

Family Page



Background Focus

The parable commonly known by the title “Prodigal Son” or “Lost Son” is called “The Forgiving Father” in the Featured Story of *The Catholic Children’s Bible* on page 1620. This change of emphasis from the son to the father is deliberate and reflects the main point of the story. Although it is important that the son recognized his self-destructive ways and decided to repent and to return home, it is even more important that he was received with mercy and compassion by his father.

Jesus’ story here is a story not only about our human weaknesses but about God’s loving-kindness, or mercy, for all of his children. This is the message of this chapter. Future chapters will explore our human tendency to take the wrong path, and our need to be honest with ourselves, to be sorry, and to ask for forgiveness. But in this chapter, the emphasis is on God’s mercy. God’s mercy always welcomes us home.



Family Strategies

The home is, or should be, a school of prayer. A morning prayer at the breakfast table or in the car on the way to school, grace before meals, and night prayers as a family set a powerful example for children. Take opportunities to pray the traditional prayers: the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be. You might pray an Our Father and a decade of the Rosary (ten Hail Marys) as you begin a car trip—or a five-decade Rosary if possible. On shorter errands, vary the prayer among these three traditional prayers. Certainly we should encourage our children to speak to God in their own words. But we should also prepare them to join with the community in common prayer as well as to use these traditional prayers in their private prayer.

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Family Activities

- Make saying “I’m sorry” and asking for forgiveness a family habit. Sometimes it is hard to say “I’m sorry.” Make a sign that will help. Cut a circle out of cardboard. Paste construction paper on both sides. On one side write, “I am sorry.” On the other write, “I forgive you.” Hang this sign on the refrigerator or in another accessible place. When anyone needs to say, “I am sorry,” that person may take that sign and give it to the one they hurt. After talking things over, the hurt person will give it back, showing the “I forgive you” side. Then the sign is hung again in its usual place.
- Read together the Featured Story on page 1620 in *The Catholic Children’s Bible* (Luke 15:11, 20–24). Invite your child to tell you what he or she remembers about the story.
- Together watch the YouTube video “The Parables of Jesus 6 – The Prodigal Son” (3:37). This cartoon illustrates the parable with modern scenes and dialogue.

Pray It!



Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

God, you are the forgiving father who welcomes us back when we ask for forgiveness. Thank you for showing us such great love. Amen.