**Our Loving Father**

Goal: Understand the consequences of loving and unloving choices, and how the loving father is always calling us make to himself.

Materials: Script of the Prodigal Son, pre-cut construction paper, “loving father” template, glue, art supplies

Engage:

1. Welcome families into the room and invite them to sit at the tables.
2. Say you have a lot to do and need to get started right away.
3. Tell them you have a Bible story to read them. Make a big deal that when you read your Bible, you feel like you are part of the story. In fact, the Bible is so alive for you, you almost feel like the people are in the room.
4. Say, you have a story to tell them about a Father and his two sons.
5. Move to take out your Bible and then there is a knocking at the door.
6. Invite the Prodigal Son in and move into the script with this lesson.

Explore:

1. Once the prodigal Son has happily left, tell the children you have something amazing to tell them. Everyone does have a loving Father like the prodigal son. Say, “Even if we make unloving choices, God always loves us and will forgive us if we come to him. The sacrament of reconciliation gives us a chance to do this every time we go.
2. Say, “We never have to be afraid to talk to our loving father. I would like you to think of an unloving choice you have made. When you have one in your head, put your hand on top of your head.”
3. Say, “Guess what? There is no sin is so big it cannot be forgiven, and there is a “party in heaven” every time we go to reconciliation.
4. Hold out your arms and say, “God loves us bigger than “this much” and we are going to do a special project to help us remember this.
5. Show families your sample of the Parable of the Lost Son Craft.
6. Show the following step-by-step instructions
   1. Hand out strips of 3\*11 paper and have them fold it into thirds
   2. Have families cut out the head with the Bible verse
   3. Instruct parents to draw around their child’s hands and cut them out.
   4. Using a glue stick show how to glue on the verse and hands.
   5. Have children write names on the back and draw on face, nose, eyes, and hair.

Reflect:

If time allows, ask families to share the 3 most important things they learned from the lesson.

Script for Parable of the Prodigal Son

(Leader hears a knocking on the door)

Leader: Who can that be. I really want to tell my story.

PS: Hi, do you have food? I am so hungry! Oh please, I’ll eat anything. I haven’t eaten in days.

Leader: Uh, no, I don’t have any food. We are in the middle of a retreat…

PS- (sits down, dejected) Sorry, oh this is all my fault. If only I hadn’t made such unloving choices.

Leader- Wait a second…….I think I know you. Hey,( to the kids) Remember how I told you the Bible comes alive for me. I think this is the prodigal son form the story I wanted to tell you! I can’t believe this has happened to me again!

PS-I don’t know what you’re talking about, but I sure could use some advice.

Leader-Well, why don’t you tell us your story and maybe we can help.

PS- Ok, here it goes. Well, see, I have a really rich dad. I grew up having everything I could ever want, even though I had to share a room with my older brother. Anyway, one day I decided I was super bored living at home so I said to my dad, “Dad, give me all the money I would have gotten after you die. I want to go live on my own in the world. I’m tired of being here.”

Leader- Wow, I can’t believe you did that. (To families) Do you think this was a loving or unloving choice? (Wait for responses. Be sure to ask why.) What did your dad do?

PS- He gave me the money. He was really sad, but I didn’t care. I was going to live it up! My older brother almost seemed happy that I was leaving.

Leader- I’m confused again. If you had all that money, why don’t you have food now?

PS- That’s the worst part. Instead of spending the money on food, or a house, I just spent it on parties with my friends. Boy, I had a lot of friends for awhile. But when the money ran out, so did my friends. I got a job tending pigs at a farm, and sometimes, their food looks good to me, but I’m not allowed to eat it. I want to go home, but I am afraid that my dad won’t forgive me. I don’t know what to do.

Leader- Kids, talk to your parents, what do you think he should do? (give a moment to families and then take responses. Be sure to direct conversation to going and asking for forgiveness)

Leader- Sounds like they think you should go home.

PS- That’s what I’m going to do. I will say, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer worthy of being your son. Make me a servant. Anything is better than the way I’m living now.” (Son runs out)

Leader: Gee, I wonder what will happen. What are some of your guesses? (take answers)

PS- (running back into the room wearing a nice cloak) I can’t believe it! I am so blessed by my dad!

Leader- What happened?

PS- Well, I got home all ready to go find my dad, but he ran out to ME! It turns out he was waiting for me the whole time. Then he ran to me. Embraced me and when I said I was sorry, he forgave me right away. In fact he threw me a party to welcome me back!

Leader- Wow, was your older brother there.

PS- (Looks sad) No, he wouldn’t come. Does anyone think they know why? (Takes response, should come out that the brother is jealous.) But my dad talked to him one-on-one and told my older brother he would still get what he has earned but that he has to party because I came back. He said, “My son, all I have is yours, but we must rejoice for your brother was dead and now he has come back to life. He was lost and now he is found!”

Leader- I’m so happy for you. Hey, is that new ring?

PS- Yeah, my dad gave it to me to remind me that even when I make unloving choices, I can always come to him and ask for forgiveness. He loves me that much!

Leader- You have a very loving father!

PS- Don’t I know it! I hope everyone has a loving Father like that. Speaking of, I better get back to my party. See you guys later!