Sunday School Family Lesson – The Prodigal Son

Lesson Background
This lesson is based on one of the many recorded parables of Jesus. Parables are sometimes seen as moral tales like fables but they have much more to offer than a simple lesson of right and wrong. Focusing on each character to discuss his or her feelings and relationships with other characters can be more illustrative of the complexities of our human relationships all within the context of God’s unconditional love. These stories speak to the way of being in the world that Jesus showed us. I have added this feelings and relationship focus to the discussion sections.

Lesson Plan
Paraphase/read: Jesus was a great teacher. He told stories using familiar objects and activities that the listeners could understand. He sometimes told stories called parables. Today we are going to read and discuss the parable of the prodigal son. You may have heard this story before.

Younger children – Share the story from a children’s Bible or paraphrase from the adult text.
Emphasize the happy ending reunion and the father’s forgiveness of his son. This father is like you as parents. You love and forgive your children and help them try again to make a better choice. God forgives and helps us also.

Grades 1,2 – Show the children Luke 15:17-32 in an adult Bible
Read the story from a children’s Bible or paraphrase from the adult text.
Ask: Do you have a favorite part of the story we just read?
Pretend you are the younger son. What is a foolish thing you did?
What is a wise thing you did?
How do you feel about what happened to you in this story?
How did you feel when your father forgave you? God forgives us always.

Grades 3,4,5 – Have the children find and volunteer to read Luke 5:17-32 in an adult Bible. (This is a long passage. You might need to read some also.)
Say: This parable only appears in the Gospel of Luke.
Ask: What is your favorite part of this story?
Who is your favorite character in the story?
What are some feelings the younger son may have had in this parable?
What are some feelings the father might have had?
What are some feelings the older son may have had in this story?
Have you ever felt like the younger son; the father; the older son?
Do you think the father should have forgiven the younger son?
Have you ever needed to be forgiven by someone? to forgive someone?
Why did the father say this son was dead and had come back to life?
(Some mention of the difficulty of travel and communication in Bible times might be helpful here. It was a true possibility that if someone left an area or town they might not come back and you might never hear from them.)

**Share these words again:** But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.

Luke 15:32

**Activity**
Each family member could draw a character or a scene from this story. You could each share why you chose the character or part of the story as you show everyone your amazing art. This is a great lesson reinforcement and review activity. Display your work together!

**Closing**
Close with this prayer or your own.

Dearest God,
We thank you for your Word and for the stories of our faith. We thank you for the parable of the Prodigal Son that Jesus told long, long ago.

In Jesus’ name we pray,
Amen.