



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

LESSON 4 **FOR LEADERS**

THE LOST SON

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.

Curiosity Activity: Lost and Found!

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Lost and Found Activity Cards](#) (2 sets), songs from the [What Did He Say? Early Childhood music flashdrive](#)

Before kids arrive, print the [Lost and Found Activity Cards](#) onto cardstock. (This copy will be in addition to the ones you use for the Play Station.) Cut out all 12 squares and hide them around the room. Be sure to make the “two sons” card difficult to find.

Have kids form a circle.

I am so excited to share today’s part of God’s big story with you, but some parts of our story have gone missing! Somewhere in the room are 12 cards with pictures on them. Hold up the sample card from the Play Station. They look like this one, but the pictures might be different.

Do you think you can find all 12 cards? Allow the kids to respond. Some of them may not want to be found! Are you sure you’re up to finding them? Wait for kids to respond once more. When I say, “Go,” work together to find all 12 cards. When you find a card, run “home” to me (point to yourself) while holding your card up high.

Are you ready? 3, 2, 1 ... Go!

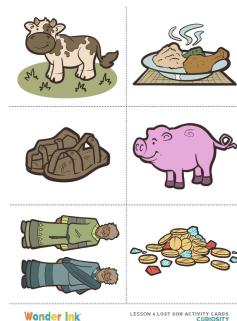
Play music from the [What Did He Say? Early Childhood music flashdrive](#) as kids search for the lost cards. Remind kids to run “home” as soon as they find a lost card. As kids find the lost cards, and run toward you, celebrate and welcome them with high fives and a big, “Welcome home!”

When all 12 cards have been found, gather the kids and say: **Look! All the cards were lost and now they are found! On the count of three, let’s all shout, “Hooray!”**

One, two, three! “Hooray!”

Invite the kids to sit down and tell you what is on each of the cards. Collect the cards. **It can take a long time to find lost things but other times it doesn’t take long at all. Were any of those cards hard to find? Allow kids to share which cards were difficult to find. Did you feel like giving up when we hadn’t found all the cards yet? Wait for kids to respond. We might feel like giving up when lost things or people are difficult to find, but the good news is God never gives up or stops searching for those who are lost. He is always waiting and eager to welcome them home. Today’s Wonder Truth is: **GOD WELCOMES US NO MATTER WHAT.****

When we hear part of God’s big story for today, listen for each of these pictures to be mentioned.





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?**



Faith

LESSON 4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Paper Craft

SUPPLIES: construction paper (various colors, 1 sheet per every 2 kids), scissors (prep only), coloring utensils, tape or stapler, stickers (optional), party hats (optional, 1 per kid), markers (optional), crepe

Ahead of time, cut the construction paper into 1–1 ½" wide strips, with enough strips so each kid can have two or three to decorate.

God celebrates when we come to Him. Like the father in today's story, when we come to God, He throws a party! Let's make some party decorations!

Pass out two or three paper strips to each kid. Invite the kids to decorate their strips. Then, help the kids connect the strips together in a long paper chain using tape or a stapler. You can also give the kids party hats and let them decorate the hats with markers and stickers. Be sure to monitor the stapler (or designate another adult volunteer to be in charge). You can also set out crepe paper party streamers and let the kids decorate party streamers.

Each one of you made a part of this chain. Just like the links in this chain, God wants each one of us to be at His party!



10:45 Service

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.

Closing Game: Lost Son Hot and Cold

SUPPLIES: scissors (prep only)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Lost Son Sheet](#)

Ahead of time, print and cut out the son and the home images from the [Lost Son Sheet](#). Put the home picture in a place where all the kids can see it. When the kids aren't looking, hide the son somewhere in the room.

God always welcomes us and, like the father in the story, He celebrates when we come to Him. Let's play a game where we try to find the lost son and help him get home! As we're playing, imagine how God celebrates when we come to Him.

Whoever finds the son will take him and run to the home picture; then, everyone else will say, "Welcome home!"

Play "Hot and Cold" as the kids look for the lost son.

If they are close to finding him, say "hot," and if they are not close to finding him, say "cold." When a kid finds the son, that child will pick up the picture and run to put the son on the home picture while everyone shouts, "Welcome home!" Play several rounds.



10:45 Service