

THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The parable of the Prodigal Son is a story-lesson that Jesus told the people who came to hear Him teach. It is a lesson about being sorry and about being forgiven. It is also about being open to being forgiven and forgiving. Sometimes reconciliation between people who have hurt each other does not take place because the thought of saying and being sorry for something is just closed out of an offender's mind. Sometimes the person who has been offended is the one who is closed to being reconciled.

To learn about the openness and love that is needed to become forgiving people, every family should make this New Testament story a part of their discussions and prayers. The story can be found in Luke 15:11-32. Many children's bibles also give a version of the story written for young readers.

Parents Today

Parents of young children can read the story and retell it in words that will help their chil-

Every parent is at some time the father of the unreturned prodigal, with nothing to do but keep his house open to hope.

John Ciardi

dren understand something about loving and forgiving. Families that include older children will find this story a rich source for discussions, especially having everyone express their

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thoughts about the family relationships in the story. It is important that the story be shared from different points of view. Discuss not only the father and the prodigal or lost son, but also the dutiful son who stayed with the family. Talk about the possible role the mother in this family might have played. Find out what members of the family can learn from this story and how these lessons that Jesus thought were so important can be applied to family life today.

I can forgive, but I cannot forget, is only another way of saying, I will not forgive. Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note— torn in two and burned up, so that it never can be shown against someone.

Henry Ward Beecher

AROUND THE HOUSE

After reading the story of the Prodigal Son to her children, a mother asked, "Do you know who wasn't very happy to hear about the prodigal son's return?" One young son answered quickly: "The fatted calf!"

Saints are sinners who keep on trying.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Forgiveness

Children learn to be forgivers by having the experience of genuinely being forgiven. Forgiveness must be taught. A sincere gesture of apology on the part of the offender and a loving acceptance of the wrongdoer by the forgiver is needed. Parents must be careful not to give lip service to the forgiving experience. Forgiveness is not merely a function of language.

The wrong done must be discussed and understood for what it was. This process dissipates grudge-bearing, which is a genuine obstacle to forgiving.

God, our loving Parent, gives us the formula for forgiveness. Forgive as you, yourself, want

The worse thing in the world is not sin; it is the denial of sin by a false conscience— for that attitude makes forgiveness impossible.

Bishop Fulton Sheen

to be forgiven. Forgive with love and a sincere attempt at understanding.

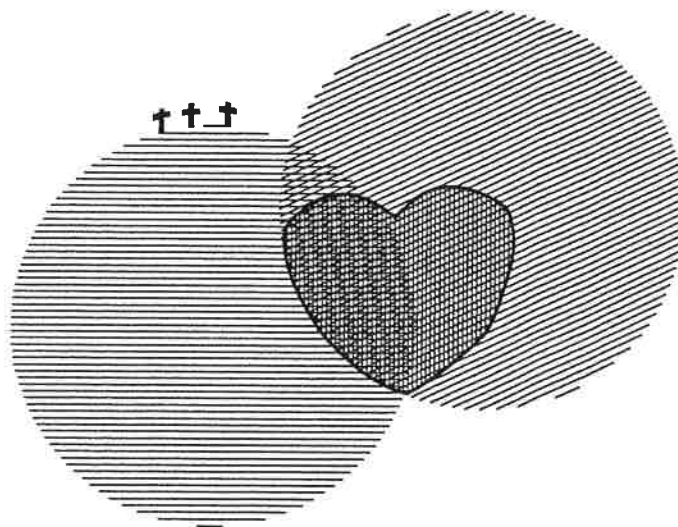
Children learn much about forgiveness from parents who also forgive each other. In conflict situations between parents, children witness a whole range of conflicting values and priorities. What a child learns from these situations all depends on how his or her parents have learned to deal with conflict and conflict resolution themselves. Children have front row seats on their parents' lives. Parents decide what's *playing*.

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The Power of Words

*A careless word may kindle strife,
A cruel word may wreck a life,
A bitter word may hate instill;
A brutal word may wound and kill,
A gracious word may smooth the way,
A joyous word may light the day.
A timely word may lessen stress;
A loving word may heal and bless.*

author unknown



Jesus' Prayer on the Cross

**Father, forgive them,
they do not know what
they are doing.**

Luke 23: 34