



Growing as followers of Jesus

Leaders Guide

Introduction:

This week we are continuing to think about God. This sessions focus is God the Parent. Often in the Church you will hear people talk about God as Father but the Bible also uses mothering images for God as well. In the Uniting Church it is important that we use gender neutral language for God or use both male and female examples. This is to reflect that not all people have had good experiences with parents, so using the parent analogy can be complicated. Families are very diverse now so by using a variety of examples that are in the Bible helps a wider audience connect more effectively to God.

Ideas for families:

- **Talk about what does a loving parent look like?**
- **What is something you do as a family that makes people feel loved?**
- **Create a new family ritual to show each other love and remind you of God's love.**

Ideas for Congregations

- **Talk about someone who has been like a loving parent to you.**
- **When has God been like a loving parent?**
- **Hang feather boa across your church and give everyone a feather to remind them that God gathers us under God's wings like a mother hen.**





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Gathering Idea – God: Our Parent

- **Leader may want to share a photograph of their family, and maybe even their parents to evoke thoughts of God as a mother or Father figure.**
- **A wonderful clip could be selected as a visual from the movie 'Coco' (Disney) about family or another video resource.**
- **Retell the story or have the kids participate in a dramatic retelling, perhaps prepare a script to help before session with character/role for them. You can even have a narrator and actors.**

Heart of the Story (Everyone Chat):

Give them some background about the story.

Significance of pigs for someone with a Jewish background. Love of the father for his sons.

Patience of God as God awaits our returning home. What does home mean for the son and for us?

Arms reaching out to greet the younger son, reminds us of the feminine nature of God as a mother reaching out to embrace.

Father's response to the older son once again that of a reassuring parent. How God may be likened to the Father.

The patience of God's waiting as God longs for community with us. Just like we long for family (especially through our Covid experience) God longs for us.

Activity Ideas

- **Retell the story or have the kids participate in a dramatic retelling, perhaps prepare a script to help before session with character/role for them.**
- **You can even have a narrator and actors.**
- **Share the godly play story of the holy family and make figures that can be taken home. (extended activity)**





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Who is God?

Like a loving parent

Name of the Book Chapter Verse

LUKE 15 11-32

“While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. He felt sorry for his son. So, the father ran to him and hugged and kissed him.

Getting Ready!

What does a loving parent look like to you? What sort of things do they do or say?



Today we are exploring that God is like a loving parent.

Jesus tells us if we are followers of Jesus we are adopted into God’s family and that God loves us like a loving father, or a caring mother.

Families today come in all shapes and sizes, they have good days and bad days. God’s love is like the very best of what a family can be like.

God’s love for us is there all the time and has been there right from the beginning. You are a treasured child to God.

PRAISING GOD!

O God you are like a loving parent, enfolding us in your embrace. Like a father and mother, you protect, love, and nurture us. Remind us of how you patiently wait so we can be in community with you. We praise you and give you thanks for you are wonderful, loving, kind and generous. thank you in Jesus’ name, Amen.

SORRY GOD,

Loving God, you call us to be your children and we are sorry that sometimes we turn away or make choices that hurt you. Show us that your love like a circle never ends, and you always hope that we will change and come to you.

Thank you for your love in Jesus and for always giving us an opportunity to change and make better choices, in your most precious name we pray, Amen.



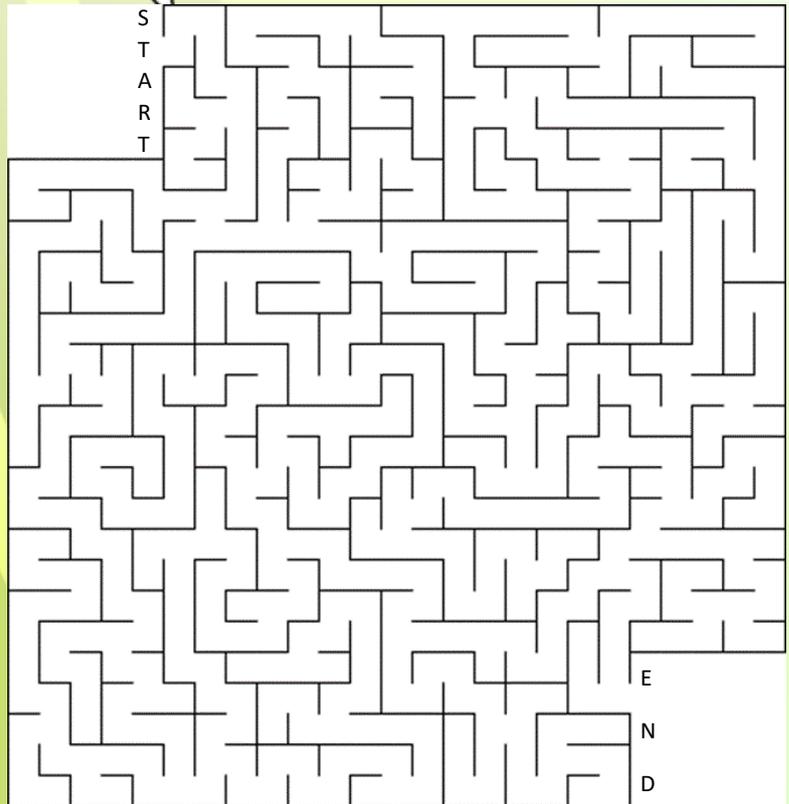
DRAW A MOTHER HEN CARING FOR HER CHICKS!



Find your way to the end as a follower of Jesus.



You are amazing, you got this.



TELLING OTHERS!

Why not video the story of the Prodigal son and share it with others to remind them they too are loved by God like a loving parent!

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Make a card for someone who might be missing their children or their parents.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Every night when you go to bed, remember that you are loved by God! Every morning give thanks for your super big family!

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.

