

# Using Story Bags in Scripture

Story bags raise immediate interest and intrigue and are effective in engaging young students. Props that are part of the story are placed into the 'Story Bag'. The story teller begins the story and draws each prop from the bag slowly and deliberately at the appropriate time in the story. Either before or after the story is told, explain the props so that students can gain insights into the context of these times. Many elements in biblical passages are unfamiliar to students resulting in their limited understanding of the story. Teachers' preparation is essential in three areas:

1. Know the story so that you do not need to refer to the text during the telling;
2. Practise your expression, use of silence, variation of tone, pitch and volume to create atmosphere;
3. Relax – it does not matter if some exact words or details are omitted or forgotten. Only you know the story details. The more you perform story telling the easier and more enjoyable it becomes.

## THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL AND HIS BROTHER Luke 15:11-32

Teacher preparations:

- A bag such as a gift bag or something similar
- Some soft toy pigs
- A ring
- Some toy coins in small velvet or similar bag
- Some purple material for robe
- Cut-out cardboard sandals worn in biblical times

Story telling instructions:

- Gather students onto carpet sitting in a circle.
- Place bag in front of you.
- Explain that you are going to tell a story and you want students to watch and listen closely as you are going to reveal some key items, called props, from this story bag.
- At the symbol, II pause and take out the appropriate prop.

Context of props in this passage:

- **Bag of coins:** This represents the son's share of the property. It was not uncommon for some families to give the second son a share of the property in money so that he could buy his own property and make a life for himself.
- **Pigs:** Jewish purity laws forbade observant Jews from touching pigs. If they did come in contact with pigs they were rendered 'unclean' not in the sense that they were dirty, but rather that they were no longer 'pure' and could not come before God in worship or prayer until they were cleansed.
- **Robe:** The robe was an outer garment worn over other clothes to keep people warm and could also serve as a blanket if person was out in the open during the night. It was also an important part in the investiture of new kings. Robing was a regal symbolic act.
- **Ring:** Wealthier families owned family rings which were handed down from one generation to the next. In placing a ring on the son's finger the father is acknowledging that he is to return home as a family member, not as a slave.
- **Sandals:** During these times only free men wore sandals. Slaves were bare-footed. This is yet another sign that the father has forgiven his son completely and is accepting him fully back into the family.

STORY SCRIPT	INSTRUCTIONS	PROPS
Jesus told this story. Once there was a man who had two sons. The younger son asked his father, "Father, give me my share of the property." II So his father gave this son his share of the money. A few days later his son left to travel to a distant country where he spent all his money.	II Take out the bag of coins and place them deliberately and slowly into the central space.	bag of coins
A famine came to that country and the son had nothing. II He found work looking after pigs and was so hungry that he began to eat the pigs' food. He soon came to his senses and said to himself, "Why am I here? My father's workers have more to eat than me and here am I dying of hunger! I will go back to my father and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your workers.' " So he set off and went to his father.	II Take out the toy pigs, again slowly and deliberately.	toy pigs
His father saw him in the distance and ran to him, put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to his father, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, II bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; II put a ring on his finger and II sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.	II Take out robe and lay it out on the carpet as if placing it on a person. II Next take out the ring and place it down as if putting it on a finger. II Then take out the sandals and place them as if putting them on a person's feet.  Emphasise the words <i>dead and alive; lost and found</i>	robe  ring  sandals
Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed you; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has wasted your property, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."	Emphasise the words <i>dead and come to life; lost and has been found.</i>	

Other story bag suggestions:

ZACCHAEUS Luke 19:1-10	THE BIRTH OF JESUS Luke 2:1-20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dolls' house size table/bench to represent tax-collector's table</li> <li>• a long narrow piece of brown fabric to represent road through Jericho</li> <li>• bag of coins</li> <li>• tree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• male baby doll</li> <li>• strips of cloth such as calico</li> <li>• box filled with shredded paper to represent manger and straw</li> <li>• toy sheep</li> </ul>