



# **The Lost Son**

**Luke 15:11-32**

**Teacher Tip:** The Lesson 31 storybook is intended to prepare children for an invitation to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. If appropriate, offer that invitation to the children after reading this storybook to them. You may use the Children’s Guide for New Believers located at [ResourceWell.org](http://ResourceWell.org) which offers a simple explanation of our need for salvation, the ABC prayer of salvation, and an informational letter for parents or guardians.

**The children met Ranger Reggie for the hike at 9 a.m. sharp, just like he asked. Without saying a word, he turned onto a narrow trail and began to walk. Just as the mid-morning sun was making the sand and rocks warm to the touch, they arrived at the edge of a deep canyon.**

**“Here we are!” Ranger Reggie announced. Amanda and the rest of the campers cautiously walked to the edge and peered down over the guardrail.**

**“It’s neat to look across the canyon. The other side is so far away and the bottom is so deep,” Louis observed. He pushed a pebble off the rim of the canyon with the toe of his shoe and watched it roll faster and faster until it finally leaped into the air and plunged into the raging river far below.**

**“I love to come here and think about how this canyon is like us and God,” Ranger Reggie remarked.**

**“What do you mean?” Louis asked.**

**Ranger Reggie stepped away from the guardrail. “When we sin...”**

**“You mean when we do things our way instead of God’s way?” Natalie interrupted.**

**“That is exactly what sin is, Natalie,” Ranger Reggie agreed. “You see, God is perfect—He is never near sin. When we sin, we are far away from God, just like we are far away from the other side of this canyon.”**

**“This side of the canyon looks dry and sandy and the other side is full of pretty green trees and flowers. Can we walk over there?” Amanda asked.**

**“No silly! It’s too far! Unless you can walk on air,” Billy teased.**

**“That’s just how it is with God. Because of our sin, we can’t cross the canyon that is between us and Him.” He smiled at the group. “Follow me. I have something to show you.” The curious campers followed their leader along the canyon’s edge as he continued to talk.**

**"God wants everyone to be close with Him forever, so He made a way for us to be close to Him again." At that moment, the campers rounded a corner in the path and saw a rope bridge stretching across the width of the canyon.**

**"Now, we can get to the other side!" Billy yelled as he ran towards the bridge. He tested the bottom rope with his foot. The ropes bounced slightly.**

**"Is it safe?" Louis asked, his eyebrows creased in worry.**

**"This bridge is definitely safe!" Ranger Reggie assured. "A bridge builder built it just for us. Even strong winds can't break this bridge! Come on, let's cross over and see the beautiful trees and flowers!"**

**Ranger Reggie carefully grasped the side handrail ropes with both hands and stepped onto the thickly braided center rope. Holding firmly to the handrails, Billy, Natalie, and Louis followed behind.**

**As he led the campers across, Ranger Reggie's voice was calm and confident, "God gives us a way to be close to Him, too. He knew we could never be good enough to get across the deep space between us and Him. He sent His only Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross. That way we could be forgiven forever and close to God always. It was as if the cross became a bridge from us to God."**

**"So, Jesus is like the bridge builder!" Louis commented. "When I decided to follow Jesus, it was like I was walking across a bridge to be close to God."**

**"Exactly right!" Ranger Reggie exclaimed. "All we have to do is choose to follow Jesus. God promises that whoever believes in Him will have life forever close to God, on earth and later in heaven, as part of God's forever family."**

**"That was amazing!" Billy exclaimed as he stepped off the rope bridge and onto the sweet-smelling, green grass.**

**"Wow! What a cool hike!" Louis shouted as he gave a high-five to Billy and Natalie. Natalie turned to congratulate Amanda. Her friend was not there. "Where's Amanda?" she exclaimed, with alarm in her voice.**

**Billy pointed to the other end of the bridge. Amanda stood silently near the canyon's edge, staring at the bridge. "Come on! What are you waiting for?" he called across to her.**

**"I can't do it! I just can't do it!" she yelled back, her voice shaking with fear. Ranger Reggie was already on his way back across the bridge.**

**"Here, walk with me," Ranger Reggie said as he reached out. "I'll stay right with you all the way. I'll even have my hands over your hands to guide you safely across."**

**"No! I can't," Amanda moaned as tears welled up in her eyes. "It's too high. I might fall!"**

**"I know you can do it! It is simple to cross and I'm right here with you. I promise I won't let you fall!" he assured her.**

**Finally, Amanda agreed and timidly stepped onto the rope bridge. Ranger Reggie firmly gripped her hands. As they slowly made their way across, Ranger Reggie whispered, "I'm so happy you decided to cross the bridge. It reminds me of how happy God the Father must be when we decide to follow Jesus. It's like the story Jesus told about a father who was very happy when his lost son finally came home. Do you know that story?"**

**Amanda shook her head as they took their next step together. He continued, "Well, the young man had left home. He spent all his money on wild living and thought his father would be angry with him for that."**

**"What did he do?" Amanda asked, her voice strengthening with each step.**

**"When he ran out of money, he got so hungry he decided to go home. He planned to ask his father to let him be one of his servants. He thought he had done too many wrong things to be treated as his father's son again," Ranger Reggie answered.**

**"Did his father let him be a servant?" Amanda asked.**

**"Even better!" Ranger Reggie explained as they neared the end of the bridge. "His father greeted him with a big hug and kiss. He gave him a ring, a robe, and new sandals. He even threw a welcome home party!" He paused as Billy and Louis reached out to help Amanda take the last step onto the fresh green grass. He stepped off the bridge behind her, scooped her up into a big hug, and said, "You did it!"**

**Amanda grinned and laughed with joy as her friends encircled her with hugs of their own. "It's awesome here. Thanks, Ranger Reggie, I never could have crossed this bridge without you!" she said with a smile as she turned to enjoy the cheerful welcome and congratulations of her friends.**