READY TO USE YOUTH EVENT

# The lost son

EVENT AIM

To have fun, while exploring the story of the lost son

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 15:11-32

BACKGROUND

This event plan is intended for use during the summer holidays (though it could be used at other times of the year). The activities are based around the parable of the lost son which may be very well known by some young people, and completely unheard of by others. This session is designed to provide space to explore the story from different angles and accepting a wide variety of prior experiences so that young people can each encounter God for themselves in the story.

If you are planning to use this resource at a special summer event, think about the appropriate timing to suit those young people you will invite, as well as your team, and give some thought to how you will follow this up, rather than simply running a one-off summer special. Perhaps you can invite young people to regular events in the autumn term, or even use this to kickstart something new. You may choose to use these materials alongside others provided in this issue for other age groups, in which case, you may be able to provide opportunities for intergenerational gathering as part of what you offer.

Those of us who are very familiar with this text can fall into the trap of being ready to present the lessons Jesus taught through it, rather than following Jesus’ example and presenting a story as it is, allowing the listeners space to hear what God was saying to them. In this session, the emphasis is on telling the story and allowing space for each of us to encounter God anew in the text.

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## WELCOME – 10 mins

Create a welcoming environment as the young people arrive. Play some upbeat music and serve refreshments. Depending upon the nature of your event, you may wish to provide a meal, perhaps pizza or a barbecue, or just some simple refreshments such as doughnuts and hot chocolate. Whichever line you take, ensure that you have followed the appropriate food hygiene guidelines and catered for special dietary requirements and use this time to provide an overwhelming welcome to your young people, showing generous hospitality and ensuring all young people feel welcomed in.

## GAMES – 10 mins each

**OPTION ONE: Video game assistant**

**You will need:** games consoles and screens

Set up a couple of games consoles for the young people to play (you could do this as people arrive). As games are being played, invite others to give the players some advice. Some of it should be good, some of it should be terrible. No doubt you’ll discover pretty quickly who appreciates the help and who doesn’t! Once the games have finished, chat about what it’s like to get help when it’s needed (or unwanted).

**OPTION TWO: Pigswill lucky dip**

**You will need:** various food ingredients or leftovers – the sloppier, the better; a bucket; prizes such as pound coins or sweets in sealed plastic bags; clean-up facilities

Before the event, make a bucket of ‘pigswill’ made from various appropriately disgusting-looking ingredients or leftovers. Drop some rescuable treasures into the buckets. Challenge the young people to dip their hands in to recover the prizes, either inviting volunteers to the front, or running a relay. (Remember to check for allergies before you start.)

**OPTION THREE: Prodigal**

**You will need:** [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RXi_cZ57sg) **and the means to show it**

Explain that during the course of this session, we are looking at a story or parable Jesus told and explain that this film clip retells the story in part. Play the video and give the young people the opportunity to share how they feel in response to this, explaining that we will explore the themes in the story more, during this session.

## BIBLE STORY – 15 mins

**You will need:** [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RXi_cZ57sg) **and the means to show it; Bibles**

Explain that you are looking at a story that Jesus told. Say that the film retells the story in part. Play the video and give the young people the opportunity to share how they feel in response to this.

Share the story of the lost son, perhaps reading the Bible together or retelling it in your own words. If you prefer, you could present the text and challenge the young people to create a drama retelling the parable in a modern context. Encourage them to think about the scenarios this may be set in, and the three main characters in the story and how they can represent them.

## CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Discuss the story further using these questions:

* How do you feel about this story?
* Which parts do you like / dislike?
* Why do you think Jesus told this story?
* What surprises you most about this?
* Can you relate to any parts of this story?
* Where might you be in the story?
* Is there anything you want to do in response to that?

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins each

**OPTION ONE: Missing**

**You will need: paper and felt-tip pens or computers / tablets and simple design packages**

Challenge the young people to create a ‘son missing’ poster for the youngest son, either on paper or digitally. They could draw on details from the retelling or their own imagination. As they do so, create a space for the young people to discuss what the story tells us about the father and his love for his son. You may be able to make a display from the completed posters.

**OPTION TWO: Creative prayer area**

**You will need:** resources for your chosen activities (see below)

This story may raise many issues for many young people. Create a space where they can reflect and respond as appropriate, perhaps providing a time for reflection and prayer, or a space that can be accessed throughout the session. Gather together appropriate resources for this, such as Bibles, boxes of tissues, posters, paper and pens. Artists across the generations have been inspired by this story, including, more recently, Charlie Mackesy who has created a number of pieces entitled ‘Prodigal son,’ and ‘Prodigal daughter’. You may wish to include some of these images in a prayer space.

**OPTION THREE: Drama**

**You will need:** volunteers to facilitate the activity

Ask a volunteer to run a drama game. Ask the children to think of a situation – either from the Bible story or a similar situation from their own lives. Invite two or three people to start role-playing the situation. Then either stop the role play at a certain point and invite someone else to take over one of the roles, or say that, if anyone has any ideas about where they might take the situation, they can shout “Stop” and take over one of the roles.

When the situation has run its course, get some feedback about how that went. If you have time and the group is keen, then set up another situation and do the activity again.

**OPTION FOUR:** Reunion

Arrange the young people in small groups or pairs and challenge them to create a ‘reunion’ scene. This could be based on the parable or be unrelated. When they are ready, invite the young people to perform their scenes.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

As you draw the session to a close, ensure that you have given the young people the opportunity to respond, and signpost further opportunities to talk or gather as appropriate. Pray as you close, before inviting the young people to return to a future event.

**BECKY MAY**

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