



DEEPER BIBLE

What If I Feel Like the Older Brother?

[15 min]

Supplies

- Bibles*
- paper
- pens

Give Applause

Sit with kids in a circle. (If you need to have two rows of your circle to fit, that's fine. It's important that kids can see each other.) Say: **We're going to play a game. You'll take turns saying your name, and I may or may not cheer for you. Your goal is to figure out why I'm cheering for the people I'm cheering for and not others.**

Start by saying your own name and either cheering or not cheering for yourself. You'll cheer only for people who are wearing blue. Anyone who's not wearing blue won't get applause.

Ask: • **What are your guesses as to why I cheered for the people I did?** After kids guess, share the reason.

- **How did it feel if you *didn't* get cheered for?**
- **What things have I done for you in the past to let you know I care about you?**

Say: **Maybe you didn't get cheered for, and that hurt a little. But you know I care about you because I prepare lessons to teach you, I play games with you, I welcome you, and I pray for you. Even if you didn't get cheered for, you can be sure that I care about you!**

You know, this game reminded me of the older brother in the Bible story. When the runaway son came home, it was clear he was deeply loved. His dad welcomed him with a big hug, a fine robe, and a major party! The older brother seemed to feel like you did if I didn't applaud for you, wondering where *his* party was.

Maybe you feel God's love all the time. But maybe sometimes you wonder about God's love. Maybe it doesn't feel like a big celebration. So, what if you feel like the older brother? Let's dig in to that.

Dig Deeper

Say: **When the older brother was jealous, his father said two things about him. First he said, "Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me."**

That reminds me of a way we can see God's love.

Read the second half of Hebrews 13:5. Then have small groups discuss this question.

Ask: • **How do you know God is always with you and won't leave you?**

Say: **The younger son in the story was far away from his father. But the older son got to be with his father all the time! And God invites *us* to be with him all the time. In fact, he promises never to leave us. That's an incredible sign that we are deeply loved.**

The other thing the father said to his older son is this: "Everything I have is yours."

Is that true of God's love for us, too? Has God given us anything? Absolutely! I'm about to read some Bible verses that tell us God has blessed us with "every spiritual blessing." There's that word, *every*, just like the father in the story said *everything*. So let's see what all those spiritual blessings are.

Have small-group leaders distribute paper and pens. Explain that as you read the verses slowly, kids can write down any words they hear that sound like a spiritual blessing.

Read Ephesians 1:3-8 very slowly, allowing time for kids to write. Then read it again so kids can listen for words they may have missed the first time.

Ask: • **What are some spiritual blessings you heard in this passage?**
(Ideas could include being united with Christ, God loved us, God chose us, God adopted us, glorious grace, kindness and grace, wisdom and understanding.)

Say: **Wow! The older son in the story didn't get applause or a big party...but he was deeply loved. Instead of a party, he received love through the constant presence of his father and having access to everything his father had. And we are deeply loved. Even if God's love doesn't feel like a big party, it's steady and it's always there. God is always with us, and he's blessed us with every spiritual blessing!**



CRAFT Napkin Rings

[20 min]

Supplies

- cardboard tubes (each child will need at least a 4-inch piece)
- scissors*
- aluminum foil
- glue sticks
- permanent markers (fine-tipped and in a variety of colors is ideal)

Easy Prep

- Make a sample craft.



Tip

- This craft works best with cardboard tubes, such as paper towel tubes. If you don't have enough of those, you can also use chenille wires as the base, wrapping them with foil also. However, the napkin ring will look messier and won't hold its shape as well.

Make Sets of Napkin Rings

Show kids the sample craft you made, and challenge kids to guess what it is.

Say: **When people have *really* fancy dinners, sometimes they use napkin rings. That way you can roll up a cloth napkin and use the ring to hold it rolled up! When the son in our Bible story came back home, his dad threw him a fancy dinner. We're going to make silver napkin rings so we can have fancy dinners with our families to remind us that we are deeply loved.**

Set out the supplies to share, and have kids follow these directions to make napkin rings.

- Cut about 1 inch off the end of a cardboard tube.
- Cut through the ring to make a C shape.



- Tear a piece of aluminum foil that fits around your cardboard ring. Wrap it around and glue it in place.
- Use the markers to write “deeply loved” and add any other decoration you want on your foil. (If you need to flatten the ring a little bit to decorate it, that’s fine. Just curl it back up when you’re done.)
- Make three more napkin rings so you have a set of four.
- If you have more than four people in your family, check if there are enough supplies to make more napkin rings.

Talk About It

Have small groups discuss these questions.

Ask: • **What are some reasons your family might have a fancy or special dinner?**

• **What do those dinners show that your family loves?**

Say: **We are deeply loved, and God celebrates us! Just as the father celebrated his son with a fancy meal, you can use these napkin rings to make every meal a fancy meal...and a reminder of how much God loves you!**

Have kids take their crafts home and use them to have fancy family meals.