

We Are Forgiven

Objective: The students will be able to state that God will forgive them when they have sinned.

For the Catechist

In Lesson 11 the children learned that Jesus taught us to ask forgiveness through the story of the Prodigal Son. They will recall this story in the present lesson. Review the story in Lesson 11, Introduction, to be ready to assist them. The previous lesson dealt with sin. Now it is time to focus, even more so, on forgiveness. Make sure the children see that truly it is wonderful to be forgiven. You may wish to have some personal examples ready.

Asking forgiveness is part of a key component of Eastern Christianity, namely, repentance. The Desert Fathers and Church Fathers wrote much about repentance or metanoia. Our lives are to be lived with repentance at the core of our lives. An example of this is the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

Acknowledge the children's request with "I forgive you." When a child or anyone else asks for forgiveness, there is a tendency to say "It's all right" rather than "I forgive you." Yet, the granting of forgiveness is so important. In asking to be forgiven, the child asks for another opportunity to be himself or herself. "Please forget the past. I am weak and I make mistakes; overlook them. If you give me another chance, I can do better." It is like saying, "Yes, I broke faith; but if you continue to believe in me, I will do better the next time." Knowing they are forgiven, children are encouraged to be themselves in a new way. Once children are forgiven, they more readily accept themselves.

Lost sheep. Although the concept of Jesus as shepherd is not fully developed in Eastern theology, the image is scriptural ("I am the good shepherd" John 10:11). Despite our non-agrarian society, the image is understood by children who see the shepherd as a parent figure. The lost sheep story (Matthew 18:12-13) does

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "All-Holy Trinity"

Introduction: Discussion of being lost, search for lost object **Need:** Precious object (perhaps a watch) belonging to someone else

Read Text Aloud: Ask questions noted on following pages as text is being read

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

•*Basic 1:* We Learn to Love and Ask Forgiveness

•*Basic 2:* "The Lost Prodigal Son" Maze

•*Group:* "Forgiveness" Plays

•*Craft:* "Please Forgive Me" Hanging Craft

Closing: "All-Holy Trinity"

Come Bless the Lord Icon:

Packet I:

Packet II: The Prodigal Son

Teaching Pics

not specifically mention Jesus as "The Good Shepherd"— that reference is in John 10:11. The two stories are used together to present an image and a story that serve to teach God's abiding love for us.

Forgiveness Vespers. On Cheesefare Sunday, the last day before the Great Fast, our Eastern tradition offers us a chance to reconcile ourselves with one another during the Forgiveness Service. You may wish to explain this to your students, recalling to them the first lesson in their book "Our Church Family." As a church family we learn to love and forgive together, especially at this service. When Cheesefare Sunday comes this year, remind the students again of the Forgiveness Vespers.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

Repentance

"*Metanoia or repentance* is a central theme in Eastern Christian spirituality, for it aptly describes the whole movement on our part toward God, drawn and carried by His grace. It begins with an inner change of attitude and is expressed in an outer change in behavior, leading to ongoing growth" (LLIII 30).

"Repentance never ends. It includes not only a turning away from sin and immorality, but a continually refined re-direction and unification of our whole being toward the very Center of our being. We are called to progressively subject our physicalness to our reason, and our reason to our 'heart/spirit,' and our spirit to the Spirit of God. It is for this continual refocusing that we frequently pray in our services, "That the rest of our lives may be spent in peace and repentance, let us ask the Lord" (LLIII 35).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Our prayer for this unit is a prayer to the Holy Trinity. In this prayer we learn to ask forgiveness when we hurt someone or sin. [Pass out index cards to 5 students. Review words.] I will say the prayer now; and when I point to you, read the words on your index cards. [Say the words slowly to let the children participate.] Let's go to the icon corner now and pray to the Trinity. Let's get ready to pray. [Make the sign of the cross, and pray slowly to let the children participate.]

Introduction

[Before the children arrive, hide a precious object from home that belongs to someone else—perhaps a watch.] We are learning about how to love and forgive. Last week our lesson was about the difference between "by accident" and "on purpose." Who can tell me what the difference is?

We also learned last week that God doesn't want us to hurt others—even if they have hurt us first. God loves everybody and doesn't want anyone hurt. When we hurt someone on purpose, it's like we take a few steps away from God. We're no longer as close [clasp hands] or united to God as we want to be. It's like we're lost. Have you ever been lost? What is it like? [Allow responses.]

That reminds me, I can't seem to find my (object hidden). It belongs to (name) and he/she'll be very upset if I don't bring it back to him/her today. I know I had it in this room today. Will you all help me try to find it now? [Let children help find object. You may want to have it in your coat so you will find it.] Here it is! Oh, thank goodness. Now I can get it back to (name), and he/she will be so happy.

Before our search, we were talking about being lost. Jesus talked about how we are like lost sheep when we have done something wrong on purpose. Jesus said, "I'm the Good Shepherd." When we are lost, Jesus will search for us because we are precious to the Father—just as you all searched for my (object) which was precious to (name). The Father doesn't want us to be away from Him. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will look for us like lost sheep and bring us back to the Father. Let's read our lesson.

14

We Are Forgiven



God created us to love.
God does not want us to hurt.
God does not want
us to hurt others.

When we hurt others
on purpose, it is wrong.
It is a mistake.
It is called sin.



We say "I'm sorry" to the person we have hurt.
We try to make things better.

Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type). See "Reading of Text" in Lesson 1 for use of the Vocabulary Visual Aid.

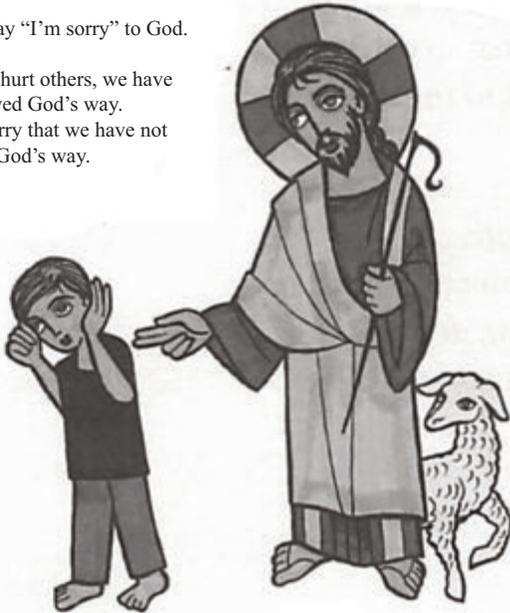
It is called sin.

We learned a little about sin last week. What is sin? (Sin occurs when we hurt someone else on purpose.) How do you feel when someone has hurt you? [Allow ample sharing time.] When you've hurt someone and you can see that they're crying, how do you feel? [Allow responses; remind children of how they felt when they were hurt and that hurting someone else isn't what God wants. Perhaps share how you've felt when you've hurt someone.] What do we say when we've hurt someone? (I'm sorry.) Is it hard to say "I'm sorry?" [Allow responses.]

If it is hard to say "I'm sorry," we ask the Holy Spirit to help us.

We also say "I'm sorry" to God.

When we hurt others, we have not followed God's way.
We are sorry that we have not followed God's way.



Jesus said when we sin we are like lost sheep.
Jesus does not want us to be lost.
He said, "I am the Good Shepherd."

Like a good shepherd, Jesus will look for us when we are lost.
He will bring us back to the Father.

... we ask the Holy Spirit to help us.

We received the Holy Spirit at baptism. The Holy Spirit is sent by God to help us love and care for one another. When you have trouble saying "I'm sorry," to whom can you pray? (The Holy Spirit) You can say, "Come into my heart, Holy Spirit, and help me to say 'I'm sorry.'"

We are sorry that we have not followed God's way.

We say I'm sorry to the person we have hurt. But we must also say "I'm sorry" to God. Why? (Because we have not followed God's way)

He will bring us back to the Father.

Who will bring us back to the Father when we've sinned? (Jesus) Jesus is like a good shepherd, He does not want the sheep to stray.

We ask God to Forgive Us.

In Lesson 11 we learned that God will forgive us. Jesus told us a story about a boy and his father. What do you remember from the story? [See Lesson 11, Introduction. Help students reconstruct story.]

When I sin, Jesus will bring me back to the Father.

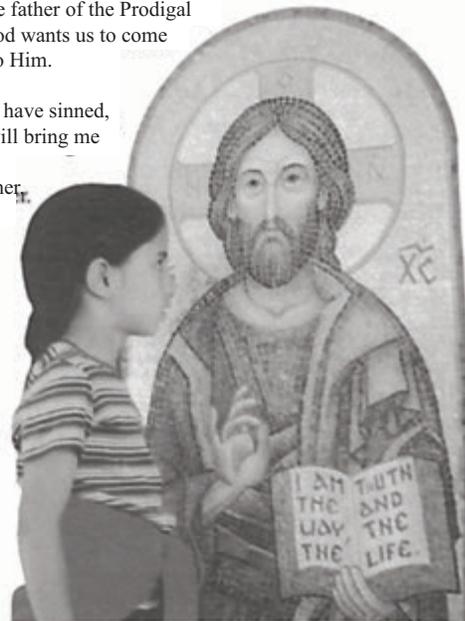
Who will bring us back to the Father? (Jesus) Will the Father ever stop loving us? (No) The story of the Prodigal Son tells us that God always wants us to come home to Him.

Let's review: Today we learned Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd. Where will Jesus lead us? (To the Father) When we've sinned, who will always forgive us? (The Father) It is wonderful to be forgiven!

God the Father loves us.

Like the father of the Prodigal Son, God wants us to come home to Him.

When I have sinned, Jesus will bring me back to the Father.



God, our Father, will always forgive us. It is wonderful to be forgiven.

Activity Tracks

Basic 1: We Learn to Love and Ask Forgiveness [This worksheet is in the student text.]

Today we learned that when we sin we are like lost sheep. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will always bring us back to the Father. The top part of the worksheet asks you to fill in the missing letters from words we learned last week. Below that is Jesus in the middle of the maze. Around the maze are four children whom He needs to bring back to the Father. Before He can do that, He needs to find them. Can you help Him?

We Learn to Love and Ask Forgiveness

A. Match each picture with the one that should come after it.



B. Draw a circle around the word that completes the sentence.

1. God said, "_____ your parents." Honor lift
2. To honor means to _____. play obey
3. To honor means to _____. respect jump
4. To honor means to _____. share serve

Basic 2: "The Lost Prodigal Son" Maze

Remember a couple weeks ago we learned about the Prodigal Son who left his father and his good home and wasted all his money. The Prodigal Son made a mistake, and he asked his father to forgive him. In today's lesson we learned we too have to ask forgiveness when we make a mistake. The Prodigal Son was lost, like a person in a maze. See if you can retrace his steps and get him home again. [As students are working reinforce the lesson by asking the following:] "What does the father do at the end of the story?" (Runs out to meet the son) Will God ever stop loving us? (No) Will God forgive us when we make a mistake? (Yes) Who will lead us back to God when we've sinned?" (Jesus)

Group: "Forgiveness" Plays

Materials: a card game, a toy, cookies,

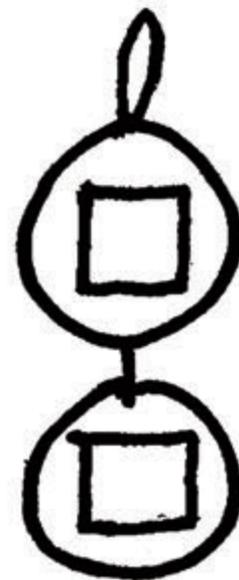
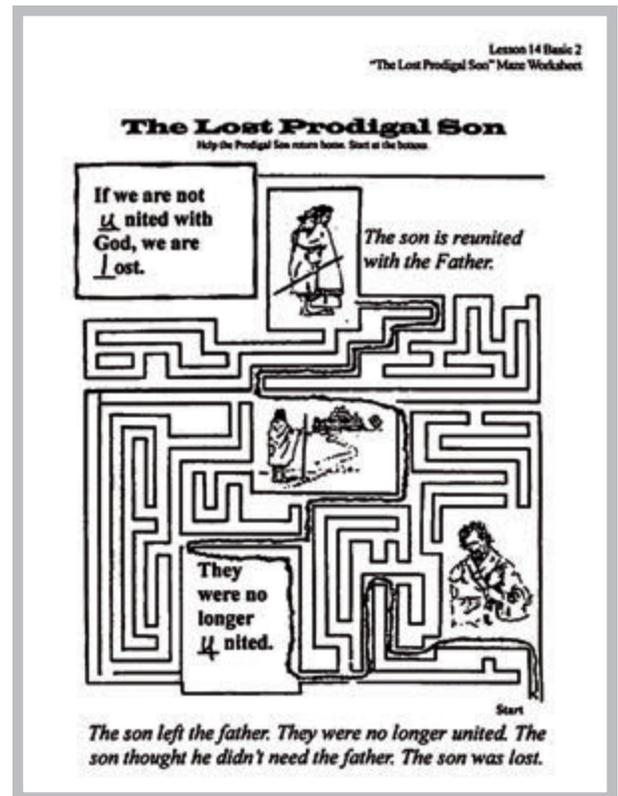
Today we learned that we make mistakes. God doesn't want us to hurt others; but if we do, we ask forgiveness. For our activity, we're going to let you use your imaginations. We'll split into groups, and I'll give each group a prop to use for a little skit. For example, here is the deck of cards for the game "Go Fish" What could a person do wrong when playing this game? Why might someone have to say "I'm sorry?" We'll decide how to pretend a skit using their prop. Then the group can do it. The person who has done wrong will say "I'm sorry," and the others will say "I forgive you."

Craft: "Please Forgive Me" Hanging Craft

Materials: "Please Forgive Me" worksheet, markers, paper dessert plates (2/student), yarn, hole punch

Today we learned that we make mistakes. God doesn't want us to hurt others; but if we do, we ask forgiveness. We ask forgiveness of the person we hurt and of God. Our craft today will help us remember our lesson. The top part says, "I'm sorry, please forgive me," and on the back is a picture. The bottom says, "I forgive you," and a picture is on the back.

[Have sample ready to show children.] The pictures on



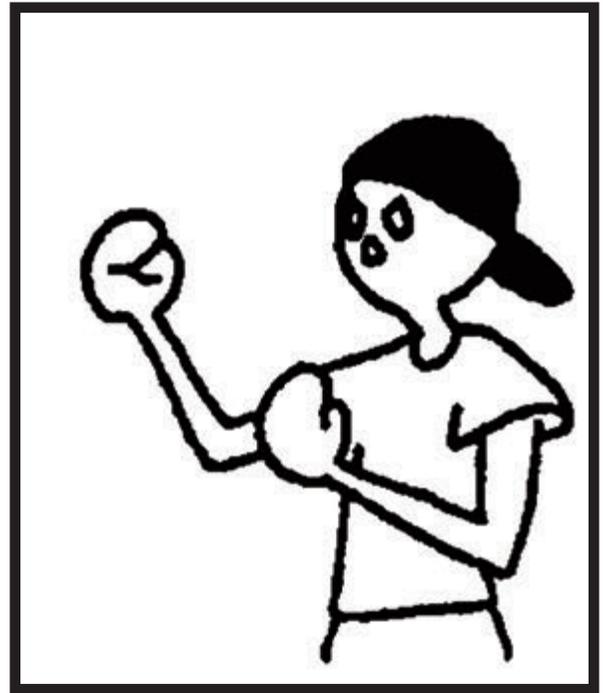
the other side will help you remember about asking forgiveness. [Have students color and cut out pictures and words; paste picture on one side and words on the other. Use yarn to connect the two plates, and make a hanging loop off the top plate.]

Closing: *This is our third lesson about loving and forgiving. Remember, the Holy Spirit helps us to love and forgive. We received the Holy Spirit at our baptism. When you need help loving and forgiving, you can pray this prayer or simply say "Holy Spirit, help me to forgive." Let's say that together.... Now, let's go to the icon corner and pray all the words of the prayer to the Holy Spirit together. Let's get ready to pray. [Make the sign of the cross and pray slowly to let the children participate.]*

God bless you, and have a good week!



hurt



on purpose



sorry

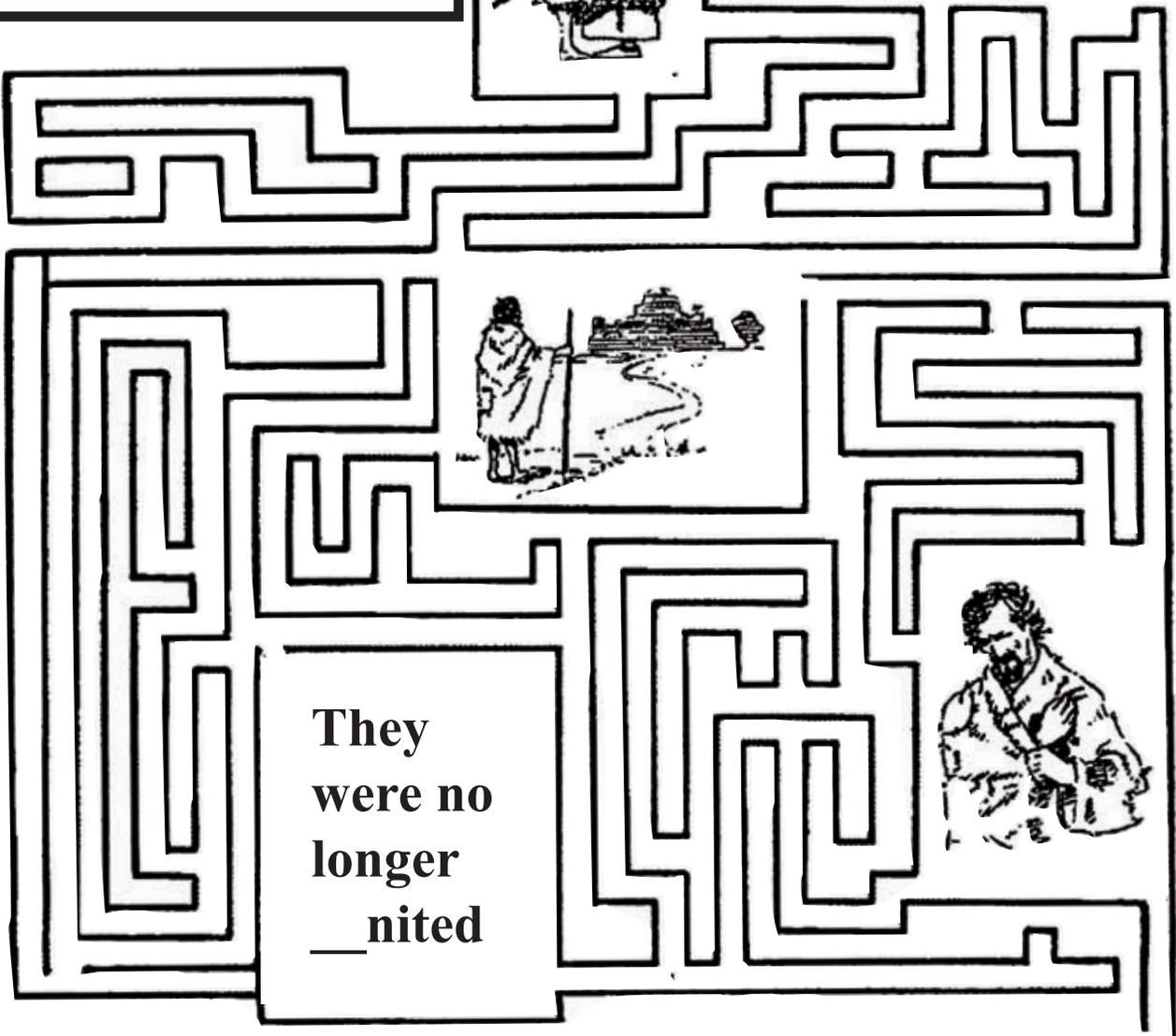
The Lost Prodigal Son

Help the Prodigal Son Return home. Start at the bottom.

If we are not
__nited with
God, we are
__ost.



*The son is reunited
with the Father*

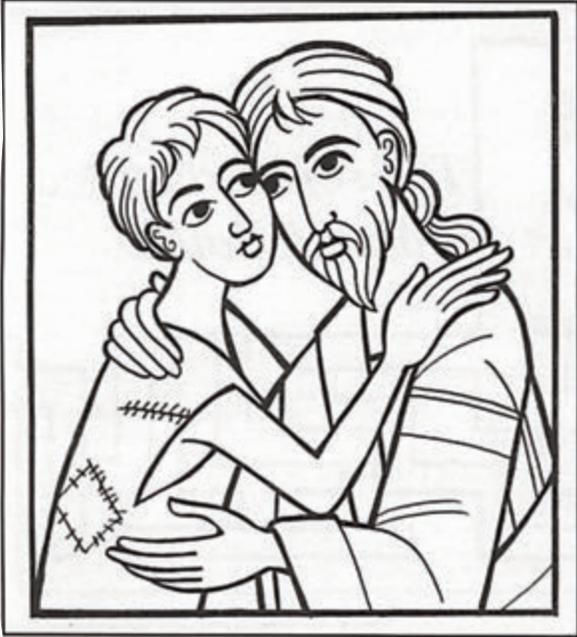


They
were no
longer
__nited



Start

The son left the father. They were no longer united. The son thought he didn't need the father. The son was lost.



“I’m sorry,
please
forgive me”

“I forgive
you”

