

Bible Story Week 2

Last week I told you a story that Jesus Himself told when He was on the earth.

At the time, Jesus was going around teaching crowds and performing amazing miracles. But not everyone was happy about what He was doing. The religious leaders, in particular, weren't pleased.

One day, some of them were grumbling because Jesus was choosing to hang out and share meals with people that the religious leaders felt weren't as good as them. Jesus knew that these leaders thought they were better than everyone else. So, He told the story of a man with two sons.

Really quickly, let's recap the part of the story from last week.

There was a man with two sons. The younger son asked for his share of his father's inheritance. This was the money he was supposed to get one day when his father died. The son took the money, packed up his stuff, and left for a faraway country. When the son arrived in the faraway country, he spent his money however he wanted. The younger son was quite the party animal. He lived it up and spent all his money. In fact, soon, his money was all gone. Then the whole country started running low on food. The younger son ended up getting a miserable job feeding pigs . . . while he starved. The son decided to head home, beg his father for mercy, and ask if he could live as a servant. But he could never have expected what happened next.

His father saw him coming down the road and RAN toward him. The father welcomed the son with open arms, and he threw a huge party in his honor! It seemed like a happy ending. But Jesus wasn't finished with the story yet.

While the younger son was receiving his warm welcome, the older son was out working in the field. We can imagine he had been working hard ever since his younger brother skipped town. As the older son wrapped up his workday and headed toward the house, he could tell something was up. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. There was a party going on . . . but why? The older son asked a servant what was up. The servant told him that his father had thrown a party because his younger brother had come home. The older son was FURIOUS when he heard this news. Why should they celebrate his brother, after everything he had done wrong? The older son refused to go in and join the party.

The father came out and begged his son to join him. Listen to what the son said to his dad.

Open the Bible to Luke 15:29 (NIrV) and read.

“Look! All these years I’ve worked like a slave for you. I have always obeyed your orders. You never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends”

Meanwhile his brother had run off and spent all his dad’s money, and when he came home with nothing . . . he got a PARTY!

Open the Bible to Luke 15:31-32 (NirV) and read.

The dad said, “My son . . . you are always with me. Everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad. This brother of yours was dead. And now he is alive again. He was lost. And now he is found.”

What do you think happened next? Do you think the older son decided to forgive his younger brother and go into the party? Or do you think he shut the door on that relationship forever?

The interesting thing about this story is that Jesus didn’t tell us. He didn’t tell the crowd gathered that day whether the older son chose to forgive his brother and join the party. But one thing’s for sure. If the son didn’t forgive—if he chose to stay mad at his brother and stayed on the outside—he missed out. He missed the chance to have a good relationship with his brother. He missed out on a lot of great things—including a pretty epic party.

When you don’t forgive, you miss out.

When we choose to stay mad instead of forgiving someone, we miss out. We might miss out on a great friendship just because we misunderstood something that someone said. We might miss out on being able to laugh and have fun with our brother or sister because we’re too focused on being angry. And that’s no good for anyone! It’s not easy to forgive, but God can help us. Let’s ask Him to help us now.

PRAYER

Dear God,

thank You for showing us how to forgive. Jesus taught us what forgiveness looks like, and He SHOWED us when He died for us on the cross. Even though we have Jesus’ example, though, it’s not an easy task for us to forgive. Please help us choose how to forgive so we don’t miss out on all the great gifts You want to give us.

We love You, and we ask these things in Jesus’ name,
Amen.

We have the best example of forgiveness in Jesus, and that is a huge reason to celebrate!
Jesus came to show us the BEST possible way to live!

In John 10:10, we can read Jesus' words: "I have come so they may have life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way" (NIRV).

When you don't forgive, you can miss out on that 'fullest possible' life that Jesus offers. If we're not careful, we can start to think like the older son in Jesus' story. It can be hard for us to forgive because it doesn't seem fair. But that's when we need to remember that ALL of us need forgiveness. And we should be happy for others when they're forgiven, too.

God has had a plan for forgiveness from the very beginning. Even in the Garden of Eden, He knew what He was going to do to fix our relationship with Him. He sent Jesus to be our Savior. Since Jesus died for us, we can experience forgiveness from God, and we can choose to forgive others, too.

"When you don't forgive, you miss out. Say that with me."

"When you don't forgive, you miss out."

You see, it not only feels great to BE forgiven, but it also feels great to forgive others, too. God wants us to experience the joy that comes from offering forgiveness. He wants us to forgive so we can fix any of our relationships that may be broken. "If you've ever gotten into a fight with your best friend and then made things right, you know what that looks like. If you don't choose to forgive, you could miss out on that really special friendship. But if you forgive and treat your friend the way you want to be treated, you can take a step toward fixing your relationship. Trust me: it's worth fixing!"