**Connected: Created to Belong**

**Module 3: Markers of God’s Family**

**Lesson 1: Saved by Grace**

**Spiritual Aims**

Students will hopefully:

* identify with one of the sons in the parable
* recognize how grace affects their own lives
* articulate what it means to freely belong to God

**Lesson Objectives**

Students will:

* reconstruct the plot of the prodigal son parable
* explain the role of grace in the parable of the prodigal son

**Materials Needed**

* Recording paper and marker
* At least 3 Bibles [teaching tip 12]
* 1 copy of Appendix A per 8 students
* Construction paper or bristol board that matches the colour coding you used to mark Appendix A (see Pre-Lesson Preparation)
* Tape
* 1 copy of Appendix B per 2 students
* Optional: Prizes for winning team

**Pre-Lesson Preparation** (if applicable)

* When printing Appendix A, colour code each copy by printing on coloured paper or marking with bright colours. These colours will create teams that will race to summarize the plot of the parable. The number of colours is based on the total number of students divided by 8 (e.g., if you have 32 students, you’ll need 4 colours). If you don’t have a multiple of 8, round down.
* In the room where you will be doing the Bible study, tape up construction paper or bristol board that matches the colours you used for Appendix A. These will mark where each team should meet and provide a surface to put the plot points in order.

**Minds On** (approx. 10 min.)

**Brainstorm:**

1. Number off your students to form groups of 4.
2. Tell half of the groups to choose a spokesperson and then brainstorm what it means to be a “good child”. This could include characteristics a good child demonstrates, actions they do or don’t do and even personality traits.
3. Tell the other half of the groups to choose a spokesperson and then brainstorm what it means to be a “bad child”.
4. They do not need to record their answers, but the spokespeople will share their groups’ answers.
5. After 3 minutes, ask each spokesperson to share his or her group’s answers. Write their answers on your preferred recording paper so everyone can see.

**Leader’s note:** If your group is smaller than 8 you may decide to brainstorm as a large group, first for “good child” and then for “bad child.” Record or ask a volunteer to record the answers on your recording paper.

**Prompt:** Today we are going to read a story that Jesus told to teach about God’s family. There are two sons who each had a very different relationship with their father.

**Action** (approx. 45 min.)

**Put the Story in Order!:**

1. Begin by reading a story from the Bible, the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 [teaching tip 13].
   * Leader’s note: If students have their own Bibles, you can ask them to turn to this passage, or distribute the 3 Bibles to volunteers. Ask 1 to read verses 11–16, 1 to read verses 17–24 and 1 to read verses 25–32 of Luke 15 [teaching tip 7].
2. After the passage has been read, each student will be handed 1 or more plot points (from Appendix A) on a colour-coded piece of paper. The colour of their paper indicates what team they will be on. If you are giving multiple plot points, make sure they are of the same colour.
3. After the plot points have been distributed and you say “go”, students will run with their papers to the meeting place for their colours, indicated by the bristol board or construction paper pieces taped around the room.
4. Once the teams are assembled they must put their plot points in chronological order.
5. When a team finishes, all team members put up their hands. You yell “FREEZE!” and all the other teams freeze while you read the plot points out loud.
6. The other teams can disagree if something is out of order, in which case you say “go” again and the race resumes [teaching tip 8].
7. Allow students to refer to a Bible if they cannot remember what happened in the parable.
8. After the activity is complete, if you are using prizes, award them to the first team to correctly put their plot points in the order they happened in the parable.

**Optional:** For an extra challenge, you can turn this activity into a version of the game Headbanz, where each student has a plot point stuck to his or her forehead, and the team has to get themselves in order.

**Leader’s note:** Moving takes time and may lead to disruptions. However, students might struggle to hear or pay attention if they are too spread out. Use your discretion whether it is more important to have everyone in close proximity or to keep them in their current location to complete the next activity.

**Discussion:** After the activity, assign each team a brother to discuss (i.e., older or younger). Ask each group:

* How was the father’s relationship with that brother broken?
* What did the father do to restore it?

Have each group to choose 1 person to share the group’s answer with everyone.

After all the groups have shared, ask your students to vote by show of hands who they think is the good son in the story. If there is not widespread agreement, ask some students from each side why they voted that way.

**Prompt:** Often the older son is labelled “good” and the younger son is labelled “bad,” but we can see that neither son had a perfect relationship with the father and that their labels were not as important as their responses to how the father treated them. Grace is a word that describes why we can belong to God’s family — it’s because he loves us and accepts us, not because we deserve it! Grace means that God wants us in his family no matter what obstacles are in the way.

**Consolidate/Debrief** (approx. 5 min.)

**Leader’s note:** These questions might be very personal and sometimes confusing for some students. Be available to discuss further with students who are not sure which child they are more like and if they want to move in a better direction.

Ask your students to pair up. If they are resistant to sharing, offer the option to write their answers instead or simply reflect in their minds. When they have, distribute the questions from Appendix B for them to discuss with their partner.

Close in prayer, thanking God for his grace and asking him to help each student truly believe they can be accepted in God’s family.

**Appendix A: Put the Story in Order!**

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| The younger son asks for his inheritance. |
| The father divides his property between his sons. |
| The younger son leaves home and wastes all his money. |
| The younger son gets a job feeding pigs, and he’s starving! |
| The younger son decides to ask his father to hire him as a servant. |
| The father gives his younger son fine clothes to wear. |
| The father throws a party for his younger son. |
| The older son is furious at the celebration. |

**Appendix B: Consolidate/Debrief**

Discuss with a partner:

* Which child from the parable do you think is more like you are with your parents?
* Which child do you think is more like you are with God?
* How does God show you grace?

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