

LESSON 1

PARABLES OF A
GOD WHO PURSUES US

A graphic of a flashlight beam shining on the word "LOST". The flashlight handle is yellow and the beam is white, illuminating the word "LOST" in large, bold, blue letters. The background is dark blue with a white diagonal line and a scalloped edge.

villagebible.church/lost

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Day 1

OVERVIEW

Have you ever lost something valuable to you? Maybe it was your cell phone or money or your homework that you worked hard on. You did whatever it took to find your lost item. The amount of time it took for you to search for this item didn't matter. If necessary, you recruited parents, siblings, and friends.

Just this past week, I was at the middle school lunchroom, and I saw that one of the middle school boys had lost his cell phone by unknowingly throwing it in the garbage when he was finished with his lunch. He and his three friends put on latex gloves to do whatever it took to search through the bag of garbage that was already thrown in the dumpster. Fortunately, one of the kitchen workers dug through the garbage before these four boys needed to and found the missing cell phone covered in red slimy spaghetti sauce. This young man was full of joy because his cell phone was lost, but now it was found!

Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at three stories from Luke 15—the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son—to reveal God's heart for lost people!

Open it

1. What is something valuable that you lost and eventually found? How did you feel after you found it?

Read It

Luke 15:1–7

Day 2

TODAY'S THEME: WHO ARE THE "SINNERS" AND "TAX COLLECTORS"?

Read Luke 15:1

Notice that the evangelist directs our attention to two groups, really two audiences, paying attention to Jesus' words. The first are the tax collectors and sinners. As a reminder: the tax collectors of the Bible have nothing in coming with those who work for the Internal Revenue Service today. Nothing. Rather, they are those Jews who had been recruited by the Romans to collect a tax from their neighbors, a tax that in turn supported the ongoing Roman occupation of Israel. Moreover, tax-collectors were given a quota by their masters, and the more they exceeded that quota—that is, the more they could squeeze their neighbors on behalf of the occupying Romans—the richer they became. They were, therefore, considered traitors, cheats, and thoroughly and completely unrighteous.

The second group St. Luke describes as sinners, and we must take care to note that Luke is not a child of the Reformation that declared that all were sinners. Rather, he is using that term more precisely to describe those people who stood so far outside the pale of what was considered decent behavior that they were routinely shunned. As a colleague of mine recently said, yes, we're all sinners, but these were the one who were called that to their face...regularly, relentlessly, publicly, and by everyone.

And these are the kinds of folks who are flocking to hear Jesus, eager to sit at His feet and listen as He spun yarns about God's coming Kingdom. It's not hard to imagine what they loved about Jesus, for he described for them a kingdom where everyone was welcome, where power and status and social stigma were no more, and where God would set to right all the injustice of the world, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, freeing the imprisoned, and elevating the downtrodden. No, it's not hard to imagine why they loved Jesus.¹

5. Why were sinners and tax collectors drawing near to Jesus?

6. What students at your school are like "sinners" and "tax collectors"?

7. What can you do to help these students draw near to Jesus?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✎ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- Pray that you can make it a priority to draw near to Jesus every day.
- Pray that you can build a relationship with students that are like the "sinners" and "tax collectors" so that you can help them draw near to Jesus.

¹ Devotional by David Lose found @ <http://www.davidlose.net/2013/11/luke-15-1-2/>

Day 4

TODAY'S THEME: PRONE TO WANDER, LORD, I FEEL IT!

Read Luke 15:3–5

Jesus told the crowd a parable. In Greek, *para* means “beside” and *ballo* means “to cast or throw.” A parable is simply a story that Jesus throws alongside a truth to illustrate the truth He is teaching. Jesus tells a story about a sheep that wanders away from the other 99 sheep in the flock.

No creature strays more easily than a sheep; none is more heedless; and none so incapable of finding its way back to the flock, when once gone astray: it will bleat for the flock, and still run on in an opposite direction from the place where the flock is: this I have often noticed. No creature is more defenceless than a sheep, and more exposed to be devoured by dogs and wild beasts. Even the fowls of the air seek their destruction. I have known ravens often attempt to destroy lambs by picking out their eyes, in which, when they have succeeded, as the creature does not see whither it is going, it soon falls an easy prey to its destroyer.²

We are all like sheep, and each one of us has gone astray from God. Isaiah 53:6 says, “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way...*”

10. What things separate us from God?

11. The shepherd actively looks for the lost sheep. What does this tell us about God?

12. This shepherd leaves the ninety-nine in open country to go find the one who was missing. Why would the “ninety-nine” be safe? What protection comes from being in the fold? Does this have any connection to our own lives, and what lesson can be learned from the ninety-nine in this parable?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- Pray that God would keep you from wandering away from Him.
- Thank God for the small group (flock) He has placed you in to provide you protection.

² Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Luke 15:4". "The Adam Clarke Commentary". <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/luke-15.html>. 1832.

Day 5

TODAY'S THEME: A PARTY ON EARTH AND IN HEAVEN

Read Luke 15:6-7

After finding the lost sheep and carrying it home on his shoulders, the shepherd calls his friends and neighbors together to rejoice with him. To rejoice literally means "to express pleasure over another's good fortune; congratulate." (BDAG)³ The friends and neighbors shared in the shepherd's joy that the wandering sheep was found. The sheep could have been hurt or, even worse, killed by a predator. There is rejoicing because now the sheep is under the loving care of the shepherd and reunited with the added protection of his flock.

We need to rejoice whenever we see a lost person come to Christ and His church!

13. What dangers are there for a Christian who wanders away from Jesus and His flock?

14. Why did the shepherd want to share the good news with his friends?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Take some time to praise God for your salvation!

³ <https://www.preceptaustin.org/luke-15-commentary>

Day 6

TODAY'S THEME: REPENTANCE

Read Luke 15:7

Just as there is a party on earth when a sinner repents, so also is there rejoicing in heaven. We see that the rejoicing is over the one sinner who repents. Repentance is the Greek word *metanoia* and means “to change one’s mind about God, self and sin.” When a sinner repents, he understands that God is holy and that he is utterly sinful and there is nothing that he can do to get rid of his sin, but that he needs Jesus to save him from his sin. From the NT uses, it is clear that *metanoia* means, however, much more than merely a change of one’s mind but also includes a complete change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. *Metanoia* is a conversion in every sense of the word. ⁴

15. If you were to have a one-on-one conversation with God, would He say that you are one of the sheep in His flock or would He say that you are a wandering sheep? Why would He say that?

16. Share a time when you believe heaven rejoiced when you or someone you know repented of sin.

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Take some time to be honest before the Lord and ask Him if there is any unconfessed sin that is hindering your fellowship with Him!

⁴ https://www.preceptaustin.org/2_peter_39-10#repentance

Note: This study guide was written by Pastors Tim Badal, Mario Arindaeng, and Jeremy Anderson, Village Bible Church. www.villagebible.church