



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.

Play Stations

SUPPLIES: uncooked rice, 10–15 small objects (e.g., marbles, coins, or interlocking bricks), shallow bin, cardstock (2 sheets), coloring utensils, scissors (prep only), laminator (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Lost and Found Activity Cards](#) (2 sets), [The Lost Son Coloring Sheet](#) (1 per kid)

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas what we'll be learning about today?

Play Station: Sensory Seek and Find

Set-up: Pour uncooked rice into a shallow bin. Add other small objects such as marbles, coins, or interlocking bricks. Mix the objects into the rice.

Play: Invite the kids to reach into the rice to find the hidden objects. For an extra challenge, the kids could also close their eyes while trying to find the items. Watch closely to ensure kids do not put any of the items in their mouths.

Play Station: Memory Matching

Set-up: Print two copies of the [Lost and Found Activity Cards](#) onto cardstock and cut apart the cards. Turn the cards face-down and arrange them in a grid. You may want to laminate the cards for durability.

Play: Show the kids how to take turns turning over two cards to find a match.



Play Station: The Lost Son Coloring Sheet

Set-up: Print one copy per kid of the Coloring Sheet. Set out the [Coloring Sheets](#) and coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw a picture of a party they would like to have.



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?

9:00 Service



Faith

LESSON 4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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

Play Emotion Charades

Describe a situation, then say, "I would feel ...," and play out that emotion without saying anything. Invite children to guess your emotion. Allow volunteers to play out emotions one at a time. Use the suggested scenario and make up your own. Ask, "How would you feel?" A child should silently play out her answer while the other children guess.

SAY • Most of us feel sad when we lose something special, and we feel happy when it is found. Some of us might feel excited if our brother got a cool new toy while some of us might feel jealous or angry. How we act when we feel those emotions is very important. In our Bible story today, we will hear about people who felt many different emotions.



9:00 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.

Responding in Worship: Welcome Home Prayer Stations

SUPPLIES: paper (1 sheet per kid), coloring utensils, play money (a few pieces for each kid), welcome mat (optional), party supplies (optional)

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

Set out one sheet of paper for each kid, along with coloring utensils. Set out the play money in the middle of the room and the welcome mat on the floor by the door. If using party supplies (such as party hats, party horns, streamers, or balloons), set them out by the welcome mat.

Who represents us in the story Jesus told? Allow the kids to respond. **The son! How are you like the son?** Allow the kids to respond. **We do wrong things, called sins, which are things we think, say, or do that aren't what God wants. Who represents God in the story?** Allow the kids to respond. **Yes—the father! The father not only forgives the son for the wrong things the son did, but the father also runs to the son and welcomes him! The father throws a party to celebrate that the son came home.**

We can ask God to forgive the wrong things we do too, and we can always come to God. He will forgive us, welcome us, and celebrate us! Use your coloring utensils to color, write, or draw something you've thought, said, or done that God doesn't want. Then go to the play money and take a few pieces. Designate a spot for the kids to leave their play money. **Put the play money and the paper with your picture on the floor here, and stop to pray and ask God to forgive you. Then go to the welcome mat and pray, thanking God for welcoming you, forgiving you, and celebrating you.**

If using party supplies, let the kids use them to celebrate by the welcome mat. Play quiet worship music while the kids go to the stations.

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.

9:00 Service