

# CELEBRATING THE WORK OF GOD

## Luke 15:11-32 // The Parable of the Prodigal Son and His Brother

*This worship service centers on the parable of the prodigal son and his brother. Here are some materials to help you create your own worship service.*

**MAIN THEME:** *What works of God inspire you to celebrate?*

---

## CHOOSING MUSIC // FOR SINGING

- ✪ **Before the Throne of God Above** [Suggested Key: D]  
Text: Charitie Lees Bancroft | Music: Vikki Cook  
© 1997 Sovereign Grace Worship  
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing (Integrity Music [DC Cook]))
  
- ✪ **By Our Love** [Suggested Key: G]  
Text and Music: Christy Nockels  
© 2009 Christy Nockels Publishing Designee, sixsteps Music, [worshiptogether.com](http://worshiptogether.com) songs  
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)
  
- ✪ **God of Justice** [Suggested Key: F]  
Text and Music: Tim Hughes  
© 2004 Thankyou Music  
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)
  
- ✪ **Hear Our Praises** [Suggested Key: C]  
Text and Music: Reuben Morgan  
© 1998 Hillsong Music Publishing  
(admin. Capitol CMG Publishing)
  
- ✪ **Perdón, Señor (Forgive Us, Lord)** [Suggested Key: F]  
Text and Music: Jorge Lockward  
© 2000 Abingdon Press  
(admin. The Copyright Company)
  
- ✪ **Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** [Suggested Key: F or G]  
Text: Joachim Neander Music: Stralsund Gesangbuch  
© Public Domain

## CREATING DRAMA // FOR HEARING

Use our version of the scripture passage that includes three readers. Enlist volunteers to prepare, practice, and read it in the style of a readers' theatre. (below)

### LUKE 15:11-32 // An Occasion for Celebration

**Reader 1:** A reading from Luke 15: An Occasion for Celebration. Jesus said, “A certain man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the inheritance.’ Then the father divided his estate between them.

**Reader 2:** Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living. When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country and he began to be in need. He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything.

**Reader 3:** When he came to his senses, he said: ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have more than enough food, but I’m starving to death! I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands.” ’ So he got up and went to his father.

**Reader 1:** While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then his son said: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!’ They began to celebrate.

**Reader 2:** Now his older son was in the field. Coming in from the field, he approached the house and heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. The servant replied: ‘Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he received his son back safe and sound.’ Then the older son was furious and didn’t want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. He answered his father: ‘Look, I’ve served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you’ve never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours returned, after gobbling up your estate on prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’

**Reader 3:** Then his father said: ‘Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.’”

**Reader 1:** This is the Word of the Lord

**All: Thanks be to God.**

Purchase and use the video “Prodigal Daughter” from Worship House Media as a way to present the scripture passage in a fresh way. You can preview it below.

Since this is a long scripture passage, you can divide its reading into two parts within the worship service: Luke 15:11-20a and Luke 15:20b-24. The first half illustrates the son’s mistakes, and the second half illustrates the father’s forgiveness and the family celebration. In our sample service, you can see how we chose to do this.

## FINDING ART // FOR SEEING

Purchase and use “Dancing Children Silhouette Loop” from The Work of the People [[workofthepeople.com](http://workofthepeople.com)] with scenes of orphan children dancing on a rooftop in India. You can preview it below.

Trace a large silhouette of a person on butcher paper or some other material. Before, during, or after worship, invite worshipers to respond to this question on the silhouette with different marker colors: What works of God inspire you to celebrate? You might encourage worshipers to color and add to the silhouette.

Purchase and use “The Father & His Two Sons” depicting the Prodigal Son from [www.eyekons.com](http://www.eyekons.com). Use this art during the scripture reading, for a moment of silent reflection, or in some other way. We especially like the artwork by Laura James and Jeff Condon.

## LIVING WORSHIP // FOR DOING

Encourage worshipers to find ways to connect their story to the story of the Prodigal Son. Here are some practical ways to do that in their lives and communities this week:

- Ask God to point you to someone who might be considered an “outcast” or “prodigal” this week. Find a way to show them you care for them and accept them.
- Pray a silent prayer of “thanks” to God when a broken relationship is restored.
- Take pictures of moments worth celebrating this week and share them on social media with a common hashtag such as #celebrate.

## MAKING SPACE // FOR WORSHIPING

Fill the worship space with items that reflect a party or celebration. This might include balloons, party favors, bright colors, or other similar materials. If you are using this as the second week in the module series, you might add these items reflecting celebration to materials you used last week.

## WRITING POETRY// FOR PRAYING

Incorporate a Prayer of Confession. A prayer of confession says, “I’m sorry, God.” One of the most well-known prayers of confession says:

*Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. Forgive what our lips tremble to name, what our hearts can no longer bear, and what has become for us a consuming fire of judgment. Set us free from a past that we cannot change; open to us a future in which we can be changed; and grant us grace to grow more and more in your likeness and image, through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.*

You might use this prayer or rewrite it in your own words. If you choose to use this prayer or another prayer of confession, be sure to remind worshipers that just like the father in the prodigal son story, God always forgives us and takes us back with open arms of love and celebration. You can remind worshipers of this by reading a verse such as Ezekiel 36:25-28 after the prayer or incorporating this scripture passage into your prayer. If you need help crafting your own prayer, go to The Studio on our website [[samford.edu/go/cwa](http://samford.edu/go/cwa)] and watch Episode 4: Praying in Public.

# SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

*Celebrating the Work of God // Luke 15:11-32 // The Parable of the Prodigal Son and His Brother*

## WELCOME

Say hello to other worshipers and welcome them in the name of Christ

## SONGS AND STORIES

Begin by singing the chorus of the hymn, *Tell Me the Stories of Jesus*. A few days before worship, invite 2-3 worshipers to prepare brief testimonies completing this statement: "The story of Jesus is a story of ..." Sing the refrain of the hymn between each person's story.

## THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

*[Light a candle to represent the light of Christ]*

**Leader:** The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**All:** **And also with you.**

**Leader:** Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**All:** **Who made heaven and earth.**

**Leader:** Let us pray. Mighty God of Mercy, we thank you for the resurrection dawn, bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes every day new. We acknowledge that you have brought us in safety to this new day, and you have called us, your servants, into ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to step out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All:** **Amen.**

## SONGS OF PRAISE

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
Hear Our Praises

## SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 15:11-20a // The Prodigal // Part 1

## SONG OF CONFESSION

Perdón, Señor

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Leader:** God, we call to you and name you as eternal, ever-present, and boundless in love. Yet there are times, O God, when we fail to recognize you in the daily business of our lives. Have mercy on us, O God.

**All:** **Accept our repentance and grant us forgiveness.**

**Leader:** Sometimes shame clenches tightly around our hearts, and we hide our true feelings. Sometimes fear makes us small, and we miss the chance to speak from our strength. Sometimes doubt invades our hopefulness, and we degrade the wisdom you have given us for your use. Have mercy on us, O God.

**All:** **Accept our repentance and grant us forgiveness.**

**Leader:** God, we lower our heads before you and we confess that we have too often forgotten that we are yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to you. Have mercy on us, O God.

**All:** **Accept our repentance and grant us forgiveness.**

**Leader:** Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to you in the world. Remind us to be who you would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us near to you and build our relationship with you and with those whom you have given us on earth. Have mercy on us, O God.

**All:** **Accept our repentance and grant us forgiveness.**

**Leader:** Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. Forgive what our lips tremble to

name, what our hearts can no longer bear, and what has become for us a consuming fire of judgment. Set us free from a past that we cannot change; open to us a future in which we can be changed; and grant us grace to grow more and more in your likeness and image, through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Have mercy on us, O God.

**All: Accept our repentance and grant us forgiveness.**

*[Sing Perdon, Señor to end this time of confession]*

## **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Ezekiel 36:25-28

## **SONG OF GRATITUDE**

Before the Throne of God Above

## **SCRIPTURE READING**

The Prodigal // Part 2 // Luke 15:20b-24

## **VIDEO REFLECTION**

Purchase, download, and use “The Prodigal Daughter” from Worship House Media as an interesting twist on the scripture passage.

## **MESSAGE**

## **SONG OF RESPONSE**

God of Justice

## **CLOSING PRAYER TIME**

Invite worshipers to gather in groups of 4-5 and encourage them to find ways to connect their story to the story of the Prodigal Son. Pray for one another as they live in their different communities this week. Ask God to help them find an “outcast” or “prodigal” and befriend them. Encourage them to pray prayers of thanks for broken relationships that have been restored.

*[Sing the chorus of God of Justice to end this prayer time]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **SENDING**

**Leader:** May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**All: Amen.**

**Leader:** Friends, go in peace to love and serve.

**All: With God’s help, we will.**