

# The Lost

Lesson 01 in the series, "Parables"

## A. Jesus often taught using parables.

Parable = a short story that explains spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships.

"Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet: "I will speak to you in parables. I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world.'" Matthew 13:34-35 (NLT) (see also Psalm 78:1-3)

## B. One day Jesus told three parables to explain how God feels about lost people.

"Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!" Luke 15:1-2 (NLT)

### 1. The parable of the lost sheep.

So Jesus told them this story: "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!" Luke 15:3-7 (NLT)

*Note:* God loves lost people who have wandered away.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Luke 19:10 (NLT)

"All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all." Isaiah 53:6 (NLT)

### 2. The parable of the lost coin.

"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents." Luke 15:8-10 (NLT)

*Note:* God loves lost people who have fallen through the cracks.

"The LORD has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us." "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!" Isaiah 49:14-15 (NLT)

*Note:* God rejoices when we repent.

"As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live." Ezekiel 33:11 (NLT)

### 3. The parable of the lost son.

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'" "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' "But his father

said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began." Luke 15:11-24 (NLT)

*Note:* God loves lost people who have selfishly rebelled.

"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." Romans 5:6-8 (NLT)

*Note:* The older brother did NOT rejoice when his selfish brother repented and came home.

"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!' "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'" Luke 15:28-32 (NLT)

*Life Application:* God wants us to love lost people as much as he does.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (NIV)

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us." 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 (NLT)

- We must become aware. (Who? Where are they spiritually? What is their story?)
- We must commit to prayer. (Godly attitude, opportunities, boldness, authenticity, etc.)
- We must show we care. (What are their needs? What resources can I give?)
- We must be ready to share. (Time, unconditional friendship, personal testimony, a plan of salvation, etc.)

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## Discussion Questions

1. Read Luke 19:10 & John 3:16-17. What was Jesus' mission? Why did he come?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 & John 20:21. What is our mission? Why are we here?
3. Read the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). Have you ever wandered away from God? If so, what happened? How did God find/rescue you?
4. Read the parable of the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). Have you ever felt forgotten by God? Explain what made you feel this way. Do you know someone who feels forgotten by God right now? If so, what can you say to encourage him/her? (see Isaiah 49:14-15, Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5)
5. Read the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32). With which character in the story can you most identify? Why? Which character would you have most identified with five years ago? What's changed? Spend some time as a group praying for people you know who are running from God and making terrible life choices.
6. Discuss the following four steps to reach out to lost people:
  - We must become aware. (Who? Where are they spiritually? What is their story?)
  - We must commit to prayer. (Godly attitude, opportunities, boldness, authenticity, etc.)
  - We must show we care. (What are their needs? What resources can I give?)
  - We must be ready to share. (time, unconditional friendship, personal testimony, a plan of salvation, etc.)
7. Discuss the following quotations:

"If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped around their knees. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let no one go unwarned or unprayed for." C.H. Spurgeon

"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference." Max Lucado

"While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight; while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight-I'll fight to the very end!" William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army

"I am not going to Heaven because I have preached to great crowds or read the Bible many times. I'm going to Heaven just like the thief on the cross who said in that last moment: 'Lord, remember me.'" Billy Graham