

The Son Who Obeyed – Story Time with Jesus Lesson 6

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Which Son Obeyed? children's Bible lesson from Matthew 21:28-32

This lesson is the six in a [nine part study for children on the parables of Jesus](#). For related ideas, search our website for "[Parables of Jesus](#)."

Lesson Six: The Son Who Obeyed His Father

Main idea: Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven do what the Bible commands, with the help and grace of God.

Teacher preparation:

- Read Scripture references, John 14:15, Matthew 7:21-23, 1 Corinthians 7:19, Micah 6:8, and Luke 17:10
- Gather: Bible; dry erase markers or chart paper and markers; hand out for each child ([click here for handout](#)); crayons, markers, and colored pencils; scissors
- Take time to meditate on this week's Scripture and think about your own life. Do you live by "cheap grace?" Do you say you're a Christian only to live in a way that is displeasing to God, because you know His grace covers your sins? In what ways is your walk not matching your talk? What is one way you can be more obedient to Christ this week?

Scripture references:

- Matthew 21:28-32
- Psalm 51:5
- Mark 12:30-31
- John 14:23
- 1 John 2:3-4
- Exodus 20:3-17

Game: Simon Says

Play a few simple rounds of Simon Says. Have the children spread out with room to move around them. Call out

different commands, such as “Simon says hop on one foot.” Every now and then, give a command without saying “Simon says” before it. If any child follows this command, then they are out. Play until there is one child left. Let them be “Simon” next.

Message:

Open in prayer, then say, This is our sixth week learning all about the parables. We sure have learned a lot in the past several weeks! As you remember, parables are stories Jesus told to teach us important lessons about the Kingdom of Heaven. From them, we learn what Heaven is like, what God is like, and what we should do as citizens of Heaven. We learned in the Story of the Soils that the message of the Kingdom of Heaven will be received differently by different people. In the story of the Wheat and Weeds and the story of the Fishing Net, we learned that when Jesus returns, he will separate those who believe in him from those who don't, so it's our job to tell everyone about his love. We learned that even the little things we do make a big difference in the Kingdom of Heaven in the Story of the Mustard Seed and the Story of the Yeast. In the Stories of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl, we learned that the Kingdom of Heaven is worth more than anything in this world. Last week in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant, we learned that as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we must forgive others when they wrong us, because Jesus has forgiven us. The parables remind us that we represent the Kingdom of Heaven, we represent Jesus, everywhere we go in the world. In today's parable, we will continue to learn about what we are supposed to do as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Follow along with me as I read from Matthew 21:28-32. In this story, Jesus is speaking to the priests and elders in Jerusalem.

²⁸ “But what do you think about this? A man with two sons told the older boy, ‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ The son answered, ‘No, I won't go,’ but later he changed his mind and went anyway. ³⁰ Then the father told the other son, ‘You go,’ and he said, ‘Yes, sir, I will.’ But he didn't go.

³¹ “Which of the two obeyed his father?” (Before continuing with the parable, allow the children to answer.)

They (the priests and elders) replied, “The first.”

Then Jesus explained his meaning: “I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. ³² For John the Baptist came and showed you the right way to live, but you didn't believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even when you saw this happening, you refused to believe him and repent of your sins.”

Last week's parable was spoken to people who already followed Jesus. Today's story was for the priests and elders. What do we know about the Jewish priests and elders of Jesus' time? (Allow the students to answer.) That's right, they were not great people. They thought that they had special privileges with God, and that they got to go to Heaven because of this. They thought they were better than everyone else, and they didn't follow the commandments of the Bible. Instead, they made up a bunch of silly, impossible to follow rules, and expected everyone to obey those. Why do you think Jesus told this parable to the priests and elders? (Allow students to answer.) The priests and the elders were like the second son, who said he would do what his father asked him to do, but then didn't do it. They looked like they were righteous, but they really did not love or obey the Lord. Who do you think Jesus is comparing to the first son in the story? (Allow students to answer.) The first son is like the corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes. These people were seen as the worst of the worst in society. It would have shocked and offended the priests and elders to hear that these people, who they just saw as dirty sinners, would enter the Kingdom of God before them.

Why do you think Jesus says these people, the lowest of society, will get into Heaven before the priests? What did they do right? (Allow children to answer.) Jesus tells us in Matthew 21:32 that these sinners listened to John the Baptist, who came before Jesus and talked about the Kingdom of Heaven. They were living a life full of sin, but when John the Baptist told them to repent, they did. Who can remind me what it means to repent? (Allow a student to respond.) To repent means to turn away from the wrong things we do in our lives and start to do the right things that God expects us to do. The first son in the story didn't obey his father at first, but then he changed his mind, he

repented, and obeyed his father. Psalm 51:5 tells us that we are born sinners. We are like the tax collectors and prostitutes in the story. Every one of us is full of sin, we all have told our heavenly Father “no,” when he requires us to do something. We have not loved God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. This is what God has called us to do in Mark 12:30-31 and we don’t always do it. We don’t obey God.

But does following God really matter? Isn’t it enough to believe that Jesus died for our sins and to love him? This is something that a lot of people today believe. Many people believe that we get into Heaven, that we are saved from our sins by just believing in God and that we don’t have to do anything else. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.” We are saved by grace, and there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. We become citizens of Heaven when we believe in God. This is very important to remember: we don’t earn our way into Heaven! But is it enough to just say we believe in God? Does it mean anything when we say we believe Jesus died for our sins, and then we don’t live lives that are pleasing to Him? How can we say we love Jesus and NOT follow his commands? Let’s have a sword drill to see what Jesus has to say about this. Remove all fingers and bookmarks from your Bible, and when I say go, turn to John 14:23. Go! (Read, or have a student read, John 14:23.) “Jesus replied, ‘All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.’” When we truly love someone, we are eager to do things that please them. I love my husband, so I cook him his favorite foods and watch football with him. Who are some people in your life whom you love? How do you show you love them? (Make a list on the board of the children’s answers. Encourage them if necessary to include siblings, friends, teachers, parents and other relatives.)

That is a good list we made! So when we love someone, we do things to show that we love them. According to the verse we just read, what do we do to show Jesus that we love him? (Allow students to respond.) If we love Jesus, we do what he says. The Bible is very clear on this point. 1 John 2:3-4 says, “And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴ If someone claims, ‘I know God,’ but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth.” Here’s the hard truth: we don’t really know and love God unless we follow his commandments. Are we going to be perfect at this all the time? Of course not. Like I said, we are all sinners and it takes God’s grace to save us. Once we receive that grace into our lives, we don’t just sit around and keep living a sinful life. We do our best to follow the commands of God, like the first son in our parable. He started off by sinning and not obeying his father, and then he did obey his father. The second son looked like he was going to obey, but didn’t at all. We don’t want to be like that! We don’t want to just look like “good people.” Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven do what the Bible commands, with the help and grace of God.

How do we get to know God, so we can know the commands he wants us to follow? (Allow the students to respond.) We go to church, we pray, we spend time with other Christians, we read books about God and we read the Bible. Those are all ways for us to get to know what God expects of us. What are ten very important rules that God wants us to follow, which are recorded in Exodus 20? (Allow children to respond with the ten commandments. Write them on the board.) The ten commandments are: Love God more than anything else, don’t make anything in your life more important than God, respect the name of God, rest on the seventh day of the week, respect your parents, don’t murder or hurt people, be faithful to your spouse, don’t steal, don’t lie, and be happy with what you have- don’t be jealous of other people’s stuff.

These are all some good rules for us to follow. Why do you think God commands us to do these things? It is to be mean? (Allow students to answer.) Of course God is not being mean. He gives us rules to follow because he knows that when we do these things, we will live better, happier lives. These rules were made for us because God loves us so much and wants the best for us. The ten commandments may seem like a lot to remember, but Jesus sums up the commandments of God nicely when he says in Mark 12:30-31, “ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.” We show we believe in and love God when we obey him,

and we obey him by putting him first in our lives, and by loving others.

End in prayer.

Craft: Mini Book ([download here](#))

Every week, students will make a mini book that retells the parable in very basic terms. This sixth mini book in their library reminds the kids how to obey God like citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. To begin, demonstrate how to fold the book. Fold along the solid lines. Start by folding the long side to the long side. Crease well. Keep it folded, then fold in half, crease well, and fold in half again, creasing well. Now unfold it all the way and fold it in half short side to short side, so the dotted line in the center is folded in half. Cut along this dotted line. Do not overcut! Now unfold the paper and fold it in half again, this time long side to long side. Now for the tricky part. Pinch both short ends of the paper, with the crease facing up. Bring your hands together, causing the cut in the middle of the paper to open up. You should have a plus sign now. The last step is to press all the pages down so the cover is on top. Mush the pages down and crease all the folds. You may need to use a marker or pencil for these creases, as they are all now stacked up on each other. Now that you have a little book, have the kids write their name on the cover. Read each page and have the children illustrate it accordingly.

1 ratings 5 stars on average