



# A Story of Forgiveness

(based on Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32)

Vary the tone and volume of your voice, as well as the speed and rhythm, to create drama and capture attention.

When Jesus was telling stories lots of people came to hear him. Some of the important religious leaders noticed that Jesus welcomed everyone, no matter who they were. This bothered some of the leaders and they began to complain. Jesus heard their complaints and decided to tell them this story:

A father had two sons. The younger son was bored. He wanted to leave home and go to the city where life would be more exciting. So one day the younger son said to his father, "I'd like to have my share of everything you own now. I want the money now rather than after you die. I have things I want to do and I'm ready to make my own choices." So the father gave his younger son his share of the money.

■ **What do you think the father was feeling as he did this? How do you think his mother was feeling?**

The younger son was so excited! Now he could make his own choices. He packed his bags, waved goodbye, and travelled to a city far away. When he arrived in the city he had the time of his life. There were so many things to do and so many things to buy. He bought new clothes and sandals. He ate the best food. He made friends and gave them expensive gifts.

■ **How do you think he was feeling?**

Unfortunately, the money soon ran out. And when it was gone his new friends left quickly. Without the money, life was hard. Now the son had no home, no friends, and no food. He started begging in the streets. Finally he was so hungry he decided to take a job feeding pigs, even though working with pigs was against Jewish law. Some days he was still so hungry that he almost ate the pigs' food!

■ **How do you think he was feeling now?**

Sitting with the pigs one day the younger son began thinking about his poor choices. "What am I doing here? The workers at my father's home always have enough to eat. Why should I stay here and starve? I'll go back to my father's house. I will tell my father that I made a big mistake and that I'm sorry. And maybe, just maybe, Father will let me become a worker and work for him." Slowly the younger son walked the road back home, tired and dirty and hungry.

One day the father was looking down the road and saw someone coming. He had looked down that road every day since his son had left. For so long he had worried about his son and hoped that he would return. Could this person really be his son?!

■ **What do you think the father was thinking?**

His heart bursting with love, the father ran to meet his younger son and gave him a big hug. "I'm so sorry," the son said. "I've let you down. I'm not worthy to be your son anymore. I hope you'll let me be your servant."

■ **How was the son feeling?**

But to his amazement, the father gave him brand new clothes, new sandals for his feet, and a fine ring for his finger. The father told everyone, "Get ready, we're going to have a big party! My son has finally come home."

■ **What do you think the servants were thinking?**

There was one person who was *not* interested in celebrating. The older brother had been working hard all day. In fact he had been working harder ever since his brother left home. When he heard that his brother had come home and there was to be a party he became very angry. He refused to go in to welcome his brother home. When his father asked why he said, "It's not fair. I've worked every single day and you never gave me a party."

■ **What else might the older brother be thinking and feeling?**

The father answered quietly, "You chose work and home. Everything I have is yours, and has been all along. I love you, and I love your brother. We celebrate because your brother has returned and is alive."

■ **What do you think happened next?**