
“Parable of Two Sons”

Children’s Bible Study on Matthew
21:23-32



Actions Speak Louder Than Words...God’s Speak Loudest of All Sunday School Suggestions For the Parable of the Two Sons

“I’ll believe it when I see it...” This is an oft-quoted maxim that reminds us how important it is to follow through on promises. It can be easy to “talk a big game” or proclaim that we love the Lord. Its another thing to live out those words and do what we say. In this Gospel lesson, Jesus assures us that He has authority to speak with the words of God Himself. He also reminds us that we can rely on Him to do what He promises.

Lesson focus: Jesus often disagreed with the leaders and teachers of His time. He often used parables to emphasize how to live, and also to sneakily explain who He was. In this passage, both of those things happen. The key to take away is that Christ fulfills His promises, and expects us to live out our love as we serve one another and value his authority.

Passage: Matthew 21:23-32

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (or whoever you might have around!)

Materials Needed: Construction paper, decorative materials, glue, scissors, markers, pencils, erasers, popsicle sticks, paper plates or bags, driver’s license or certificate of some sort, pipe cleaners, staples, stickers, Bible (all optional, depending which activities you choose to use—except for the Bible, you need that for sure).

See the [demonstration of this craft project](#) on our [YouTube channel](#).



Classroom Games and Activities to Introduce the Bible Lesson

Lesson Opening: There are a couple of elements at work in this passage. One is the importance of Christ's authority, given by God. Another is the emphasis on Jesus as the example of fulfilling promises and doing what we promise. This lesson looks at both of those dynamics, focusing on Jesus as the true Son and reliable hope.

Here are some activities to get kids thinking...(select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Play a directional game to remember the importance of obedience. Consider a simple one like "Simon Says" or "Mother, May I".
- Riddle it up... touch on the element of questions and "puzzling" by kicking off the lesson with some riddles or thinking questions.
- Who gave you that authority? Look at some artifacts that demonstrate a sense of identity or authority: driver's license, certificate, work authentication, etc. How do you know whether the certificate is true and reliable?
- Live by demonstration...look at something that requires a live exhibit. Try to explain it just with words, and then act out to show how important it often is to *show* how to do something with more than just verbal explanation.
- Following authority...talk about the meaning of "authority figures" and who is in charge in various places. Who are we required to listen to when we are in school? At home? How do bosses, law enforcement officers, or court supervisors get their privileges?
- Do what you say...have you ever been in a situations where no one would really know if you followed directions or not? How would you make the right choice?

Explain that today we'll look at a Gospel passage where Jesus told a parable about who He was, and who we should be as a result. We'll see how God wants us to be true to our word.

Ask: Do you know what the word "authentic" means? How about the word "genuine"?



Parable of Two Sons (Matthew 21:23-32)

Sunday School Lesson

Bible Lesson: As always, how you choose to experience the story will vary according to the ages and abilities of your children (and how many are participating). This passage could work with dramatic presentation, whether through puppets, skits, or mime-acting. You could assign roles or describe as you go along. Remind students to keep an eye out for elements of Christ's authority and our responsibility. Set up the story by explaining that in this passage, Jesus had just come into Jerusalem triumphantly on Palm Sunday. The people in charge of the temple were a little nervous and angry with Him, and tried to confuse Him into saying something offensive.

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" -Matthew 21:23

In this opening, the leaders tries to force Jesus into saying something that they could deem criminal. If He said that His authority, or power, came from God (which it did), the leaders could have gotten Him in trouble for claiming to be God (even though, of course, He was!). They thought they could trap Him with such a question, asking Him to prove who He really and truly was, and challenging Him to prove His "credentials." However, He turned things around and stumped them with a riddle-like question of His own:

Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. -Matthew 21:24-27

Jesus answered the question with a question. The inquiry He posed was even more tricky and confusing than the one the priests had given Him. In fact, it stumped them. They realized they were stuck because they couldn't accurately determine where authority came from, and they



didn't want to admit that they were without power or mistaken somehow. So they gave up, recognizing their trick had backfired.

Jesus followed up with another story...

What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.'²⁹ And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went.³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. -Matthew 21:28-30

Jesus was reminding people that making promises is a much different action than actually carrying out your word. Saying you'll act a certain way without following through is like talking about joining a professional sports league when you've never before played a game. The Pharisees did a lot of talking about righteous living, but they missed the mark. They ultimately missed the Messiah, Jesus Himself.

Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him. -Matthew 21:31-32

Ask: Have you ever talked about something, and been confused when it came time to actually do it? When is it hard to keep promises or obey?

It's important to note that, while living out our words is important, this story isn't just about us. It's about Jesus! Jesus was the "third son" of this parable. He made promises and followed through on them. We know that He does what He says, because He died for us. We can always trust His promises, and live by His example and love.

Close with a prayer thanking God for the gift of Christ, and asking Him to help us as we live out our promises in word and deed.

Crafts: "Bee Genuine" sticks, double-sided paper puppet, Action Puzzle

Coloring Page: O is for Obedience



“Do What You Say!”

Bible Craft ideas on Matthew 21:23-32



True Obedience: Craft Ideas for the Parable of the Two Sons

“Actions speak louder than words” is a well-known and helpful maxim for us to remember, and it has important meaning. The parable of the two sons emphasizes this point, and we want to let children

know that they ought to live out their love in real ways. However, it’s also important to note that Jesus did do what He talked about doing. He proved He is worthy of our trust and love, and we can live in joy because of that.

These crafts serve as reminders of the story itself as well as the points to be taken from it. The fun “bee” sticks are a helpful decoration, and the double-sided puppet can help tell the parable. The puzzle can be used to create a fun illustration, and also reminds kids that this story isn’t so much a “puzzle” as we might think initially.

Verses or Captions to Consider...

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. -Romans 12:9

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart... -1 Peter 1:22

Don’t just talk.... Live out your love!

Actions speak louder than words.

“Bee” faithful!

“Bee” genuine!

Don’t be “puzzled”.... Do what you say you will!

Jesus was the obedient son...follow His example

See the [demonstration of this craft project](#) on our [YouTube channel](#).



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Craft one: “Bee Genuine” Stick Craft

You will need:

- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Paper or cardstock
- Markers or crayons
- Verse caption or extra decoration (optional)
- Popsicle sticks
- Pipe cleaners, google eyes, or other extra decorations.



Procedure:

1. Cut the paper into oval “bee” shapes. Cut out some “wings” as well.
2. Decorate the ovals with stripes and faces to resemble bees. Add antennae if desired.
3. Add a verse, caption, or label on the bees and/or popsicle sticks.
4. Glue the bees onto the popsicle sticks and wave for a fun reminder to “Bee” real!



Craft Two: “Puzzled” Activity

You will need:

- Glue and/or tape
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Caption or verse (Optional)
- Markers or crayons
- Cardstock or card board
- Extra decorations (optional)



Procedure:

1. Decide what kind of picture and caption you wish to create.
2. Draw a picture and add extra decorations (stickers, glitter, etc.) if desired.
3. Add verses or captions to the image.
4. Glue the paper onto cardstock or cardboard for thickness.
5. Cut the picture apart into unique shapes, so that it can be put back together as a puzzle.



Craft Three: “Double-Sided Attitude” Puppet

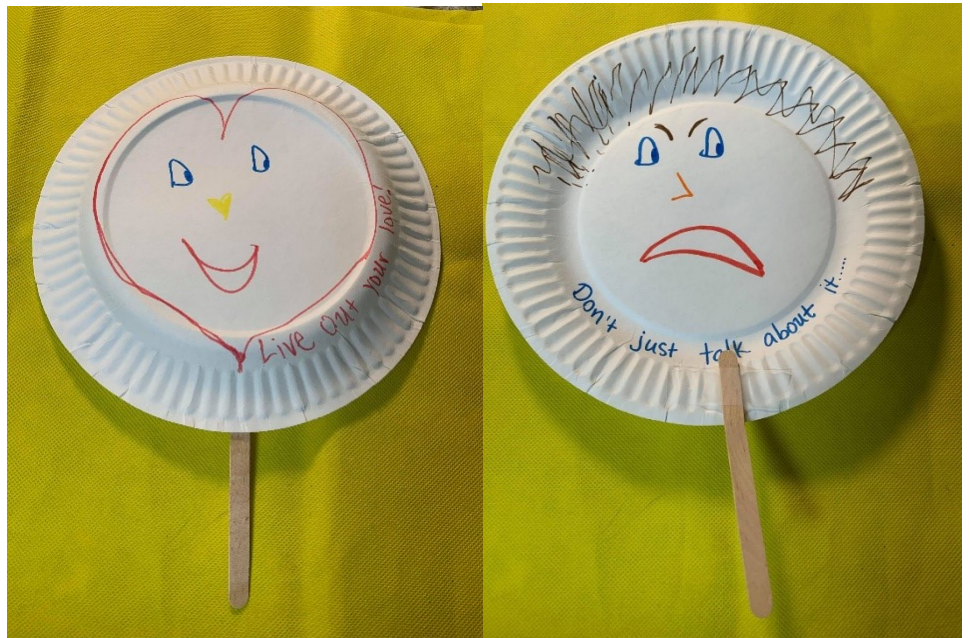
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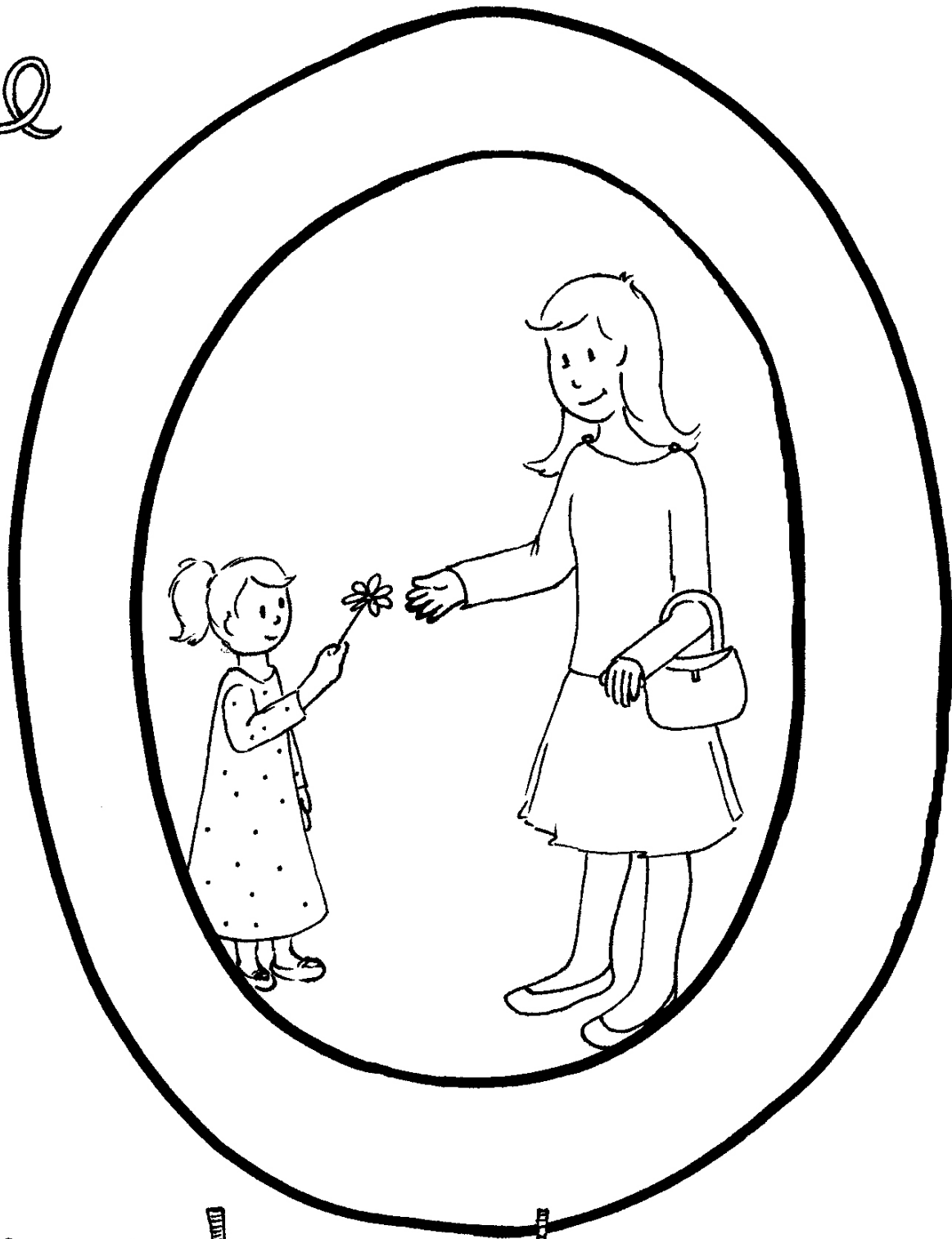
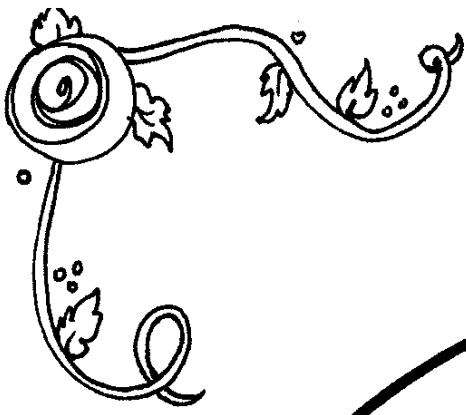
- Paper plate and/or paper bag
- Markers or crayons
- Popsicle sticks
- Scissors
- Glue or tape



Procedure:

1. Choose a paper plate or paper bag as your “backdrop.”
2. Decorate one side of the plate/bag with a happy and “obedient face.”
3. Decorate the other side of the puppet with a negative angry face. Feel free to embellish with google eyes or hair for extra texture.
4. Add captions and verses.
5. Attach a plate (if using) to a stick to hold up the appropriate facial expression. Use the puppet to help describe the parable or consider example scenarios of obedience.





is
for **obedience**



IS
FOR

obedience



This lesson was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May

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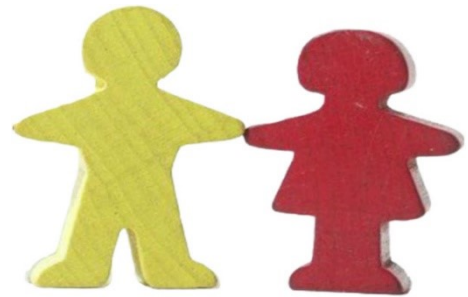
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