll be in class.
- Always have the Bible in your hand, so the students will know and understand that what they are going to learn is coming from God's word.
- Don't forget to practice the entire lesson, to measure the time and then pray asking for God's help and God's blessing for the teaching team and the students.

Material

- Read the section "Biblical and Cultural Background" found below.
- Pictures of parents showing their love to their children.
- Illustrations of the prodigal son and other characters in the parable to be used with a flannel board, or use pictures with a back flap that allows them to stand on a flat surface, like a table or the floor area where you will teach the lesson.
- A sack or backpack with the following: play money, dirty and torn brown piece of cloth, a picture/drawing of a pig, a clean piece of cloth.
- Memory verse printed out on paper to post on the wall.

Biblical and Cultural Background:

Think about this as you read Luke 15:11-32. The audience Jesus had that day were publicans and sinners from the city who came out to listen to him. They knew their own sins very well and they were willing listeners. Among them were also scribes and Pharisees. But they kept themselves apart, condemning the publicans and sinners; they were especially critical of the way in which Jesus was receiving sinners and was eating with them.

Jesus taught them about the love of God through a story about two sons and a loving father. One of them, because he didn't understand his father's love, asked his father one day for his portion of the inheritance that would belong to him, and he left home. He went to a far away

country, and after he lost it all and after he hit rock bottom, feeding pigs and being so hungry as to desire their feed, he realized that he had sinned against his father and against God, and so he set out to return to his father to ask for forgiveness. Jesus longed for these Israelites to recognize their own sin and the love of God the father, and so be able to return home from the dark country of sin.

God loves us and is willing to forgive our sins if we ask God to.

Introduction

- *Welcome the group and if there is a new child, introduce him/her to the group. Allow the children to feel happy and comfortable to be learning about Jesus.*
- *Hand out nametags to the students and fill out the attendance sheet*
- *Offer a prayer giving thanks for the day, asking the direction of the Holy Spirit to teach this lesson according to God's will.*
- *Introduce and practice the memory verse 1 John 1:9 (or a part of it, to help them with memorization)*
- *To understand today's passage better, I am going to tell you a story about a little boy whose name is Carlitos. He left his house one morning very happy because he was wearing brand new clothes, and Carlitos had decided that he would really take good care of his clothes so that his father would be very proud of him, showing him that he was a big boy and that he knew how to take care of nice things. However, when he got to the corner, he saw his best friend and they went out to play in the park across from his house. Carlitos was being very careful with his new clothes, not to get them dirty, but suddenly it started to rain very hard and Carlitos and his friend started running as fast as they could so they would not get wet, but then Carlitos tripped and fell in the mud. All of Carlitos' clothes got dirty, and what's more, his pants got a tear right on his knee. Oh no! What am I going to do? Thought Carlitos. Dad is going to get mad when he sees my clothes are dirty and torn. I think I just won't go back home so that Dad won't be mad. In the meantime, Carlitos' dad was getting worried because Carlitos was not back home.*

Studying the Bible passage

Just like Carlitos, there was a boy in the Bible, and this boy we know as "The Prodigal Son." The word "prodigal" means someone who is not very careful with what they have and they end up wasting and losing what they have. So, for example, let's say that for your birthday your aunt got you a box with 100 color markers. You weren't careful with how you put them away or put the cap on them each time you drew or colored. Or you didn't notice that your dog was chewing on a couple of markers (and made his tongue lime green!), or you lost the caps for a bunch of them when you took them on vacation. One day you would realize that you have hardly any markers to color with. That is being wasteful, that is what a prodigal person does.

[*You may use the flannel board to tell the story.*] The prodigal son had a brother and a father who cared for them and loved them very much. One day this son decided to leave from home, so he told his dad "I want the money you told me one day you'd give me". The father gave the son the money, just as he said he would one day. The son took the money the father gave him and he moved away far from home. The father was very sad when the son left, because the father loved his son and missed the many happy days they had had together.

When the son arrived at a far away country, he forgot all the good things his father had taught him, and instead he spent the money on bad things. He spent and spent the money until one

day he had none left. (*Take out the play money from the sack and leave bills everywhere around the classroom or handing it out to the students until you have no more money left*). The good clothes he had were getting dirty and torn. (*Put on the torn and dirty brown cloth, and act like you're sad and hungry*), and got very hungry. Finally, he had to go to work, but it was taking care of pigs in a farm! (*Get near the picture of the pig, which is glued to the wall, and sit on a chair or the floor and think aloud*): "when I was living with my dad, I never lacked anything. There was always good food and my dad gave me nice and clean clothes, but above all I miss my dad because he loved me." The son was sad because he had left home because he knew how much pain he had caused his father when he left, so he thought "I will return home and will tell my dad that it hurts me to have done so many bad things and that I don't deserve to still be his son, that I am willing to be back and just be one of his workers." (*Say these words really happy while you walk, pretending you are heading back to the house*).

So the son started on his journey and while the son was walking and walking towards his house, when he got close he saw a man running toward him. That man got closer and closer. What? It was his father! The son could barely believe what he was seeing as his father ran to him and hugged and kissed him. "Oh dad!" the son said "I spent all the money that you gave me. I did bad things! I am very sorry I did all that! Oh, dad, I don't deserve for you to call me your son any more!" (*say these words really repenting*). The father loved his son and was so happy that he had returned. The father knew that the son was sorry for what he had done, and so the father forgave the son for all the things he had done. Everything was OK now. The father gave the son new clothes and many nice things. (*Put on the nice and clean cloth*). And then the father had a dinner in honor of his son who had returned. The son felt so happy knowing that his father never stopped loving him! And he was happier still to know that his father had forgiven him all the bad things he had done and that now everything was OK between them.

Then, what happened was since the father was SO happy that he decided to throw a big party for the younger son, who had returned. When the older son found out, the one who had stayed at home, he got very upset and angry. He yelled at his father and said: "It's not fair! I have been a good son, and you didn't throw me a party! My brother was disobedient and wasted all your money, and you give him a party!?" That's not right! The father said to his older son: "I know you're upset, but think about this: we didn't know how your brother was! I even wondered if we would ever see him again! Son, it is good that your younger brother returned. He was lost, but now we've found him. He's a part of the family again. That makes me very happy!"

Reflecting on the Bible passage

Ask the students the following questions so they can participate and reflect upon them and can better understand the teaching from the Bible passage.

- ◆ Was the younger son careful with the things his father gave him, the money etc.?
- ◆ What happened to all the money that the younger son had?
- ◆ What did the younger son have to do when he ran out of money?
- ◆ What made the younger son realize that he had done wrong? (*Try to emphasize that he repented and that he asked his father forgiveness*).
- ◆ Do you know what it means to repent? When you repent, it's like you're going one direction, away from God, and then you turn around and go the opposite way, towards God.
- ◆ Did the father stop loving the son at any point?
- ◆ What about the older brother: how did he feel about his younger brother coming home?
- ◆ Do you think God stops loving us when we misbehave or don't obey God?

- ◆ What does God want us to do when we disobey or when we misbehave?
- ◆ When the younger son left, did he obey his father?
- ◆ When the younger son returned, how did he feel? How did the father feel?
- ◆ When you disobey your parents and you tell your parents that you're sorry, how do you feel?
- ◆ What does God want us to do when we disobey and misbehave?
- ◆ What did the older son think? Did he think the father was being fair? Why did the father do what he did?
- ◆ How do we feel when others hurt us? Is it hard to forgive them? Did you know that God wants us to forgive them?

Applying the Bible passage to our life

The prodigal son, the younger son who was very disobedient and wasteful, changed his mind and decided to obey his father. That's call repenting. When you do something you know you shouldn't and you then decide "Wow! That was not a good idea! I need to obey mom and dad!" that's called repenting.

The good thing is that when the prodigal son decided to repent, that even though he mad messed up BIG, the father's love was BIGGER!

That's also true with God. When we mess up, even when we mess up big, and then we repent, God's forgives us because God's love is bigger. So how big is God's love?

What is bigger? *Draw a circle on the board and ask* What's bigger: this circle, or God's love? God's love is bigger! What about this classroom? What's bigger? Or what about the church? Or the block. Or the city? Keep thinking of bigger things, always answering God's love is bigger.

Like I said, when you repent, it's like you're going one direction, away from God, and then you turn around and go the opposite way, towards God. Let's play a little game to remind us about repenting. When I say go, you're going to walk forward. When I repent, you're going to turn around and go the opposite direction. Let me show you. Line up the children side by side, facing the same direction, with enough room to walk forward a few steps. (*You might need to have children lined up in a couple of rows*). Give the order to walk, and after a few steps say "repent" and have them head in the opposite direction. Tell them to stop. Point the group in a different direction and repeat from the beginning. Play the game a couple of times.

God loves us so much that he sent his son Jesus to die for us and the only thing that God wants is that we love him and obey God always. When we obey our parents, we are obeying God, because God tells us to obey our parents. And when we do something we shouldn't do, neither God nor our parents stop living us, although they do get very sad. That sadness will end when we tell them that we realize what we've done and we really repent from the Herat and we ask God to forgive us and ask our parents to forgive us and whatever other person we hurt with our actions. God is so big and loving that as the Bible says, if we confess our sins God is faithful and just and will forgive us and cleanse us of our sin.

Remember Carlitos? He remembered how much his dad loved him and he thought that perhaps dad was worried about him, and so he went back home and asked his dad to forgive him for dirtying his clothes and his father was so happy to see that Carlitos was OK that he did not really care about Carlitos' clothes. Carlitos had an older brother. What do you imagine that Carlitos' older brother thought about all of this? What do you imagine that Carlitos' dad told the older brother?

Conclusion

We are glad when mom and dad forgive us, but we are especially glad because we know God loves and forgives us, so we need to ask God forgiveness when we disobey God and we need to learn to forgive those who are mean to us. *Review the memory verse, 1 John 1:9.*

Conclude with prayer. "Thank you God because you love each one of us. We are glad that you forgive all the bad things we do when we really are sorry about doing them. Help us be nice to others. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen"

Stories of God's Love

The Lost Coin

Day Four

1st to 3rd Grade

THEME:	"We are God's Treasure and God seeks us out"
BIBLE PASSAGE:	Luke 15:8-10
MEMORY VERSE:	"For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost" Luke 19:10 (NRSV)

Objective

Through learning the story of the lost coin, the student will learn that even when we are separated from God because of our sins, God will seek us out. Once we are found, that is, when we repent and God forgives us, God will celebrate and rejoice!

Preparation

- Prepare for this lesson by reading Luke 15:8-10. Pray for understanding of what God would have you teach through His word.
- Read through the lesson and time it. Make sure your plans fill the time allotted without being rushed.
- Make sure all of your physical needs are planned for well ahead of time.

Material

- A cardboard circle spray-painted silver or covered in foil to represent a silver coin (if you don't want to use a real coin). You may want to use more than one coin if you have a large class.
- Brooms and flashlights to help look for coin.
- Small pieces of chocolate (one piece for everyone in the class) to celebrate, when the coin is found.
- Blindfold.
- The text of each of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-17) and of the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31) printed on construction paper.
- Memory verse printed out on paper to post on the wall.

Introduction

- *Welcome the children and say a prayer thanking God for the children, for the way in which God loves us and wants to be with us always. You may use this prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for this day and this time together. We thank you for making us and loving us. Because you love us, please help us to know that when we are lost that you will come and find us. In Jesus' name. Amen."*
- *Make sure everyone has their name tag on and mark them present in the attendance chart*
- *Review the theme and memory verse from the previous day.*
- *Present today's theme and help the students practice today's memory verse Luke 19:10. Teach them that "The Son of Man" refers to Jesus.*

- *Tell the students:* Today we are going to learn that because God loves us so much, even when we don't do what God wants us to do, God helps us change and do the right things. And when we do, God is so happy, there are parties in heaven to celebrate!

Studying the Bible passage

The children will be searching for a lost coin before you tell them the story. You will need a silver coin and you will need to hide it in the classroom before the children arrive. You may want to make it easy to find, if you do not have a long period of time (the coin can be a circular piece of cardboard spray painted silver or covered in foil, if you don't want to use a real coin and you may want more than one if you have a large class).

Say to the children: I have lost a silver coin (or several) somewhere in our classroom. Could you please help me find it? Search very carefully, once you find it, shout Hooray!

Once the coin(s) is (are) found make sure you make a big deal out of it. "Oh, I am so glad you found this coin. Help me celebrate by doing a dance or jumping up and down." You may want to have a small treat for them like a small piece of chocolate for when all the coins are found. Have the children sit down in a circle to enjoy their treat, while you prepare them for the story.

Ask the children if they have every lost something that is very special to them. Listen for their responses and share with them if you have lost something very special in your life. Try to think of something that was lost and then found (example: a wedding ring, money, your child, a friend, or your pet). Share with them how excited you were when you found what you lost and you celebrated. Then ask them, if what they lost was found. If it wasn't ask if they have ever lost something either special or not and how they felt when they found it. Ask them how they celebrated.

Tell the children that you want to read them a story from the Bible that pertains to something being lost. Explain that after reading the story, they will be acting it out in a drama, so they will need to listen carefully.

Once you have read the story found in Luke 15:8-10, assign parts to the children and have them act out the story as you reread the scripture. You may want to have them act it out a couple times and let boys or girls play the role of the woman (a person) losing the coin. Then after finding the coin, to celebrate invite them to stand up, raise their hands and thank God (Yippee! Hurray! Thank you, God!).

Reflecting on the Bible passage

- What do you think the lost coins represent in the story?
 - o *Help the children understand the people are the lost coins to God. We are very valuable to God and God is very sad when we get lost.*
- How do you think we get lost?
 - o *We are lost when we don't obey God, when we sin against God.*
 - o *We may stop talking/praying to God. We may stop going to church. We may stop looking to God to help solve our problems. Or we may act out in ways that God doesn't approve, like lying, fighting, disobeying.*
- How do you think God finds us or seeks us out?

- *God knows where we are at all times. God continues to send us messages through our teachers, parents, friends or pastors, so that we may be found like the lost coin.*
- What does it mean to repent from our sins?
 - *It means realizing that sin is not what God wants, then making a decision to change our behavior to please God.*
- How do we repent for our sins?
 - *Asking for forgiveness is hard some times. We first have to realize what we did wrong or how we sinned. Then we have to repent, confessing to God what we did wrong and asking for God's forgiveness.*
- Can you share with the class a time that you or someone you know was lost from God and then you or they were found?
 - *Share with the class a personal story with them, keeping it short and at their level. This is a great way to share your faith with your students. If you are talking about some one else, please do not mention any names.*
- How do you think God celebrates with the angels?
 - *Sit back and enjoy the children's responses, letting them use their imagination (there is no right or wrong answer)!*

Applying the Bible passage to our lives

Use one or several of these games to remind the children that when we disobey God, it is like being a coin that has gotten lost; but then when God helps us repent and forgives us, it's like being a coin that is now found!

Find the Missing Shoes

Have the children take off both shoes and put them in one large pile in the center of the room. The children will need to sit in a circle and close their eyes. The teacher will then mix the shoes up or hide them around the room. Then have the children open their eyes and see who can find both shoes the fastest. The person done first is the winner and can be the next person to hide or mix up the shoes, if time permits.

Who Is Lost?

One of the students is selected to wear the blindfold and figure out who is missing or lost. This person will put the blindfold on and count to 15 and then yells, "Freeze". While this person is counting the remainder of the class will run around the room. When the person blindfolded yells, "Freeze", the group will freeze in position and one person will be selected to leave the room quietly. Then the person who is blindfolded will take off the blindfold and try to figure out who is lost or missing (the one person who left the room). Have another person be blindfolded and start the game over.

Find the Rules of God

Write the individual Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1-17 -- one commandment per sheet) and the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31) on colored construction paper prior to class (for a large class do more than one set). Have the children close their eyes and hide the papers around the room. Have the students hunt for them and after they are found have each child read the commandments they located.

Other Game Suggestions: Hide and Seek. Have some of the students hide the coins you used for the opening activity around the room and have the rest of the class find them and then switch.

Conclusion

You know, boys and girls, God loves us so much! God thinks we are very special and wants us to be obedient children always. Now, God sees when every now and again we disobey God, or we disobey our parents. That is not something God likes. When we don't do behave as God tells us in the Bible, it is like we get far, far away from God, like we are lost. But what is so exciting is that God notices when we get far, far away, lost like the coin, and God comes looking for us and God helps us obey him. And that makes God so very happy that there's a party in heaven!

Review today's memory verse Luke 19:10 and close with a brief prayer.

Stories of God's Love

The Sower

Day Five

1st - 3rd Grade

THEME:	"The Love of God Grows in My Heart"
BIBLE PASSAGE:	Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23
MEMORY VERSE:	"The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the [Good] News and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams." Matthew 13:23 (The Message)

Objective

The child will know the story and will understand that God wants us to grow in the faith and that we bear fruit.

Preparation

- Prepare and study the class carefully, reading the Bible passage several times.
- Prepare and have ready all the material you will use, so that you might be able to make the best out of the time allocated for the lesson.
- Always have your Bible in your hand so that the students will know and understand that all they are going to learn is coming from the Word of God.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance to meet the lesson's objective so that the lesson might be a great blessing for the children and may touch the hearts of those in need.

Material

- Pictures or illustrations where people are evangelizing.
- Pictures or illustrations of a sower in a field, to give context to the Bible story.
- Cups filled with dirt where different kinds of seeds are growing.
- Art supplies (paper, crayons, glitter, glue, etc.)
- Memory verse printed out on paper to post on the wall.

Introduction

Welcome the group, making them feel that Jesus has chosen them to be great followers, to be here today and to give them a great mission to accomplish.

- *Ask the children if they know or remember anyone whose job it is to sow the fields. Let them tell you of their experiences and what they notice about a sower.*
- *For those children who might not know anyone who is a farmer, tell them about people who plant seeds in their gardens so they can have flowers or vegetables.*
- *Show them the illustrations you brought to explain some of the characteristics of a sower to the children.*

- *Let them observe and handle the seed cups and explain to them why they are wet or dry. Explain what a sower does and that sometimes what they sow might dry up and die if it does not get the proper attention.*
- *Introduce and practice the memory verse Matthew 13:23. You may want to have them look up the passage in their Bibles. Print the memory verse and post it on the wall. You may want to cover it (partially or completely) when working on memorizing it.*

Studying the Bible passage

Today we learn in God's word about how people receive the seed of the Word of God and in some cases that leads to growth, and in others it dries up and dies, which makes Jesus sad.

Let me explain: You know your parents love you, right? And they want you to be a boy or girl that loves others, right? Well, imagine that love is like a little seed that your parents have planted in your heart. They love you, so that seed begins to grow. They teach you how to be nice to others, and that seed grows and grows, like an apple tree right before it's ready to give its apples. Then your parents notice that you are being nice to your cousin, or your friend, or a grown up. When you are loving towards others, it is like the "love seed" your parents planted is now a tree that is giving us its fruit, like an apple tree gives us its apples! Oh, how happy that makes your parents! Well, it's similar with God. The seed God plants is a seed of love which comes right from the Bible, which is God's word to us. The story today will help us think about the seed of love which God plants in our hearts, and how sometimes that seed will grow and other times it might not.

The Bible tells us a story of a sower who was very happy and full of confidence went to his field to sow, and as he spread the seeds, they fell all over the place: the road, among rocks, in the thorns and on the soil.

When it was time to check on how the seeds were doing, he realized that not all the seeds had germinated (that is, that no all the seeds had begun to produce the plant it was supposed to):

- The ones that fell on the road were eaten up by the birds.
- The ones that fell among stones got too hot because of the sun and burned
- The ones that fell among the thorns were able to grow, but then the thorns crowded them out and the seeds died out.
- But the seeds that fell on the good soil grew up and produced fruit.

The sower was very happy with the seeds that did grow and he set out to take care of them, giving them the time and care they need.

❖ Optional Activity:

Have the children act out the passage as you read the story from the Bible. Get several kids to be the different kinds of characters: sower, a seed in each of the types of soil, the sun, the birds, the thorns, etc. You may want to give them some clues about how to act out their part (the birds flapping their wings, the growing plant spreading its branches, etc.). As you read the story, have the characters come alive and act the story as they hear the biblical passage.

Reflecting on the Bible passage

Ask the children these questions to help them reflect and to realize what Jesus is trying to teach us through the story.

- Why didn't all the seeds grow up nice and healthy?
- How do you think the sower felt when he saw some seeds not make it?
- What does the sower do to keep the healthy ones alive?
- Just like seeds, there are other things that grow. Earlier I mentioned that the love our parents have for us is like a little seed that grows in our hearts. Does the love we have for our family grow? What helps it grow? Or how much we like our friends, what makes that friendship grow?
- The seed we hear about in the story is a feeling that tells us for sure that God loves us. To believe in God, to have faith, is to be sure that God loves us, even if we can't see God. (*Ask them to look up Hebrews 11:1 and have one of them read it aloud.*) Believing in God, having faith, is something that also grows in us like a seed. The more we learn about God in the Bible, and the more we come to church, we can feel that little seed growing in our hearts.

Applying the Bible passage to our lives

This love and this patience which the sower shows in this Bible story is a love that doesn't compare to anything we know

This love is the love Jesus has for us.

Jesus gave his life to save our life. His love is the seed which our Lord sowed in our hearts and he wants that love to grow in us, healthy and strong, so we may be obedient to him, sharing that same seed of love with our friends. Tell others about this love and you will be sowing that same seed in their hearts, and you can then wait to see the growth of that love of Jesus in your friend's heart.

Ask the children:

- Who teaches you about God?
- What kinds of things help your faith in God grow?
- Think about how the people who teach you about God do it. What are some things they do or say that help you learn about God? Let's practice sharing our faith in God with others (*have them say to one another statements they've recalled their teachers using to learn about God. You may want to add things like "Jesus loves you," "God listens to us when we pray," "God speaks to us through the stories in the Bible," etc.*)

Give the children art supplies and invite them to draw a picture showing seeds that are growing into flowers or plants, or maybe hearts where the seeds of God's love are growing

Conclusion

Review and practice the memory verse Matthew 13:23.

Jesus, our good friend has sown in us a seed of love and faith (*remind them it's to believe in God, to have faith, is to be sure that God loves us, even if we can't see God*) and God wants us to share those seeds so everyone will have faith and feel God's love, so that one day, just like the sower was happy to see its seeds live, so will our Lord Jesus be happy to see the fruit from those who were able to let that seed in them live and give fruit and multiply.

Invite a friend to the church so he/she may know who that God loves us and wants us to be like a big family!

And that way you will be sowing in their hearts the seed of God's love, the word of God.

Thank the students for their participation throughout the week. Invite them to keep coming to the church. Offer a closing prayer.