

Focus: God loves everyone.

Materials:

Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
CD-Toddlers 20 Favorite Bible Songs
Bible: The Big Book: The Forgiving Father
Foam Heart

Gathering (have children sit on the floor-“Criss-Cross Applesauce”)

Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about God's love and forgiveness. This week we will hear how much God loves us.

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.

Let us pray.

God our Father and Creator, you always forgive us and welcome us home.

Help us to grow as followers of Jesus. In the name of your son Jesus we pray.

Amen.

Song/Movement

Just Praise the Lord (To the tune of the People on the Bus), track: 7, from Toddler 20 Favorite Bible Songs

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc.)

The people on the bus say Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord.
The people on the bus say Praise the Lord, all through the town.

The daddy on the bus says Pray every day, Pray every day, Pray every day.
The daddy on the bus says Pray every day, all through the town.

The driver on the bus says Go to church, Go to church, Go to church.
The driver on the bus says Go to church, all through the town.

The baby on the bus says Wah-wah-wah, Wah-wah-wah, Wah-wah-wah.
The baby on the bus says Wah-wah-wah, all through the town.

The mommy on the bus says God loves you, God loves you, God loves you.
The mommy on the bus says God loves you, all through the town.

The people on the bus say Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord.
The people on the bus say Praise the Lord, all through the town

Memory Verse

Say: Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.

My son was lost but now he is found!

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *The father is happy to see his son because he loves him. His son made some bad choices, but that doesn't mean he loves his son less. This is how God feels when we turn away from sin and follow Jesus. He loves us always and he is happy to have us close to him.*

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Luke.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *“Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it.”*

Read: The Big Book: The Forgiving Father, The Forgiving Father

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

Use these questions or the ones at the back of the book. Omit the final question about Reconciliation as they have not yet had that Sacrament. Don't do the vocabulary section.

- *What does the younger son ask for in the beginning of the story?*
- *What happens after he leaves home?*
- *Why does the younger son want to come back home to his father?*
- *What does the father do when his son comes home?*
- *What does the older son do?*
- *Why does the father in the story say that his son was lost/dead but now he is found?*

Reflection on Reading:

In today's Gospel story, Jesus teaches us by using a parable. A parable is a story that helps to teach a special message. The story that Jesus told in today's Gospel teaches us about God's love and forgiveness.

- ∅ *The young son shows us how to ask for forgiveness so that we may change and grow.*
- ∅ *The forgiving father teaches us that God always loves us and forgives us even before we say that we are sorry.*
- ∅ *The older brother shows us that we should be forgiving, as the Father is forgiving.*

Each of these three figures in the story teaches us an important lesson.

Jesus tells this story of forgiveness and love to teach that God is just as willing to welcome us back home as the father in this parable.

God loves each of us and is always wanting to welcome us into his kingdom. He wants us to love one another too. Only if the older brother forgave the younger one would he be able to enjoy the party. In the same way, we can enter God's kingdom if we are able to forgive others.

Gospel ActivityActivity 1:**Pat-a-Cake Forgiveness Rhyme**

Children often squabble and make up quickly. With this little activity, they can celebrate making up on the playground or anywhere.

Match up each child with a partner. Teach the basic pat-a-cake clapping rhythm that begins with each child clapping his or her own hands together once, then partners clap right hands, their own hands once, left hand to left hand, their own hands once, both hands to partner's hands, their own hands once. Then the children know the clapping rhythm, add the rhyme:

I love you and you love me,
that's the way that it should be,
I forgive and you do too,
'cause you love me and I love you.

Activity 2:**Love Go-Round Game**

Have the children sit in a circle. Hand the heart to one child and chant the following while they pass the heart around the circle:

*There's plenty of love to go around,
The more and more we share.
Where is the love that goes around?
Where is the love, O where?*

When the verse is done, whoever is holding the heart shares something they can do to be kind to others.

(You can play a portion of a song from one of the CD's instead-for example: Jesus loves me, this I know, Jesus loves the little children, This little light of mine; instead of the verse.)

Repeat as time allows.

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, wants us to love and forgive others?
Do you believe in Jesus, who welcomes us with big hugs when we return to God?
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us love and forgive others?*

Sending Forth

Say: Being kind to others is one way we show others about God and God's love. Try to find a way to do something extra nice for someone every

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "*The Lord is My Shepherd*" track 5 from Toddler 20 Favorite Songs while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.