



## LESSON 4 FOR LEADERS

### INVITATION

*We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...*

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** God Welcomes Us No Matter What

**SCRIPTURE:** [Luke 15](#)

**WORD OF WONDER:** [Luke 10:27a](#)

Do you have a welcome mat in front of your door? Do you actually mean it? If someone happened upon your house, saw that mat, assumed that message was for them, and then rang your doorbell—what would you do? In my house, everyone would probably hide behind the couch, hoping the stranger at the door would go away!

Obviously, the “welcome” on my mat is not the same as Jesus’ “welcome.”

The word welcome that the Pharisees mutter in [Luke 15:2](#) actually has an expectation to it. They use the Greek word *prosdchomai*, which has a future expectation implied in it. It actually means that they are accusing Jesus of “eagerly awaiting” sinners as well as eating with them. This is not a passive welcome mat. This is the family in the front yard watching for their relatives to come!

Read [Luke 15:11–32](#). This final picture in the passage, given the context of that word, makes total sense! God is the Father who loves us so much He would run to us when we are still a long way off and throw His arms around us! This is the essence of expectant waiting.

Do you feel that kind of welcome? The “pick you up, swirl you around, look into your eyes with joy and love” kind of welcome? God does this for every person who makes that about-face turn and walks toward Him. No matter what is behind them, all they see is the expectant Father welcoming them into His family.

—Courtney Wilson

Children’s Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS**

**WHO?**

Luke was probably a fellow traveler with the Apostle Paul, and Luke composed the two-volume collection of Luke and Acts. Luke claims to have thoroughly investigated the eyewitness testimony to the events he narrates ([Luke 1:1–4](#)).

**WHAT?**

No rational father would allow the family estate to be divided and devalued by an insolent son. The point is not to demonstrate good parenting practices but to convey the merciful and forgiving heart of God.

**WHERE?**

Luke's gospel and Acts are written in a sophisticated and literary manner, directed to a Greek-speaking audience in the wider Roman world. The conventions of inheritance would be widely recognized.

**WHEN?**

In [Luke 15](#), Jesus tells three parables of things that are lost and then found. Ultimately, these parables explain why Jesus was surrounded by lost people— sinners—during His ministry. Jesus gives hope to the poor and desperate, many of whom turn to God.

**CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY**

It is not just certain people who need forgiveness: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” ([Romans 3:23](#), [NIV](#)). All people need the redemption Jesus offers.



## Curiosity

### LESSON 4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

*Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.*

## Party Play

**SUPPLIES:** party supplies (such as party hats and a festive tablecloth); toy desserts (such as toy cake, cookies, and ice cream); toy or disposable plates, cups, and utensils

**Wonder Ink RESOURCES:** upbeat music from the [What Did He Say? Early Childhood music flashdrive](#)

In today's story, we'll hear a story Jesus told about a father who throws a big party when his son comes home. Just like the father in today's story, when people come back to God, God throws a party! Let's pretend to have a party now!

Invite the kids to sit with you and pretend to have a party on the festive tablecloth. Talk with them about what kinds of things people do at parties. Encourage them to jump up and celebrate by clapping and cheering.



9:00 Service

## Belief

### LESSON 4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

*Guide kids into knowing God, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.*

#### Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words:  
**God, thank You that we get to be here together today. Help us learn what You want to teach us. We want to listen to the Holy Spirit as we learn from Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

#### God's Big Story

Pull out the Bible.

Ask: What is this called? *The Bible*

Ask: Why is the Bible important? *Because it is God's word. Everything in it is true. It really happened.*

#### TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Beginner Bible p397

The Lost Son

#### Word of Wonder

##### WORD OF WONDER

**Love the Lord your God with all your heart.**

—Luke 10:27a

Finish by having all the groups say all the words and do all the motions together.

- **LOVE**—Give yourself a hug.
- **THE LORD YOUR GOD**—Point up.
- **WITH ALL YOUR HEART.**—Put your hands over your heart.
- **LUKE 10:27a**—Open your hands in front of you, like opening a book.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **What are some reasons we love God?**
- **How can we show God that we love Him?**



## Identity

### LESSON 4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

*Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.*

## Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, and thank God for welcoming us.

**God, it is so amazing that we get to run to You and receive Your love, grace, and forgiveness. You are always waiting for us to come to You. Thank You for celebrating and welcoming us. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

**Blessing:** God always welcomes you. You can come to Him any time! May you know God's love and love Him in return with your whole heart.

## Hide and Seek

Encourage the kids to hide somewhere in the room while you (or another leader) count to 20 with closed eyes. You can also let the kids take turns hiding a toy or doll. Let all the kids have a chance to hide. When you find the kids or toy, jump up and down while celebrating and cheering.

**In our game, we celebrated when the lost person or toy was found. Today we're going to hear a story that Jesus told about a son who was lost and then came home. When he came home, his father welcomed him and celebrated. We'll learn how God welcomes us!**

**Our Wonder Truth today is **GOD WELCOMES US NO MATTER WHAT.****

Encourage the kids to do the following motions while you repeat the Wonder Truth. Older toddlers can say the words with you as they do the motions.

- **GOD**—*Point up.*
- **WELCOMES US**—*Extend your arms, palms up, then wave your hands toward yourself as if encouraging someone to come toward you.*
- **NO MATTER WHAT.**—*Cross your palms back and forth in front of you, palms down.*

9:00 Service