

upper elementary



Lesson 7 / July 19, 2026

Open Arms

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as

STEP 1



Lesson 7

Focus:

God welcomes us with open arms.

Lesson 7

Bible Basis:

Luke 15:11–24

Lesson 7

Memory Verse:

"The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion."
—Numbers 14:18

Students will think about how we welcome those who were lost and will celebrate the way God welcomes us with open arms even when we let Him down.

Materials:

☐ Internet access

➤ **How do you feel when someone takes something from you that is very important or special?** (Answers may vary: angry, want to get back at a person, want revenge, etc.)

One woman from Toronto, Canada knows exactly what it's like to have the most important thing in her life taken from them: her son. Two years ago, her son was kidnapped. While she searched diligently for him, with each passing month, she worried her son would never return. One day last year, though, she got the best surprise of her life. Let's find out what happened next.

Play the following video [3:24; stop at 1:59]:

'I thought I would never find him' | Mother returns home with son abducted by ex-husband
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWcC3H2bm4s>

➤ **How do you think most parents would react if their lost child returned home?** (Excited, overwhelmed with joy at seeing a lost child again, grateful, etc.)

It didn't matter how long her son had been gone; his mother's love for him remained strong and unwavering. Even though she had questioned whether she'd ever see her son again after he was abducted, she held onto hope that he would return.

➤ **How do you think God feels when His children return to Him?** (Delighted, overjoyed, welcoming, etc.)

This boy's mother welcomed her lost son home with open arms. Just like the boy's parents, God never stopped searching for us or wanting us to return to Him. Today we are going to talk about the way God welcomes us, His children, with open arms—no matter how long we've been away or how far we've gone.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)



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STEP 4 **Lesson 7****Focus:**

God welcomes us with open arms.

Lesson 7**Bible Basis:**

Luke 15:11–24

Lesson 7**Memory Verse:**

“The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.”
—Numbers 14:18

Materials:

- ☐ Internet access
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pens/pencils
- ☐ Scissors

Create a sample of the reminder before the lesson. If your class is meeting online, send hand patterns for families to print ahead of time and invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

We are going to make hands of love to remind us that God’s arms are open to us and we can keep our arms of love open to others, too.

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Guide your preteens through the following steps:

- Using paper and pens or pencils, trace both hands (separately) and cut them out.
- Place the paper hands side by side on the table with the thumbs on the inside. These are the *backs* of the hands.
- Write the memory verse on the back of one hand: “The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.” —Numbers 14:18
- Turn the hands over, so the thumbs are on the outside. These are the *palms* of the hands.
- On each finger of one hand write one action, thought, or attitude that you think may interfere with your being forgiven by God.
- Draw a line (strike through) what you wrote on each finger.
- In the middle of the hand (on the palm) write “God welcomes me with open arms.”
- On each finger of the other hand write one thing that you tend to hold against other people.
- Draw a line (strike through) what you wrote on each finger.
- In the middle of the hand (on the palm) write “With God’s help, I will welcome others with open arms.”

Place the hands face down (verse side up) on your dresser, desk, or nightstand. Read the verse before going to bed each night and again when you get up in the morning. During the week, if you struggle with anger from being offended by someone, or if you are on the other side of anger by offending someone else, or if you feel that you messed up and offended God, turn the hands over. Look at what you crossed out on the fingers. Read the focus you wrote on the palm of the hands. Then, hold your own hands out to God, and ask Him to help you forgive others with open arms, or ask God for forgiveness and for help to accept His open arms of love.

Close in prayer thanking God for His open arms of love and forgiveness. Ask for help in having open arms for others.

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