



Main Point: No matter what you've done or how far you feel you've strayed, God's love is constant, waiting to embrace you.

Key Scriptures: Luke 15:11-32, Proverbs 14:12, Romans 5:8, 1 John 1:9

Introduction

Welcome, everyone! Today, I'm excited to tell you that today we're kicking off our new lesson series, "Plot Twist."

Think about your favorite movie or TV show for a second. What's your favorite part? It's probably the moment you didn't see coming; the big reveal or the shocking turn of events, the moment that changes everything you thought you knew. That's what makes stories real and raw and come to life. They grab our attention and stick with us long after the credits roll.

For example...

[Teacher's Note: Play short movie clips with plot twists in them. I had one for every lesson in the series. Make a thing of it. See if the kids can guess which movie /plot twist you're going to show. This week's clip is from Frozen and can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkM7afqR-kc>]

Man, Hans was a bad dude. No one saw that coming.

In this "Plot Twist" series, we're not going to look at movies but we're going to be looking at stories that we see within the pages of Scripture. These aren't events that actually happened with real characters and real outcomes. They are stories that were told by the master story teller Himself. Some people refer to these stories as parables and their author as Jesus of Nazareth.

As Jesus told these stories, we're going to notice an unexpected moment, a plot twist hidden in each one of them. It's in these moments that Jesus revealed something profound and surprising about God's nature and about ourselves.

To get us started, I want to ask you a fun question. If you had a huge amount of money and no rules, what's the first thing you'd do? [Teacher's Note: Allow for responses.]

Don't hold back. Let your imagination run wild. Maybe you'd buy a mansion, or a private jet, or a lifetime supply of your favorite snack. The freedom, the opportunity; it sounds amazing, right?

Lesson

Today, we're going to look at a story about a kid who had all the freedom and money he could want, but discovered it wasn't what he thought it would be. Our story is found in the book of Luke, chapter 15. The main characters are a father and his two sons. It seems like a pretty normal family until we see that the younger son walked up to his dad and said something absolutely outrageous.

Luke 15:11-12 (ESV)

11 And [Jesus] said, "There was a man who had two sons. **12** And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them.

The son essentially said, "Dad, give me my share of the inheritance now." In their culture, an inheritance was given after a father had died. For the son to ask for it while his dad was still alive was a massive insult. It was like saying, "I wish you were dead. I don't want to wait until after you're gone. I want what is mine, and I want it now."

This was the ultimate act of disrespect, selfishness, and impatience. He demanded to have a life without his father's presence or authority, a life completely on his own terms. The son's desire for wealth and independence was the very first step on his journey away from everything that truly mattered.

And yet, the father didn't get angry. He didn't yell or refuse. With what must have been a heartbroken generosity, he divided his property and gave the younger son his half. We can only imagine the sorrow in the father's heart

as he watched his son take the money and pack his bags, leaving not just the family farm, but behind every relationship and everything that defined him. He was a son in name only, having essentially cut ties with his family and community.

With his pockets full and a burning desire for freedom, the younger son headed for a "distant country." This wasn't just a different town; this was a place far away from his family, his values, and his identity. He was off to build a life on his own terms.

And for a while, it was probably amazing. He spent his money on what the Bible calls "wild living." He threw parties, made new friends, and lived without a single rule. He was the life of the party, the person everyone wanted to be around. But as we all know, a life built on fleeting pleasures is fragile. His fair-weather friends disappeared as quickly as his money did, and he was left alone, broke, and lost.

But then his situation got even worse. A famine came on the land. Let's pick it up in verse 15.

Luke 15:15-16 (ESV)

15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16** And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

The son was so desperate that he had to take the most humiliating job a young Jewish man could take: feeding pigs. A pig was considered an unclean animal, and being a pig herder meant he was not only poor but spiritually and socially isolated.

He was so hungry that he longed to fill his stomach with the very same slop the pigs were eating. He had gone from being a beloved son in a rich home to being a desperate servant, begging for scraps from animals. This was rock bottom. It's a perfect illustration of Proverbs 14:12.

Proverbs 14:12 (ESV)

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