

## Background Reflection

As children are learning, they naturally make mistakes, and sometimes these mistakes hurt others. As adults, we too make mistakes that hurt others, and sometimes these mistakes involve or are witnessed by children. Our mistakes can become excellent opportunities to learn and teach the forgiveness we are called to ask for and offer to others.

When we forgive our child or ask his or her forgiveness, we give our child an opportunity to see, experience, and practice important skills he or she can use throughout life. And sometimes we may find that our child can teach us about forgiveness.

The scriptural focus of this chapter offers a beautiful image of how God forgives us. It is the best model for how we might respond to the grace of forgiveness by practicing this important skill in all of our relationships.

## Family Activities

- Choose one of the extra liturgies or prayer services offered at your parish during Lent and go as a family. Take the opportunity to discuss why we pray and why it is important to give time to God every day, not just on Sundays and special feasts.
- 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 meaning of this Scripture.
- Watch the video "Giving Makes You Happy\_children" (YouTube, 1:27) together. Discuss your child's individual plan for Lent, and affirm his or her wishes to do good actions. Make practical plans for giving time, talent, or treasure as a family.

## People of Faith

### Saint Joseph (first century)

Saint Joseph was Mary's husband and Jesus' earthly father. Joseph cared for and protected Mary and Jesus. In the same way, he cares for and protects the Church, which is all of us. We celebrate the feast of Saint Joseph, patron saint of the Church, on March 19.

## Prayer

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

Lord Jesus, fill our hearts with your forgiveness. Help our family always to ask for forgiveness when we need it and to offer forgiveness even before it is asked. We ask in your holy name. Amen.

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Discover!  
Finding Faith in Life

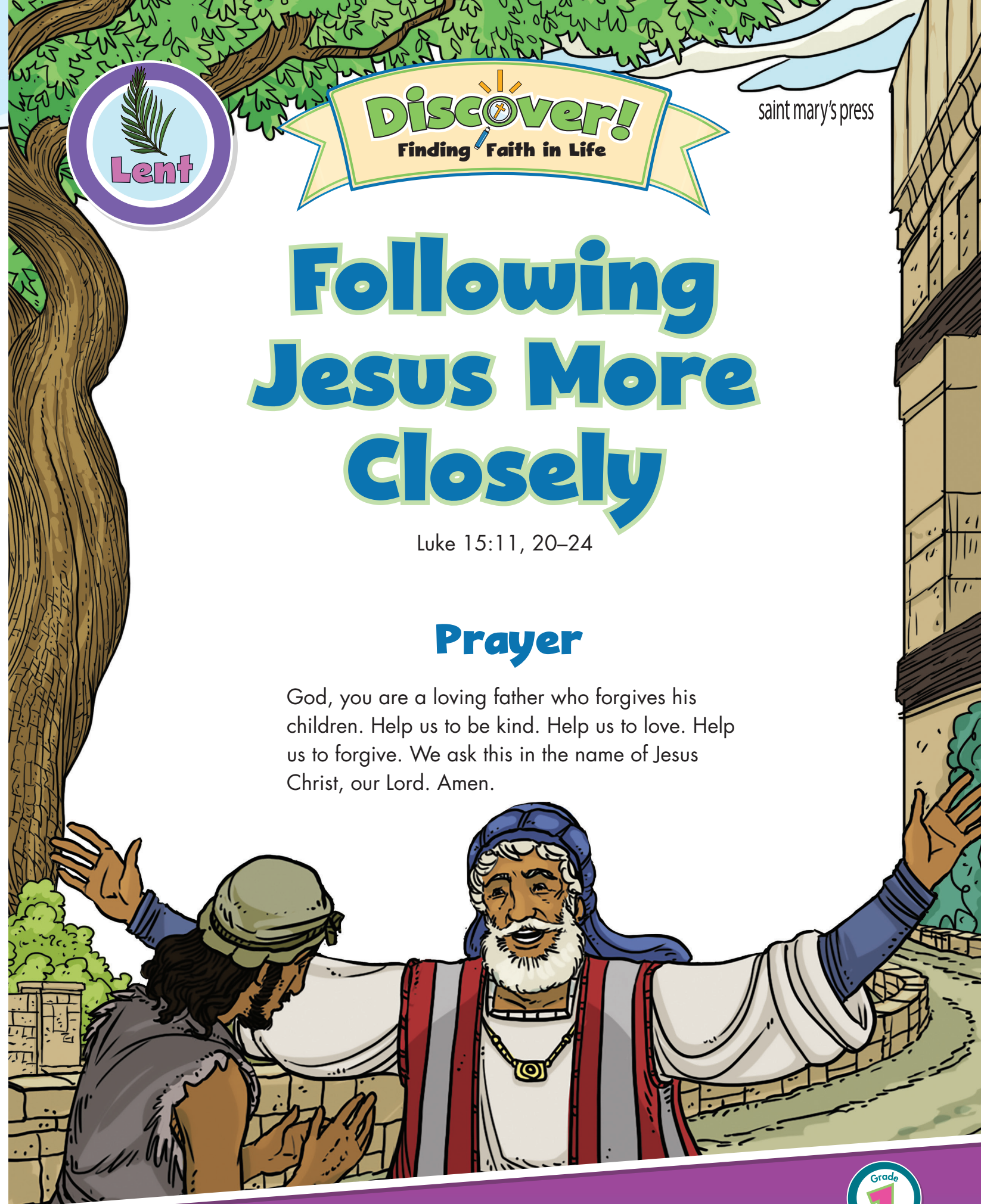
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# Following Jesus More Closely

Luke 15:11, 20–24

## Prayer

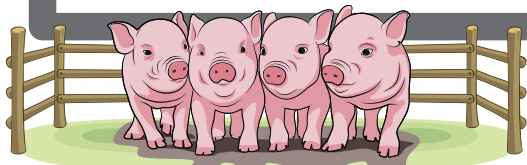
God, you are a loving father who forgives his children. Help us to be kind. Help us to love. Help us to forgive. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Use the Featured Story on page 1620 of *The Catholic Children's Bible* (Luke 15:11, 20–24) to remind you of God's love and forgiveness. Solve the maze to show the son returning to his father.



**Finish**



**Start**



**Leader:** Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

**All:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Leader:** Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God. . . .  
As we gather together this Lent, we remember the many needs of people throughout the world. First, we ask God to fill our hearts with love toward others.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who do not have enough to eat and drink,

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who do not have clean and warm clothes,

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who do not have safe homes,

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who are alone in the world,

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who are afraid to do the right thing,

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who need forgiveness and those who need to forgive,

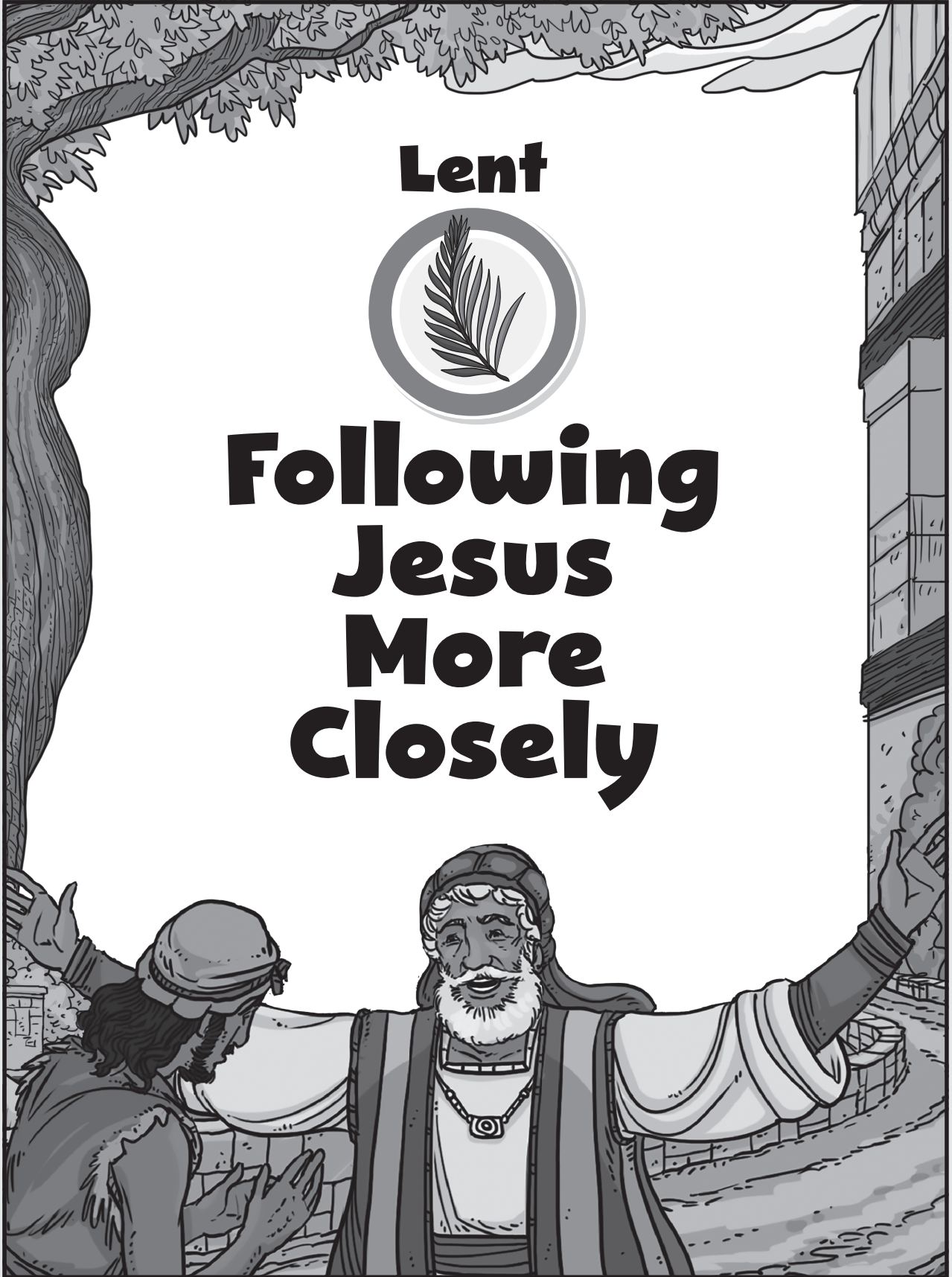
**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** For those who do not yet know God,

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We ask all of this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.



**Lent**



**Following  
Jesus  
More  
Closely**



## Lesson at a Glance

### Scripture Focus

Luke 15:11, 20–24

### Lesson Goals

- to identify that the father in the story is a reminder of God and his forgiveness
- to state that during Lent we make a special effort to be kind and to forgive others
- to recall our need to ask for forgiveness

### Catechism References

976–987, 1846–1851

### Church Year Calendar

A Church year calendar is available in black-and-white and full-color at [www.smp.org/discover\\_grade1](http://www.smp.org/discover_grade1).

### Key Words

*pity, prize, Alleluia, almsgiving*

### Music Suggestions

- “Every Little Thing,” by Cat.Chat (Cat.Chat Productions)
- “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” by The Wonder Kids (Wonder Workshop)

### Materials Needed

- *The Catholic Children’s Bible* and the Lent activity booklet
- a board or poster to write on
- copies of the handout “Following Jesus More Closely”, one for each child
- craft sticks, two for each child
- markers or crayons
- several pairs of scissors
- several bottles of glue
- a candle (optional)
- a board or poster to write on
- materials for any of the additional activities you choose

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When we forgive children or ask them for forgiveness, we give them an opportunity to see, experience, and practice important skills they can use throughout their lives. And sometimes we may find that children can teach *us* about forgiveness.

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## Get Ready! (10 minutes)

### Opening Prayer

- Invite the children to turn to page 1 of the Lent activity booklet.
- Begin prayer by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross. Then say, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." Allow about 10 seconds of silence.
- Read aloud the prayer on page 1 of the activity booklet. Invite all the children to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross.

### Engage Activity

- Invite the children to think of as many ways as they can to be kind to others. List everyone's ideas on the left side of the board.
- Ask the children to think about actions that are unkind to others. Invite volunteers to share their ideas, and list as many as possible on the right side of the board.
- Invite the children to think about the way they feel when someone is kind to them. Encourage responses, and write these under the list of actions on the left. Then ask them to think about the way they feel when someone is *unkind* to them. Encourage responses, and write these under the list of actions on the right.
- Ask the children, "When you have been unkind, what can be done to make things right again?" Invite responses, and affirm all reasonable answers. When someone offers the answer "apologize" or "say you are sorry," point out that this is asking for forgiveness. Explain that we all do wrong from time to time. Tell the group that when we do, we need to ask forgiveness from God and from others.
- Tell the children that they are about to hear a story that Jesus told about forgiveness. Explain that it shows us how to ask for forgiveness and how God responds to us when we do this.

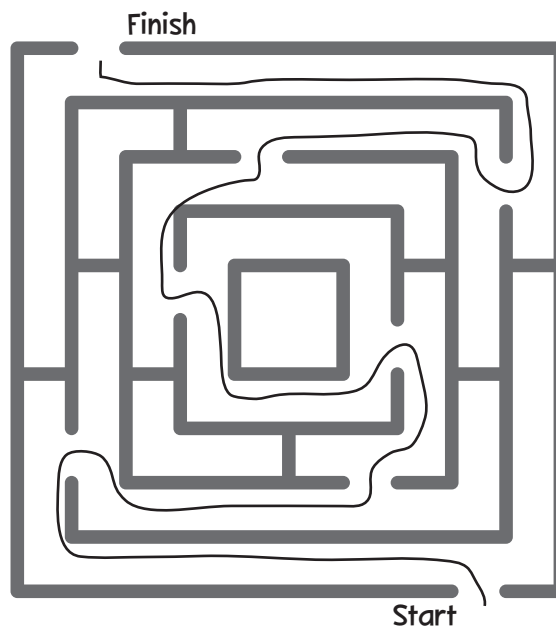


## Dive In! (15 minutes)

### Scripture Focus

- Invite the children to find Luke 15:11–32 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (pages 1619 and 1622). Point out the green leaf at the beginning and at the end of the passage.
- Have the children turn to the Featured Story on page 1620. Explain that the green leaves on this page mark that this is a shortened version of the same Scripture passage found on the other pages.

- Ask the children to look at the artwork on pages 1620–1621. Invite the children to identify the father in the pictures. Then ask them how the son is different in the top picture versus the bottom picture. (*In the top image, he is wearing ragged clothing. In the bottom image, he is wearing a new green robe and a ring.*)
- Explain that the man with the red cap is a servant who is helping to put shoes on the son's feet.
- Read the Scripture passage to the children. Then ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
  - When the son was still a long way from home, what did the father do? (*He saw his son on the way. He ran to his son, hugged and kissed him, and called to the servants to bring him the best clothing.*)
  - How did the father feel when he saw the son on his way? (*His heart was filled with pity. This means he had a feeling of sadness for his son.*)
  - Why do you think the father felt this way? (*Allow all reasonable answers.*)
- Have the children turn to the activity on page 2 of the activity booklet and complete it. *Solution:*



### Understand It!

- Read aloud the Understand It! on page 1621.
- Invite the children to summarize what they just heard, asking them key questions about the reading to check for comprehension.
- Review some of the key points with them:
  - The story began when the son asked his father for money, then left home and wasted all of it. When the son ran out of money, he returned home for help.
  - The father could have been angry. Instead, he felt happy and joyful that his son had come home.

- The father forgave the son even before the son asked for forgiveness. The father gave the son gifts and threw a party to welcome him home.
- God is like the father in the story. God forgives us whenever we are sorry for our sins, no matter what. He always loves and forgives us. He always welcomes us back to him.

### Live It!

- Read aloud the Live It! on page 1621.
- Invite the children to think quietly over the questions. Allow a couple of quiet minutes for thinking.
- Close by inviting the children to take a quiet moment to pray as directed. Invite them to close their prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

### Tell It!

- Ask the children to look at the images in the Tell It! on page 1621.
- Invite a volunteer to try retelling the story using the images. Help him or her identify what is happening in each image and how each image relates to the Scripture story. (*Image 1 shows the son coming home. Image 2 shows the son admitting his mistake. Image 3 shows the ring, robe, and shoes the father gives to the son. Image 4 shows the food for the celebration feast.*)



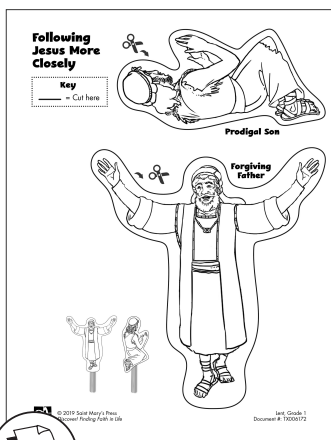
## Discover! (25 minutes)

**Note:** The handout can be found at the end of this chapter or accessed online at [www.smp.org/discover\\_grade1](http://www.smp.org/discover_grade1).

### Core Learning Activity (Craft)

#### A Forgiving Father Play Set

- Prepare by making two stick puppets, the Forgiving Father and the Prodigal Son, as samples.
- Show your samples to the children. Explain that they will make their own stick puppet father and son set, which they can use to act out the story of the Forgiving Father.
- Set out materials on a table ahead of time. You may also want to set out crayons or markers if the children do not have their own sets.
- Give each child two craft sticks and a copy of the handout. Allow them to use markers or crayons to color the figures.
- Explain that after coloring the figures, they may cut them out with scissors and then glue the figures to the craft sticks.
- Ask volunteers to tell the story of the Forgiving Father, using their stick puppets.



## Process the Activity

- Encourage the children to use their stick puppets at home. Emphasize that reading, telling, and listening to favorite stories over and over is a good way to remember and understand them.
- Tell the children that just as they often want to play through a story again and again, the action of forgiving is something that we need to practice again and again. Explain that no one who is walking on Earth is perfect yet. Tell them that we will all make mistakes from time to time, and the more we practice forgiving one another, the better we understand it, and the easier it can become.
- Remind the children that we can always ask God to help us!

### Additional Activity Options

If the core activity would not work for your group for any reason, you may choose to use any of the additional activities on pages 255–256 in its place.

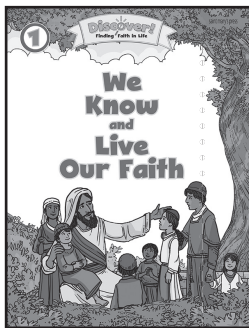
Lent

## Core Teaching

- Explain that we are in the season of Lent, and cover the following points:
  - Lent is a time of year when we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus at Easter.
  - During Lent, we think of the ways we can follow Jesus more closely.
  - One of these ways is by asking forgiveness when we hurt others. Another way is by being kind and doing good things for others.
- Tell the children that during Lent, we decorate the insides of churches with purple to stand for our sorrow for sin and for Jesus' suffering on the cross. Explain that we do not sing or say the word **Alleluia** during Lent. Tell them that *Alleluia* is a joyful word that means "Praise the Lord!" Emphasize that we do not use it during Lent because we are expressing our sorrow for Jesus' death.
- Explain that during Lent, we try to follow Jesus more closely by doing extra acts of kindness. Tell the children that we can also give up treats like candy or TV. Explain that these are nice things to have, but if we go without them, we can use that time or money instead to help people who are in need. Tell the group that this is called **almsgiving**. Explain that almsgiving is using what we have to help those who would otherwise have to go without.



- Ask the children some questions to check for comprehension, such as the following:
  - What do we focus on during Lent? (*During Lent, we prepare for Easter. We find ways to follow Jesus more closely. One of the ways is by asking forgiveness when we hurt others. Another way is by being kind and doing good for others.*)
  - What does the color purple mean? (*It shows our sorrow for sin and for Jesus' suffering on the cross.*)
  - Why do we not sing or say the word *Alleluia* in Lent? (*Alleluia is a joyful word, and not using it shows our sorrow for Jesus' death.*)
  - Why might we give up treats in Lent? (*If we go without treats, we can use the time or money spent on them to help others instead.*)
  - What is almsgiving? (*Almsgiving is using what we do have to help others who do not have what they need.*)
- Have the children turn to page 4 of the activity booklet. Read the "People of Faith" section aloud. Add any other information you know about Saint Joseph, and encourage the children to say, "Saint Joseph, pray for us," during the next week.



### ***We Know and Live Our Faith***

The following article in the *We Know and Live Our Faith* resource corresponds to concepts introduced in this lesson:

- "Lent," page 33

Read the selection aloud as time allows. Check for understanding by asking several questions.



### **Go! (10 minutes)**

#### **Lesson Wrap-Up**

- Invite the children to think back over all the different things they did in this lesson, and invite volunteers to share some of the key things they learned.
- Ensure that the following points are made, write them on the board, and circle them:
  - The father in the story is a reminder of God and his forgiveness.
  - During Lent, we make a special effort to be kind and to forgive others.
  - We need to ask for forgiveness.

## Short Closing Prayer (*optional*)

**Note:** Use this prayer if you do not intend to use the longer prayer service on the next page to close this lesson.

- Begin prayer by leading the group in the Sign of the Cross, then saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God,” followed by a few seconds of silence.
- Explain that the prayer “Lord, have mercy” is a prayer that the first Christians, the very first followers of Jesus, prayed often.
- Remind the children that we also pray this prayer at Mass, at the very beginning, when we ask forgiveness for our sins.
- Ask the children to repeat “Lord, have mercy” (*Roman Missal*) as you pray this short litany:

**Leader:** For all the times we have hurt others,

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

**Leader:** For the times when we have disobeyed or talked back to our parents, teachers, or others in charge of us,

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

**Leader:** For the times when we have not been kind in playing with others,

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

**Leader:** For the times when we used mean words to or about others,

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

- Pray the following for the group:
  - Let us pray together: Lord Jesus, we ask forgiveness for things we have done that hurt others. Help us come closer to you this Lent. Help us to be as kind and loving as you are. Amen.
- Conclude by leading the group in the Sign of the Cross.

# Prayer Service

## For the Needs of the World

Seat children together in a large circle. If it is allowed, you may consider lighting a candle near your own place in the circle as a reminder of the presence of God. As you pray the petitions, you may pass a small globe around the circle to symbolize God's care and love for the whole world.

Lent

**Leader:** Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

**All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Leader:** Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God. *(Allow about 10 seconds of silence.)* As we gather together this Lent, we remember the many needs of people throughout the world. First, we ask God to fill our hearts with love toward others.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who do not have enough to eat and drink,

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who do not have clean and warm clothes,

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who do not have safe homes,

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who are alone in the world,

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who are afraid to do the right thing,

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who need forgiveness and those who need to forgive,

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those who do not yet know God,

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** We ask all of this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen.**

*Close by singing "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" or a similar song that recalls God's love and care for all people.*

## Additional Activities

### Materials Needed

- wooden or plastic beads of equal size, at least ½-inch across, with a large hole, ten for each child (pony beads work well)
- long plastic or fabric strings (if fabric, must have plastic shoelace-type ends), one for each child

### Materials Needed

- plastic baggies filled with pretzels, one for each child
- index cards, one for each child
- tape
- markers or crayons

### Sacrifice Beads (15 minutes)

- Explain to the children that they will make a set of sacrifice beads that can be used to keep track of Lenten sacrifices and kind actions. Explain that moving a bead each time they do something good for others will help them be aware of their actions, and will help them decide to be more loving, like Jesus.
- Make a set ahead of time to show the children before they begin.
- Distribute the beads and strings, and then show the children how to start by threading one bead onto the center of the piece of string, so that the amount of string on either side of the bead is the same. Have the children thread ten beads.
- Assist the children as needed to tie a knot when they are done lacing the beads. Take the loose ends of the string, and tie a double knot no more than an inch away from the last bead in line. When the string is firmly tied, children should be able to move the beads one at a time toward the knot and then away from it again, to count their actions of Lenten practice.

### Pretzel Prayer Cards (15 minutes)

- Prepare by first checking with parents about any food allergies that could affect a child's participation in this activity. If necessary, plan to have gluten-free pretzels or other alternate treats available for any child with allergies.
- Write "Jesus, help me follow you" on each index card, and tape a card to each baggie.
- Tell the children the story of how pretzels were first invented:
  - A long time ago, a monk had an idea for making a little bit of bread into a nice treat for children. He rolled a piece of bread dough until it was long and thin.
  - Then he folded it over itself twice, so that it looked like a pair of arms crossed in prayer. (*Demonstrate this by crossing your arms over your chest.*) He baked it in the oven until it became crispy.
  - The monk gave this to children as a reward for saying their prayers each day.
- Ask the children to cross their arms in prayer. Then ask the children to repeat this prayer after you: "Jesus, help me follow you."
- Distribute the pretzels with prayer cards taped to the bags. Tell the children that the cards say "Jesus, help me follow you." Challenge them to say their prayer each day for a week, or even throughout the whole season of Lent.
- Distribute the markers or crayons and allow the children to decorate the index cards if there is time.

### **Materials Needed**

- a computer with internet access
- a computer projector
- blank paper
- crayons or colored pencils

### **Lent Is For-Giving (15 minutes)**

- Watch the video [Children's Songs] Giving Makes You Happy (YouTube, 1:27).
- Explain that during Lent, we try to find ways to give to others and to help others. Review ways the boy in the video helped at home. Share ideas on ways children in your group could help others at home and at school, especially during Lent.
- Distribute the blank paper and crayons or colored pencils. Ask the children to make a drawing of themselves carrying out a loving action at home or at school. Encourage the children to take their drawings home and share them with their families.

# Following Jesus More Closely

## Key

— = Cut here



**Prodigal Son**



**Forgiving Father**



## The Forgiving Father

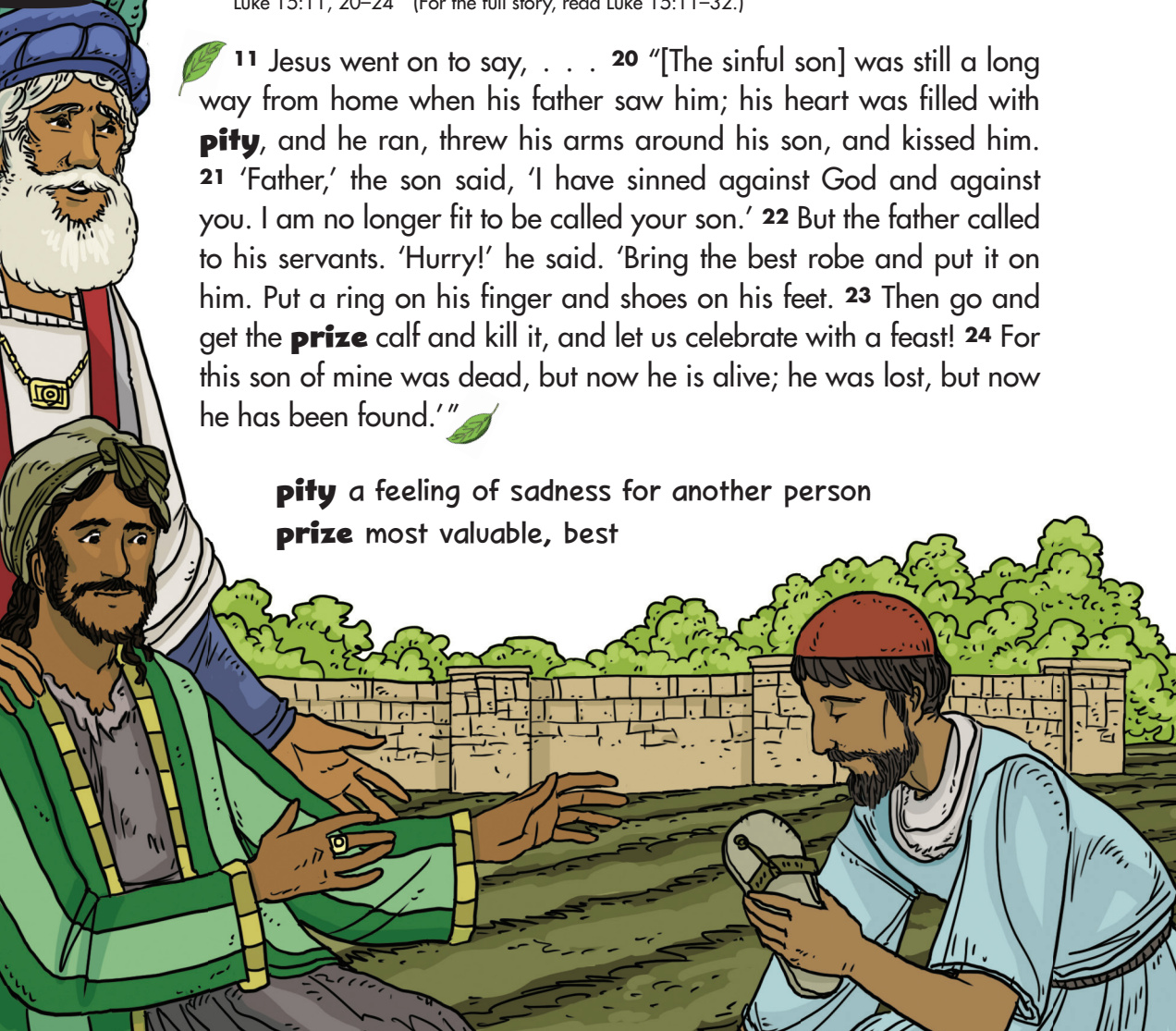


Luke 15:11, 20–24 (For the full story, read Luke 15:11–32.)

11 Jesus went on to say, . . . 20 “[The sinful son] was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with **pity**, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. 21 ‘Father,’ the son said, ‘I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.’ 22 But the father called to his servants. ‘Hurry!’ he said. ‘Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. 23 Then go and get the **prize** calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! 24 For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.’”

**pity** a feeling of sadness for another person

**prize** most valuable, best



## Understand it!

This story Jesus told could be called "A Foolish Son and His Big-Hearted Father." This son asked his dad for a lot of money and then left home. He wasted every penny. When he was starving because he had no money left, he wanted to go home.

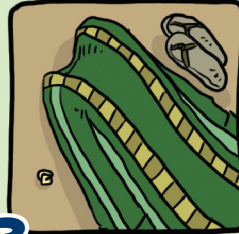
The father could have been angry. Instead, he loved his son so much that he ran to meet him. The father hugged his son even before the son said he was sorry. The father was so happy to have his son back that he gave him a gift. He held a big party to welcome him home. Jesus wants us to know that our Father in Heaven is like this loving father. No matter how much we sin, God will always love us and forgive us. He always welcomes us back when we turn to him.

STORY  
Luke 15

## Live It!

Think about a time when you behaved in a way that upset your mom or dad. What did you do to let them know you were sorry? How did they react? God is like a loving parent. He always welcomes us back when we turn to him after we've disobeyed his commandments. Thank God for loving you like the father in the story.

## Tell It!



Using the pictures above, retell this story in your own words.

