



# the visual **faith** project

## A Visual Faith Experience Broken Relationships

By Dr. Dick Hardel

**Theme: Broken Relationships** (Luke 15:11-32)

### Intended Audience

Visual Faith Experiences work best in small groups of 4-5 for more discussion of all the participants. If your group is larger than that, divide them into more small groups. Diversity of age and ethnicity is a wonderful blessing to this exercise.

### Outcome of Experience

The participants will learn from their discussions not only the pain of broken relationships but also how important forgiveness and reconciliation are in healthy relationships of family and friends. The participants will learn of the power of God's love for us even when we make decisions that lead us away from our relationship with God.

### Introduce Experience

Familing is messy! Living in close relationships, as well as the close boundaries of a family, often cause tensions and stress because of sibling rivalry, jealousy, expectations, unfulfilled promises, or parental discord. Unhealthy relationships can be healed, reconciled, and restored to health by God's grace and forgiveness. Often the reconciliation takes time, work, and love. We will begin to explore the connection of this story in Scripture to the relationship within our families.

### Image Selection

Think about a messy time in your family that resulted in broken relationships or a time when you wanted to leave the family and live elsewhere. Choose one or two images that describe the situation or connect to some of the emotions you remember experiencing at that time.

### Image Packs

We recommend Assorted Set A (set of 100 printed images) for use with this experience or other images that you may already have. You can find Assorted Set A at: <https://vibrantfaith.org/shop/visualfaithcards>



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## Broken Relationships continued...

### Facilitators Questions To Guide Group Discussion

1. How do the images you have selected connect to your experience of a messy time in your family?
2. What emotions do you remember having at that time?  
What were some emotions expressed by others in the family?
3. Were the problems resolved? Were the broken relationships healed?  
If not, what actions were taken by the members of the family? If, so, how were they healed?
4. Where was God in this situation?
5. Was the family able to work together to forgive and reconcile?  
If not, what prevented healing and forgiveness?
6. What was something you learned from that experience?

### Scripture (Luke 15:11-32)

*11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.*

*25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' 31 Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 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.'*



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## Broken Relationships continued...

### Image Selection

Choose four people from the small group(s) to read this story in Scripture dramatically: one person for the storyteller or narrator, Jesus; another person to read Father's parts, an third person to read the younger brother parts, and yet a four person to read the older brother's responses. Invite each of the readers to choose images that connect with the person whose part they read from Scripture. If there are others in the group what did not participate in the reading and image selection, instruct them that they are to think of questions to ask of the readers concerning emotion felt, decisions made, forgiveness, reconciliation and how decisions that were made within the family?

### Questions to Connect Chosen Image with Scriptures

1. **Question Directed to the Four People Who Selected the Images:** What is the connection of the images you have chosen with this story in Scripture?
2. **Question Directed to Others in the Small Group:** What questions do you have concerning the connection of the images chosen with this text?
3. Why would Jesus tell this story?  
What might have been the meaning of the story to the people present when Jesus told the story?
4. How does this story connect with you and your family?

### Application

- The Father loved both his sons. Both sons made choices that disconnected them as family. One had a difficult time returning and asking for forgiveness. The other had a difficult time understanding forgiveness. Which is more difficult for you?
- How is God at work in love and forgiveness in your family?
- What does this Scripture passage say to our faith family or congregation about love of all people, forgiveness, and the importance of reconciliation, life-choices we make?

### Prayer

As the facilitator create a holy space for the individuals and group to engage in prayer. Lighted candles often enhance a holy space. Place a cross in the midst of a table. Instruct the participants to find an image that reflects something of their family in need of forgiveness and prayer, then return to a chair near the table with the cross and candles. As the participants return to the holy space tell, them to hold onto the chosen image and begin silent prayers for healing within the family and within the person. When all have had time for prayer, close together with the Lord's Prayer.