

CITY SG – March 25-27, 2023

Today's Bible Story: Homecoming (The Story of the Lost Son) • *Luke 15:11-32*

Today's Bottom Line: God will always forgive you.

Monthly Memory Verse: *Put up with one another. Forgive one another if you are holding something against someone. Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13 (NIRV)*

1. Keep Up, Drop Down

Bible Story Review

What You Need: “Keep Up, Drop Down” Activity Page and ball pit balls (bag of 12 per group)

What You Do:

- Explain that you are going to re-tell the story. Give each child a ball.
- As you read from the “Keep Up, Drop Down” Activity Page, instruct the kids to hold their ball while they listen.
 - When one of the sons is **doing something wrong** or **making an unwise choice**, kids let the ball drop to the ground.
 - When one of the sons is **making a wise choice** or **asking for forgiveness**, kids throw the ball up and catch it.
- Read one bullet point at a time from the retelling of the story from the “Keep Up, Drop Down” Activity Page.
- After you read one section of the story, make sure the kids are throwing the ball up or letting it fall according to what you read.

What You Say:

“We can learn a lot from the father in our story today! No matter how many bad choices his younger son made, the father was quick to forgive him and welcome him home. That’s true for us, too! None of us are perfect, and we all do wrong things. If you ask for forgiveness, **[Bottom Line] God will always forgive you.**”

2. Better with Letters

Memory Verse Activity

What You Need: Bibles, blank paper (a few pieces), markers

What You Do:

- Invite the kids to sit in a circle.
- Look up Colossians 3:13 together with the if your group **IF you feel your group is able to.**
- Read the memory verse aloud for the kids.
- Ask if any kids can remember the entire verse without looking at it in the Bible.
- Test the kids’ knowledge by writing the first letter of each word on a blank piece of paper.
- Go around the circle, asking kids to repeat their memory verse one word at a time, just by looking at the first letter of each word.

What You Say:

“When it comes to forgiveness, we probably won’t always feel like forgiving in the moment. But we can push back how we WANT to respond and choose to love and forgive. Plus God will help you forgive if you just ask. You can choose to offer forgiveness to others because when you ask God for forgiveness, **[Bottom Line] God will always forgive you.**”

3. Paper Battle

Application Activity

What You Need: Paper (1/2 sheets) pens, floor tape

Non-Reader Option below

What You Do:

- Give each kid a few pieces of paper and a pencil or marker.
- Instruct the kids to write something (true or imaginary) on their paper that someone may need forgiveness for. Some examples are:
 - not telling the truth
 - doing something a grown-up asked you not to do
 - saying something mean to your brother or sister
 - taking someone's pencil at school
- Encourage the kids to write as many ideas on different pieces of paper as time and interest allow.
- **Non-Reader Option:** Encourage the kids to **draw a picture** that represents something someone may need forgiveness for. Give them these examples:
 - Not telling the truth. You could draw a mouth!
 - Being mean to your brother. You could draw a person!
 - Taking someone's pencil at school. You could draw a pencil!
- Divide your group into two teams.
- Tape a line down the middle of the floor.
- Set a timer on your phone for three minutes
- Direct the kids to take their papers, ball them up, and throw them to the other side of the tape on the count of three.
 - Instruct kids to continue throwing any paper ball that comes to their team's side of the room back across the line.
- Instruct the kids to try to have all of the balls of paper on the other side of the room by the time the timer goes off!

What You Say:

"How did it feel to write down the things a person might need forgiveness for? (*Invite responses.*) I bet sometimes it could make us feel sad, or even a little uncomfortable when we remember the times we did something wrong. How did it feel to ball them up and throw them away from you? (*Invite responses.*) That's one of the best things about God. You can trust that when you feel sorry for a choice you made, **[Bottom Line] God will always forgive you.** "

4. Pray and Dismiss

What You Need: No supplies needed.

What You Do:

- Lead kids in saying today's Bottom Line together several times. **God will always forgive you.**
- Invite the kids to close their eyes, put a hand on their heart, and say, "God will always forgive ME."
- Explain that you will begin a prayer and direct the kids to say this variation of today's Bottom Line together—**God will always forgive me**—every time you pause.

What You Say:

"God, we all make mistakes. Not one of us is perfect. But (*Pause for kids to say, "God will always forgive me."*). We know that there's nothing we could do that would make You love us less, and there's nothing we could do that would make You love us more. You love us totally and completely, right now, just as we are. And when we ask for forgiveness (*Pause for kids to say, "God will always forgive me."*). God, when we do something wrong, remind us that we can come to You, because (*Pause for kids to say, "God will always forgive me."*). Remind us that You will always be ready to welcome us with open arms, just like the father from today's story. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."