

# Word One Bible Study

## The Great Pen Adventure

By Cindy Wheeler

Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, Lectionary Series C

### OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Expand their understanding of rePENtance and its importance in a Christian's life by studying Jesus' prodigal parable.
2. Receive affirmation of the Father's accepting, forgiving love.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Bibles

Copies of study for participants

### GROUP GUIDELINES

Divide into groups of 4-6 people. Choose as leader the person with the least amount of cash with them, demonstrating their personal PENury (poverty). The leader's job is to keep the group moving through the material and ensure everyone has a chance to share. Participants always have the right to pass if they do not feel comfortable sharing a response.

### BUILDING COMMUNITY

1. Ask for volunteers to read THE GREAT PEN ADVENTURE aloud (printed at the end of this study). Keep the rhythm by adding claps.
2. Share two of the following with your group.
  - a. Something that PENS you in
  - b. A time you felt lost or a story about being lost
  - c. Something you found recently

### LOOKING AT GOD'S WORD

1. THE GREAT PEN ADVENTURE recreates one of Jesus' most famous parables as found in Luke 15:11-32. Read the parable in Luke as well as verses 1-3, then discuss.
2. What is rePENtance? How did the younger son show it? How did the father receive him? What motivates the father's actions?
3. What situation prompted Jesus to tell this parable? Who were the Pharisees and scribes? Why were the Pharisees grumbling? What was wrong with Jesus' actions from their perspective?
4. Given this context, identify the people in the story with people from Jesus' day.
  - a. The father
  - b. The younger son
  - c. The older son

### REINFORCING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

1. What seems to be the message Jesus wanted understood from the parable? What makes you sick? lost? Can you be too lost, too sick, or too sinful for Jesus? How does Jesus find you? make you well? remove your sin?
2. What does God, our Parent, desire from us when we have acted like the prodigal son?
3. What does God, our Parent, desire from us when we have acted like the older son?
4. Who might be a modern day parallel to the story's characters?
5. Why do you think Jesus doesn't tell us how the older brother responded to the father's words?
6. Why do you think He left the story unresolved?

### CLOSING

Close with a minute of silence for personal rePENtance. Starting with the leader, turn to the person on your left and say "Our Heavenly Father loves, accepts and forgives you in Jesus' name." Finish by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

## The Great PEN Adventure

Woke up one day and I'd had enough,  
working all day was just too tough.  
Work was a drag, it PENned me in,  
I needed my freedom more than kin.  
"Dad, give me what will belong to me,  
And I'll hit the road for another county.  
Have to go, I have to go.  
I love you Dad, you know it's so.

I lived the high life, have no doubt,  
life was good til the money ran out.  
Then a famine came and jobs were slim,  
tending pigs was more than grim.  
Empty belly, crummy work,  
not even bean pods for a perk.  
Dad's workers do better than me.  
I'll apologize and work for free.  
Have to choose, just be a chooser,  
PENitent or pig PEN loser?

Dad saw me first and ran to greet,  
With hugs and kisses, happy feet.  
"Against God and you, dad, have I sinned,  
No longer fit to be your kin."  
"Hush now, boy, Quick! Bring the best!  
Robe, shoes, ring and all the rest.  
Kill the fat calf, a party we'll give,  
"For my son was dead, but now he lives."

Big bro heard a party goin' down,  
Started to pout and wouldn't come roun.'  
Dad went out to ask him in,  
But it didn't appear that he would win.  
"Like a slave I worked and always obeyed,  
Yet not even a goat for me was slayed."  
"You're always with me, mine is yours,  
But disPENse with gloom, the party stirs.  
My son was lost but now is found.  
RePENt, forgive, let love surround.

Hard to believe, but it did hapPEN,  
Dad's love for me did not dampEN.

*Originally published in Discovery Bible Studies.  
Updated for youthESource in December 2015*

youthESource is published on the Web by the LCMS Office of National Mission—Youth Ministry. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; 1-800-248-1930; [www.youthesource.com](http://www.youthesource.com). Editor: Sherrah Holobaugh Behrens. VOL. 13 NO. 2. February 2016.