



Resources Available with Seen

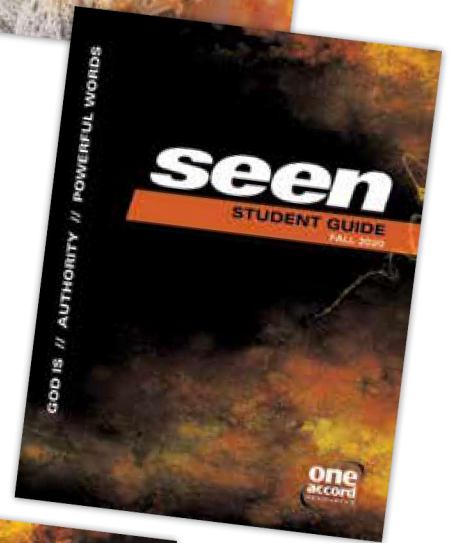
Leader Guide features include:

- 12 lessons
- Bible commentary and Bible culture clues
- Expert resource articles (topics include helping teens in crisis and understanding trauma)
- In-lesson teacher tips to help deal with sticky situations
- Bonus material to help with hard questions



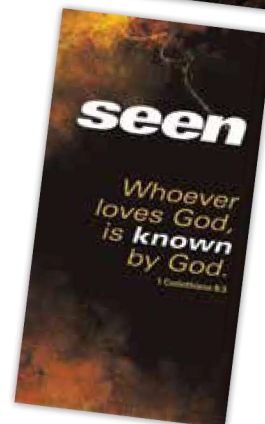
Student Guide features include:

- Journal space
- Scripture excerpts and Remember Bible verses
- Discussion questions
- Weekly challenges for further study



Digital Resources features include:

- Video resources for each lesson
- 12 customizable Leader Guide lesson outlines
- 12 reproducible student group discussion cards
- PowerPoint visuals for each lesson
- Memory verse visuals for each lesson
- Weekly parent connection materials: text and email messages, social media promotional materials
- Weekly student connection materials: text messages, social media promotional materials
- Youth curriculum logo graphics



Spiritual Growth

God Is ...

Our Father

This is the main learning objective for the lesson.

Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1
Luke 15:11-24

Easily see all the materials you need for the lesson.

SUPPLIES

Bibles
timer
Digital Resources
Student Guides
paper
pencils or pens
whiteboard, dry-erase markers
(optional: mural paper, tape)

CONNECTION

God is your Father, and He loves you.

REMEMBER

"For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

1 Corinthians 8:6

PREP

God is often described in the Bible as "the Father," especially in the New Testament. It is a term that acknowledges His love, His concern for us, His authority, and His closeness to us.

As you prepare to lead students to understand God's role as a father, it may help to focus your mind on the God you know from Scripture, the God you know from your own relationship with Him, and the God you pray to, worship, and follow. The main point of this lesson is to help students grasp not only the power of God, but the personal love He has for them.

The truth is, for you and your students, there can be negative or positive associations with the word *father*, most often influenced by your experiences with the dad in your life. As you lead students,

LEADER TIP

A graphic of the Remember verse is provided in *Digital Resources* for every session, along with other resources, including a PowerPoint template for you to customize to help lead the session time.

Practical tips and training to help leaders. Look for these throughout the *Leader Guide*.

The Remember verse will help students as they recall the lesson theme.

Personally connect with the lesson as you prepare.

be aware of what their experiences and reactions may be, and guide them to see the biblical God who is a loving, good, kind, and protective Father. God's role is everything a father *should* be, and we can look to Him to know what a perfect father is truly like.

LEADER'S BIBLE NOTES

This story of the lost (or prodigal) son is the third in a trilogy of stories of the lost. They each tell us something, not only about God's purposes, but about God's relationship with His people. The audience Jesus spoke to here was made up of Jews—those who were set apart long ago in the time of Abraham as the treasured people of God.

These stories about finding lost things are meant to paint a picture in people's minds. It's familiar imagery—God coming for them, finding them, rescuing them, and restoring them. But there are some differences too. These stories are being told while Pharisees, Jewish religious leaders, look on in disapproval—noting that Jesus is willing to welcome sinners and even eat with them. But Jesus goes on talking—welcoming anyone to hear what He says about the Father God who will not give up on them, who will search for them, and who rejoices when any sinner (not just a Jewish one) is restored to the kingdom. This is the Father we want our students to meet and know and love. There are a few things to remember when studying this Scripture passage: 1) this is a parable (a story that makes a point); and 2) examine the context. If you do nothing else with your students, teach them that the Bible is more than a collection of verses—it is a greater story of God's relationship with His people that is still unfolding today. If you pluck a verse out, you may get some good from it, but you will miss much.

OVERVIEW

Preview: Give a glimpse of today's Connection point.

Connect: Analyze what the Bible says.

Explore: Hear what students have to say.

Act: Give students something to do.

PREVIEW

Before class, write this statement on the whiteboard (or on mural paper taped to a wall): "My dad _____."

Get ready for the topic and understand the biblical context of that day's lesson.

A quick glimpse at the lesson outline.

PREVIEW is meant to give a glimpse of the day's topic in an interactive way.

God Is ... // Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1

Use the U1L1 Intro video as students arrive to spark discussion or attract attention. Welcome students as they enter, and invite them to fill in the blank on the wall with the provided markers.

When everyone has arrived and had a chance to add a response, take some time to discuss some of the answers. Don't press anyone for details, and be sensitive to the fact that for some teens, the idea of "my dad" is hurtful. Be careful not to assume that anything written on the board is meant as a joke.

We all have different experiences with our dads. Some of us have really great memories, and some of us might have gone through hard times with our dads, or maybe we don't have any memories of our dads at all. The Bible often talks about God as our Father. Jesus even called Him "Abba," which was a common term used between sons and fathers, much like we might call our fathers "Dad" today. Let's take some time to look at a parable Jesus told to help us better see God as a loving Father.

CONNECT is the main teaching portion.

LEADER TIP

Encourage students to bring their Bibles or to use Bible apps on their phones. Excerpts of the Scripture with each lesson are also provided in the *Student Guides*.

CONNECT

Jesus told many parables when He taught. A parable is a story that helps listeners understand a deeper spiritual lesson. Many teachers during Jesus' time used parables to help their listeners understand specific points because listeners could connect to the more-relatable ideas.

One of Jesus' most famous parables is about the prodigal son. As we read through it and discuss it today, let's think about what kind of father this story talks about and how Jesus wanted it to influence the way we see God.

Ask the students to turn to Luke 15 in their Bibles, and let someone read aloud verses 11, 12.

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them."

In Bible times, sons received their inheritance (money and property) from their fathers when the fathers died. In this parable, the younger son asks for his inheritance while his father is still alive, which would have been a huge insult. He's basically saying that he doesn't want to have anything to do with his father, and he wants his money now, even though his father would have still provided for him.

Ask the following questions and allow a few students to respond:

Why do you think the son wanted his inheritance early? What does this show you about the son?

How do you think the father felt when he heard his son's request?

Why do you think the father decided to give his son his inheritance early?

What would you do if your dad gave you a big sum of money?

ZOOM QUESTIONS

Imagine living in a society that is built on the concepts of honor and shame. What kind of result would the younger son's actions have brought on his family? On his father? On his older brother? Why would that be significant?

ZOOM
Questions aim to take students a little deeper, for those who are ready for that.

Ask someone to read Luke 15:13-16 aloud.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."

The son took what his dad gave him and left his family home. During Jesus' time, people often stayed in their father's households their whole lives. They wouldn't necessarily all live in the same house, but they would have a connected home where all the extended family would live and work together. It was the father's responsibility to care for his family and provide for them. The son in Jesus' parable is breaking all the traditions by asking for his inheritance early and then moving far away from his family. He's turning his back on his dad.

Why do you think the son acted the way he did?

Have you ever wanted to do something like that? Why or why not?

The son ends up in a tough situation. He wastes all his money and finds himself in a famine. He ends up having to take a job feeding pigs. Keep in mind that this man is Jewish, and pigs were considered unclean animals according to God's law. The only people who would have had pigs were Gentiles—non-Jews. So, this son has no money, ends up being a servant to a Gentile, and is defiling himself by being around pigs every day. His situation could not be much worse.

At this point in Jesus' story, we don't know much about the father, except that he gave his son what he asked for. All we know is that the son seemed to want to live life his own way, and it ended up not turning out as he expected.

Invite students to find groups of two or three others and discuss the following questions:

Share a time you felt frustrated with how things were going at home.

How did you respond in that situation? How did your parents respond?

ZOOM QUESTIONS

Consider the idea that the parable may be representing God's attitude toward the Israelite people, the Jews, who would have made up the audience for Jesus' teachings here. Who would the father in the story represent? Who would the younger son represent? Why would Jesus paint such a bad picture of the son's behavior and situation? What do you think His point would be in doing so?

Ask someone to read Luke 15:17-20 aloud.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

The son comes to his senses and realizes how he has sinned—not just against his dad, but against God as well. He did not honor his father as God's Word talks about. Once the son realized the way he had sinned, he was eager to get back to his dad to apologize.

The son hopes to go back to his dad and, at best, be his servant. Again, keeping in mind the culture during this time, the son had rejected his father. It would have been unthinkable for his father to take him back and accept him as a son again. It is likely that the father would have been seen as weak in the community if he did this.

*Ask a student to read verse 20 aloud again. Invite the students to think about the father's response.

During Jesus' time, older men didn't run. It wouldn't have been a respectable thing to do. But this dad sees his lost son coming home, and he runs to him, filled with compassion!

Here's an option to have students take over the teaching for part of the lesson.

LEADER TIP

*Instead of continuing to teach the lesson yourself, pause before the marked paragraph and allow students to lead the rest of the teaching in small groups. Students can use the *Student Guide* View pages or the *Your View* cards as provided in *Digital Resources*. If you use this option, skip down to the starred (**) paragraph on the next page after the small group time concludes.

Check out the *Digital Resources* for extra materials you can use during and after the lesson.

Why do you think the father responded the way he did?

Ask someone to read Luke 15:21-24 aloud.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

The dad not only allows his son to come home, but he throws him a huge party. When everyone would have expected the father to reject the son, he instead welcomes him back into the family with joy. He restores him fully and shows him great mercy and love.

****Remember that this story is a parable Jesus is telling. It is teaching us something about God as Father and the way He views a sinner who comes to Him asking for forgiveness.**

ZOOM QUESTIONS

What is the story teaching us about God and His attitude toward us?

We all have different experiences with our dads. Some good, some bad. But in this parable, Jesus shows us what our heavenly Father is like. Even when we turn away from Him, He's always waiting to welcome us home. He throws a party and rejoices when we come back to Him! He is a Father who is loving and forgiving and full of compassion.

EXPLORE

Erase the whiteboard or put up a new piece of butcher paper on the wall (or lay one down on the floor). Write this sentence: "My heavenly Father always _____." Let students finish the sentence and write down their thoughts in words or images on the board or paper.

Students can also use their guide pages to jot down their thoughts, impressions, and doodles.

Let's look at a few more Bible verses about God the Father. As we read them, jot down any words that jump out at you or any thoughts or images that come to

EXPLORE is where students take the concepts they've been talking about and have time to respond to them, whether that be through worship or prayer, or reading more of the Bible, or talking and writing about related ideas in their *Student Guides*.

God Is ... // Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1

mind. What qualities of God do you hear described? What do these verses mean to you?

*"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."
Psalm 68:5*

*"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"
Matthew 6:26*

*"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."
James 1:17*

*"My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in."
Proverbs 3:11, 12*

Consider inviting students to write a letter to God, confessing a time they rebelled against Him. Now encourage them to write a response from God based on what they learned in the parable today. (Students who don't want to write could record videos on their phones instead.)

After a few minutes, invite everyone back together.

God has great love for you. He is the perfect example of a father who cares, forgives, loves, and shows concern. He also disciplines sometimes—only because He wants us to live in the way that He knows is the very best. You can always trust God and come to Him with any sin you've committed. He will forgive you and restore you, just like we read about today.

ACT

Sometimes God feels so big and distant, you may think that you can't really know Him and that He doesn't really know you. But that's not what we see happening in the Bible. Like the father in the story of the lost son, God wants to wrap His arms around us and make us part of His family. But, for some of us, it can be hard to receive God's love—especially if we've done some foolish things like the younger son. Here are some thoughts you might have as you go through your week, along with some truth from the Bible.

How could I ever know God? I don't even know what's happening in my next class!

Remember, not every student comes from a good situation. Find tips like this throughout the *Leader Guide*.

LEADER TIP

If you have students who come from difficult family situations, pay special attention to them today. If they need to talk or process their feelings, let them know you're available.

ACT gives teens something to act on: a spiritual discipline to exercise, a question to answer, a prayer to pray, a new idea to think on—something they can take with them out of their group time and use in their week.

Ask a student to read 1 John 4:7 aloud.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

If you know how to love others, then you know something about God. Quick! Tell me some ways to love others! (Call on students who have answers, and repeat those answers or write them on the board.) **All right! So, you've got some good ideas about how to love others—you can trust that you can know God the Father too.**

God loves us and forgives us. No matter what sin you've committed, God is ready and willing to forgive you. The parable Jesus shared is one that reminds us that God is merciful and truly loves each one of us.

Here's another thought some of you might have:

I don't think I'm good enough to be in God's family. How do I know He really wants me?

Listen to these words from Ephesians 1:4-6, from *The Message* version of the Bible:

Long before [God] laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.

Did you catch that? God not only accepts us—even when our lives stink—but He decided He wanted us long, long ago. Before we were even born!

This is the Father we have. This is the Father you get to keep getting to know! Don't forget to continue learning about Him this week.

And one more thing. If your earthly dad is a good influence in your life, consider this:

What can I do to talk with my dad more this week?

If your earthly dad has not been such a good influence in your life, consider this:

Do I have another godly man in my family I can rely on? What do I need to do to talk with someone like that?

If you don't have someone in mind, come talk to me.

Use the Spirit-Led Insight to pause and pray for your students.

LEADER TIP

Consider sharing a time you struggled with knowing or accepting God's love. What helped remind you of God's love in your life?

Spirit-Led Insight

In John 16, Jesus comforts His disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit who will guide them to all truth, leading them to the Father. Ask the Spirit to lead students to the Father today.

Pastoring Tip

Make a personal connection with the parents/guardians of your students, letting them know who you are and your excitement in teaching their children this quarter.

Make connections with the parents of your students. Tools provided in *Digital Resources* will help you to do just that.

LEADER TIP

An important part of deepening your relationships with your students is ending your class time by praying over them. We've provided biblically based statements you can use as prayers, or you may want to create your own to remind teens of who God is, what He wants for them, and how to connect with Him.

Lastly, if you see people struggling this week because of something going on with their dads, ask them this, and then tell them the story about the one perfect Father:

I heard this story about this guy who took his dad's money and ran off. Can you guess how he turned out?

Before you go out this week, let me pray for you: *May you accept God the Father's gift of loving grace, freely given through His Son Jesus, and join in rejoicing with those who once were lost but now are found. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Reminders for you: In the *Student Guide* are suggestions for verses for further study of God our Father. Remind students that they can contact you during the week if questions come up about anything they heard today. If students express interest in making a commitment to follow Christ, see the Salvation Path section at the back of this book for help in guiding them through this decision concerning repentance and baptism.

In *Digital Resources* you'll find Family Connection tools and Student Connection helps for reaching out to your students during the week as well. Remember to let students know that you (or other leaders) are available to speak to them or to their family members if they need more information or would like you to pray with or for them.

Reminder

Remind students to complete the activities in the *SEEN Student Guide* and to work through the information about each lesson in the *SEEN PowerZone Student Booklet*.

Encourage your students to use their *Student Guides* to respond to God and work through the lesson concepts.

EVALUATE

1. Do students understand why we call God our Father?
2. Can students identify the differences between God the Father and the person they call father in their life?
3. Will students choose to ask for forgiveness from the Father who loves them when they sin against Him?

Evaluate how your students are growing in their knowledge and faith of God.

Quick reminders for you each lesson!

Our Father // Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1

God Is ...

Our Father

Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1
Luke 15:11-24

CONNECTION God is your Father, and He loves you.

REMEMBER 1 Corinthians 8:6

"For us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

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Our Father // Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1

YOUR TAKE

What is your takeaway from the Bible concept, stories, or things you discussed with your group?

the Remember verse (shown on the first page of this lesson):

for whom we what?

and through whom we what?

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God Is ... // Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1

VIEW

Today we talked about how God is the Father and that He loves you. We all have different experiences with our dads—some good and some bad. But we know from the Bible that God is a Father who is compassionate, loving, just, and good—all the time!

Read the following passage from **Luke 15:20-24**. As you read, think about how you would feel as the son, who had rejected his father, lost everything, and then decided to return.

"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

The father could have been very angry with his son. But when his son returned, the father greeted him with forgiveness, love, and a party!

- Why do you think the father responded this way?

God loves you so much. He wants you to turn to Him, to repent and follow Him. When you come back to Him, He is waiting to greet you with open arms.

- How have I experienced my relationship with my own dad?
- How do I experience God as my Father?
- Do I trust that God loves me? Why or why not?

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God Is ... // Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1

YOUR STORY

What new things did you learn about God? How will you relate to Him differently? What did you learn about what it means that God is your Father?

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God Is ... // Quarter 1 Unit 1 Lesson 1

SEARCH

Look up these verses about God being our Father, and think about how the words make you feel. What could you do to get closer to the Father God this week?

OWN IT

Circle any words below, or draw any responses, that shine additional light on the idea of God as your Father.

- **1 John 3:1a** "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"
- **Psalms 68:5, 6** "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing."
- **Romans 8:15** "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father!'"
- **John 15:9** "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."

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