

The Story of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32



Part One

Jesus also told them another story: "Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, 'Give me my share of the property. So the father divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country....

⇒ **How do you think the father felt when the younger son left home?**

Part Two

In the foreign country the son...

wasted all his money on wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.

Finally, he came to his senses and said, 'My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death. I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'

⇒ **Why do you think the son decided it was wrong for him to leave his father and to waste his money?**

Part Three

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son.

But his father said to the servants, 'Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate.

This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found.' And they began to celebrate.

- ⇒ **What did the father do when he saw his son coming?**
- ⇒ **How did the father show compassion and forgiveness?**
- ⇒ **What would you have done if you were the father and this son came home?**
- ⇒ **Would you have been as forgiving and generous as the father was?**

Part Four

The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants over and asked, 'What's going on here?'

The servant answered, 'Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf.' The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. But he said to his father, 'For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast.'

His father replied, 'My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found.'"

- ⇒ **How do you think the older son felt about the party his father was giving for his younger brother? If you were the older brother or sister, how would you have felt?**
- ⇒ **Do you think the younger son deserved to be treated like he was? Why?**
- ⇒ **How did the father show that he wanted the older son to be reconciled with his brother?**
- ⇒ **How do you think the father felt when the older son found it hard to forgive?**

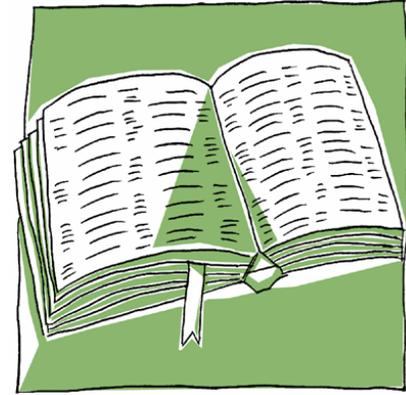
Part Five

- ⇒ **How do you think God is like the father in the story?**



The Ten Commandments

Deuteronomy 5:6-21 (CEV)



1. God comes first – believe in the real God.

⁶I am the LORD your God...

⁷Do not worship any god except me.

2. Pray and use God's name with care.

¹¹Do not misuse my name. I am the LORD your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

3. Take time off to pray and play. (Go to church on Sunday – the Lord's Day)

¹²Show respect for the Sabbath Day, it belongs to me.

4. Obey your parents and be kind to them.

¹⁶Respect your father and mother, and you will live a long and successful life in the land I am giving you.

5. Cherish the life of your neighbor. (Be kind to others.)

¹⁷Do not murder.

6. Be faithful in what you do.

¹⁸Be faithful in marriage.

7. Be honest and don't take what belongs to others.

¹⁹Do not steal.

8. Speak well of others and do not lie.

²⁰Do not tell lies about others.

9. Be pure in what you think and say.

10. Love your neighbor and be happy with what you have.

²¹Do not want anything that belongs to someone else. Don't want anyone's wife or husband, house, land, slaves, oxen, donkeys, or anything else.

Children's Examination of Conscience

1. Remember how much God loves you and how Jesus calls you to follow him.

2. Pray to the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, help me to understand how to follow Jesus each day, to know my sins – the times I have not followed Jesus, and be sorry for them with all my heart. Amen.

3. Remember those times you have not followed Jesus. God is always ready to forgive us, if we ask. Think about the things you want to ask God to forgive in your life. Consider...

- + Did I talk to God today?
- + Did I say God's name with respect?
- + Did I go to Sunday Mass to praise God?
- + Did I respect and obey my parents?
- + Did I respect others as children of God?
- + Did I call someone a mean name?
- + Did I hurt someone's feelings?
- + Did I fight with anyone?
- + Did I steal?
- + Did I lie?
- + Did I try to bring God's love to others?
- + Did I share with my brothers, sisters or friends?
- + Did I help someone who needed me?
- + Was I friendly to people who are different from me?

Remember – we sin only when we do something on purpose or when we choose not to do the good things we are supposed to do.

4. Ask for God's forgiveness.

In your own words tell God you are sorry for your sins. You might also say this prayer:

Dear God, I am sorry for doing wrong. I know you love me very much. Help me to be a caring person. Help me to change and grow in your love. Amen.

Now your heart is ready. You can go with trust to meet the priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Together you will celebrate the love of God who always forgives us!

Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Individual Confession

1. Welcoming the Penitent

The priest welcomes you. Return the priest's greeting and make the Sign of the Cross together.



2. Reading from Scripture

The priest shares God's Word with you. He may ask you to remember a word of God that you especially like.

3. Confession of Sins

The priest invites you to talk about your sins and how you want to be better and grow in God's love. Speak with trust because you are opening your heart to Jesus himself.

Whatever you tell the priest will remain private between you and him. If you have forgotten your sins, don't worry. The priest will help you remember them.

The priest encourages you to love better. He helps you understand how you can make up for your sins. You agree to do something special. This is what is called your penance.



4. Receiving Forgiveness (Absolution)

The priest gives you God's forgiveness. First you tell God you are sorry for having sinned. Then the priest says the words of absolution. These words are the sign that God forgives you and is giving you a new heart. During absolution you might make the Sign of the Cross. At the end you answer: Amen.

With the priest you give thanks to God by saying a prayer of praise. Finally the priest wishes you peace. You thank him and leave.



Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a Parish Community

1. Gathering

We gather to celebrate the Sacrament beginning with...

- + Opening Hymn
- + Liturgical Greeting
- + Prayer by the Priest



2. Storytelling

We tell the scriptural stories of God's love and mercy. We examine our conscience in light of Scripture.

- + Reading from Scripture
- + Examination of Conscience



3. Reconciling

We express our sorrow in an act of contrition. We take part in the sacramental action by processing to the priest to confess our sins and receive forgiveness and absolution, and then, by celebrating God's response in prayer, the kiss of peace, and song.

- + Act of Contrition
- + Process to the Priest
- + Confession of Sin
- + Proclamation of Forgiveness and Absolution
- + Proclamation of Praise and Thanksgiving
- + Lord's Prayer
- + Kiss of Peace
- + Song of Thanksgiving



4. Commissioning

We are commissioned – sent forth – to be ambassadors of reconciliation.

- + Prayers
- + Blessings



Reconciliation Prayers

Examination of Conscience

Examination of Conscience

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 22: 36-40

"Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.' This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, 'Love others as much as you love yourself.' All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:36-40 CEV)

Reflection Questions

- + Is my heart set on God, so that I really love God above all things and am faithful to God's commandments? Are the things of this world like money, prestige, or status truly secondary to my faith in God?
- + Am I continuing to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ? Do I pray regularly and read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, to learn how to be a more faithful disciple of Jesus? Am I growing in my understanding of my Catholic faith?
- + Do I worship God regularly by celebrating the Eucharist with an active and conscious participation? Do I celebrate the healing and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year?
- + Have I been loving and faithful in my relationships, especially with my spouse, family members, and significant relationships?
- + Do I live my life guided by Catholic values, such as respect for dignity of others, respect for creation and the environment, love, care and compassion, forgiveness, honesty, integrity? Which values have I neglected to live faithfully?
- + Do I take seriously the call to serve those in need, to alleviate suffering, to share my gifts, talents, and possessions with others? Do I work for justice for victims of oppression, discrimination, and poverty?

- + Am I ready to forgive and work for peace in my relationships and in my world?
- + Do I live my Catholic faith and moral principles in the workplace and in the community? Are my decisions in the workplace guided by Catholic moral principles?

Prayer for Forgiveness *The Prayer of the Penitent*

*My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love
above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads to sin.*

*(Rite of Penance © 1973 International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. [ICEL].
Used with permission.)*

Prayer for Forgiveness

Forgiving God, we are sorry for the wrong choices we have made. We are sorry for the times that we have been lost from you. We know that you forgive us and that you rejoice when we come back to you. We thank you for the feeling of peace that comes from your forgiveness.

Help us to forgive others. Help us to share your peace with the people around us. Amen.

Reconciliation in My Life

Take a moment to reflect on reconciliation in your life and then share highlights of your experience of reconciliation with your group. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her story without interruptions or discussion.

- Describe an experience of reconciliation in your life – an experience of giving and receiving forgiveness. With whom did you reconcile? How did you go about reconciling? Did you initiate the reconciliation? What were the benefits of reconciliation?

- What is your experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation – when you were a child and today?

- Is the Sacrament of Reconciliation meaningful for you today? What makes (or could make) the sacrament meaningful for you?

Putting Yourself in the Gospel Story

Observation Questions

Imagine you are a disciple traveling with Jesus...

- What is happening?
- What kind of day is it?
- Who is with Jesus?
- What is Jesus doing? What does he say?
- What is the crowd or individual saying or doing?

Imagine you are the person who encounters Jesus...

- Why do you approach Jesus?
- What does Jesus say or do to you?
- What happens to you? What are your feelings?
- What do you do after your encounter with Jesus? etc.

Reflection Questions

- What is Jesus saying to us about forgiveness and reconciliation?
- How does Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
- How does Jesus' approach challenge the "conventional wisdom" about forgiveness?
- What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus' approach to forgiveness? What would change?
- What is Jesus challenging us to do?



Celebrating Reconciliation

Guide to Individual Reconciliation

Read over this guide to prepare for participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The most important thing to remember is that this is a prayer – you do not need to know all of the responses perfectly. If you are unsure, ask the priest and he will guide you. The key is to relax, to pray and to let God love you through this sacrament!

Step 1. Preparation

We prepare ourselves for Reconciliation by thinking about God's love and our choices.

- ✦ We remember the commandments and all we have learned about how to follow Jesus.
- ✦ We reflect on people who have been hurt by our choices, and on the times when these choices have hurt ourselves.
- ✦ We take time to consider our relationship with God and ways that we can grow in our relationship.

(Use the Examination of Conscience as a way to think, pray and prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.)



Step 2. Welcome and Greeting

Similar to the way that we greet people we care about, the priest welcomes us in kindness. We respond in prayer by making the Sign of the Cross.

Response: *In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The priest reminds us to have confidence in God's love through a prayer.

Response: *Amen.*

After the prayer, we share with him how long it has been since our last confession. This helps the priest to guide us in our confession. He does not need an exact date, but an approximate amount of time: it has been a month, or a year. If we do not remember, we can say it has been a long time.

Response: *It has been _____ since my last confession.*



Step 3. Sharing the Word of God

Sometimes, the priest helps us to remember God's Word by sharing from the Bible a passage about love and forgiveness.

Step 4. Confession and Penance

We share with the priest a confession of our sins. During our preparation, on what actions and choices did we reflect? What are we sorry for? We share these areas in confession. We can share our failings in confidence—everything we share with the priest in confession is “sealed.” One way to get started is to complete the response, followed by sharing our sins.

Response: *I confess to almighty God....*

Sometimes, the priest will help us to search our heart for these areas of brokenness. He also can give us advice and guidance about how to follow God’s love and how to fix what has been broken.

The priest gives us an act of penance. This can be a prayer, an act of service or a way to heal a broken relationship. Through penance we begin to heal the brokenness, and we grow stronger in our faith in God.



Step 5. Penitent’s Prayer and Absolution

After having shared the story of our sin and our hope to love, we say a prayer that expresses our sorrow and our commitment to change. A prayer that tells God that we are sorry, that we will change our actions, and that we will avoid what leads to sin is a good act of contrition. This prayer can be our own words, a prayer from Scripture or a prayer that we know.

Response: Share a prayer in your own words or use the prayer of the Church on the next page.

Following the prayer, the priest extends his hands over us and prays over us. This prayer includes the prayer of absolution.

I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.



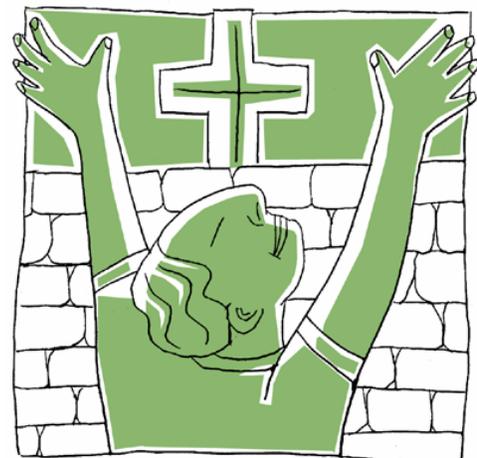
Step 6. Praise and Dismissal

Filled with peace, we praise God’s love and give thanks by sharing a short prayer from scripture.

Priest: *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.*

Response: *His mercy endures forever.*

Next, the priest dismisses us and sends us forth in peace to continue to strive to follow God’s love.



An Examination of Conscience for Teens

Relationship with God

- + Have I developed ways to make God's presence active in my life?
- + Do I take time for God by participating in Sunday Eucharist and setting aside moments to pray or read the Scriptures?
- + Do I bring Jesus' perspective to bear on my decisions about my relationships with others, my use of money and other materials, and my view of myself?
- + Do I speak of God and my faith with reverence?

Relationships with Others

- + Do I love and respect my parents and other family members and try to resolve my difference with them peacefully/
- + Do I treat other people with respect, not with abuse, prejudice, or manipulation?
- + Do I share what I have with those in need and reach out to suffering persons with support?
- + Do I reverence all human life, do whatever I can to help life thrive, and avoid actions that harm life?
- + Am I truthful, fair, and genuine in my dealings with others?
- + Do I work honestly at my job or studies?
- + Have I hurt others' reputation by speaking falsely about them or spreading gossip?
- + Do I try to become informed on issues affecting society and the whole world?
- + Do I treat all of creation with respect and justice?
- + Have I honored the sacredness of sexuality by not using another person sexually and by reserving full sexual expression for marriage?
- + Am I a faithful friend?
- + Do I deal with conflict in a constructive way?
- + Do I drive with care and safety?
- + Do I waste resources?

Relationship with Self

- + Do I try to develop myself as a person, making full use of my strengths and talents?
- + Do I explore my own motivations and attitudes about things to become more honest with myself?
- + Do I put myself down?
- + Do I try to put destructive attitudes into perspective so they do not control me?
- + Do I let fear stand in the way of doing what I think is right?
- + Do I take care of my health—eat well, exercise, and get enough rest and relaxation?
- + Have I been respectful of my own sexuality and not mistreated who I am as a sexual person?
- + Do I seek the help of other, wiser persons when emotions or problems are causing me a lot of distress?
- + Do I abuse alcohol, other drugs, or leisure activities such as watching television?

Reconciliation Prayer Service

Gathering

Opening Song

Opening Prayer

*Lord our God,
you call us out of darkness into light,
out of self-deception into truth,
out of death into life.
Send us your Holy Spirit to open our ears to your call.
Fill our hearts with courage to be true followers of your Son.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen!*

Storytelling: Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.' This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, 'Love others as much as you love yourself.' All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments."

Reconciling

Bring the baskets of file cards from the Examination of Conscience to the front of the worship space. Place the baskets on the altar or prayer table with at least one candle lit.

Prayers for Forgiveness

As we look at our own lives, let us ask God to forgive us. Please respond, "Heal us and hear us, O God."

*Lord, our God, you know all things.
You know that we want to be more generous in serving you and our neighbor.
Look on us with love and hear our prayer.*

<i>Give us the strength to turn away from sin.</i>	<i>R. Heal us and hear us, O God.</i>
<i>Help us to be sorry for our sins and to keep our resolutions.</i>	<i>R. Heal us and hear us, O God.</i>
<i>Forgive our sins and have pity on our weakness.</i>	<i>R. Heal us and hear us, O God.</i>
<i>Give us trust in your goodness and make us generous.</i>	<i>R. Heal us and hear us, O God.</i>

Help us to be true followers of your Son and living members of his church.

As children of God we are truly sorry, let us ask for God's forgiveness.

Lord, have mercy. R. Lord, have mercy.

Christ have mercy. R. Christ have mercy.

Lord, have mercy. R. Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray together...

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.

In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,

I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.

I firmly intend, with your help,

to do penance,

to sin no more,

and to avoid whatever leads to sin.

Lord's Prayer

Let us pray together the Lord's Prayer...

Commissioning

Closing Prayer

All-holy Father, you have shown us your mercy

and made us a new creation in the likeness of your Son.

Make us living signs of your love for the whole world to see.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Closing Song



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