

## LESSON 4

PARABLES OF A  
GOD WHO PURSUES US

A graphic of a flashlight beam shining on the word "LOST". The flashlight handle is yellow and orange, and the beam is white, illuminating the word "LOST" in large, bold, blue letters. The background is dark blue with a pattern of small white circles.

**LOST**

[villagebible.church/lost](http://villagebible.church/lost)

# The Parable of the Prodigal Son

## Open It

1. What is one of your greatest accomplishments that you've been recognized for?

### DAILY DEVOTIONS

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Luke 15: 25-32

2. How would you describe the character of the older son in this parable?
3. What was the older brother's response to his younger brother's coming home?
4. What did the father do when the older son wouldn't come to the party?
5. What point do you think Jesus is making by sharing this parable?

## Day 2

### TODAY'S THEME: GOOD GUY OR BAD GUY?

#### Read Luke 15:29

“Act 1” of this parable with the younger brother, clearly shows that the younger son was no good. He was a pretty bad dude all the way around. But what about his brother? Is he a good guy or a bad guy?

This son did everything his father had asked of him. He obeyed what he was told to do. He didn't dishonor his father the way that the younger brother had done by running off with his share of the inheritance. He didn't live life recklessly, but under control. He followed cultural practices and lived up to expectations.

So it seems as though Jesus was portraying this brother much differently from his younger sibling. At face value, this guy seems like a pretty solid guy.

**6. Do you think the older brother was a good guy or a bad guy? Why do you think so?**

**7. What would it take for someone to be considered a good person today? Describe their life, their priorities, their behavior, their attitudes, etc.**

**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:

Lord, help me to be more and more like You in everything I do. Help me to obey You because of Your great love for me!

## Day 3

### TODAY'S THEME: DOING RIGHT FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS

Read Luke 15: 29, 31

Well, as it turns out, the older brother was a pretty solid dude. He was a good guy! He's the kind of guy that everyone would have liked to be around. Maybe he was the guy that your parents point to and say, "See, be like him!" He was a poster child for the best guy in town. And the fact that his younger brother was so terrible only helped to pad that image. But it seems as though this brother does all the right things for all the wrong reasons. When his brother is celebrated for returning, he does nothing but complain. Instead of celebrating his brother's return, he flips the whole thing back on him. "I've done everything right!" he exclaimed to his father. "Yet I've received no parties, no celebrations. What gives?" It seems as though this brother expects some rewards for his good behavior. As it turns out, he's not so different from his younger brother. Instead of taking his inheritance early, he was still after dad's stuff and the pat on the back.

Maybe you can relate? You feel like you do everything right and no one notices. Maybe you just wish someone would compliment you for how good you've been. And when people do acknowledge you, it just makes you smile! Maybe you do all the right things because you don't want to lose some standing in the family or in your church. I mean, you've got a reputation to uphold. And ultimately, what you're doing is living for your own recognition, not for the glory of God. You volunteer, you care for others, you do your devotions, maybe you even give to the church, you do missions trips, but ultimately, you want to be known as the good kid who doesn't stir up trouble. Is that you?

**8. How can you do all the right things and still sin in doing them?**

**9. How can we dishonor God by having this kind of attitude?**

**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:

Lord, I want to obey because I love You and I want to cherish my relationship with you. Help me check my attitude to make sure that I'm living truly for You and not for myself.

## Day 4

### TODAY'S THEME: ATTITUDE TELLS ALL

#### Read Luke 15: 25–28

You can't fake it forever. The reality is, the real you is eventually going to show. Maybe others won't notice that much, maybe they will, but you'll notice. Trying to fake who we are is exhausting and we're bound to mess up at some point. This older son has done everything right for all these years. But now, when his brother is celebrated, his true colors show. He doesn't even want to welcome his brother home!

The Bible tells us that from the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.<sup>1</sup> We can pretend to be as selfless and humble as ever, but when the rubber meets the road, that's when we begin to show what our true motivations are, what our true character is made of.

Jesus is using this example to show the Pharisees that even though they do everything that is expected of them, their attitudes reflect that they don't really share the heart of God, that sinners would repent and be restored to relationship with God. When they grumble and complain, they are revealing that they're more concerned with the external actions, more concerned with status, than they are about the mission of God—people living in relationship with their Father!

**10. What brings you the most joy in life? When do you feel most valued and significant?**

**11. How do we sometimes share in the same attitude as the Pharisees and scribes, grumbling at the mission and heart of God?**

**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:

Lord, give me Your heart for sinners. Give me Your passion to save them. Give me Your wisdom to find them. Give me Your grace to share. I don't want to live life for myself at all. If there's anything in me that lives for my own recognition, show it to me so that I can live for You!

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:45

## Day 5

### TODAY'S THEME: THE REAL LOST SON

#### Read Luke 15: 28–30

In each of these parables, someone went out to look for what was lost. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd left the flock and went to find the one sheep that had wandered away. In the parable of the lost coin, the woman lit a lamp and searched diligently to find the coin she had lost. But you probably noticed that no one went and sought after the prodigal son when he went away. As a matter of fact, before the parable is even half over, that son isn't lost anymore. But before we think that no one went out to look for the lost in this last parable, take a closer look. In verse 28, Jesus says that the older son was angry and wouldn't go in to the celebration of his brother's return. And you see what happens? "The father came out and entreated him."

What Jesus is showing here is that the truly lost brother wasn't the sinful, younger brother. He's been found! It's the older brother. He's been living with his father all this time, but hasn't cherished a relationship with him. He does all his father asks but doesn't share in the heart of his father. He's done everything right, yet doesn't celebrate his brother's return.

Many people are "close" to God, but yet are very far away. Lots of people who go to youth group or attend church regularly don't actually have a relationship with God. Maybe that's even you! Just like the father goes out to ask his son to join the party, Jesus extends an invitation here to those who are "righteously lost."

**12. The Pharisees and scribes didn't realize they were lost, but Jesus is showing them that they are. How can you be sure that you have truly found salvation in Jesus and aren't like the Pharisees who thought they were saved, but weren't?**

**13. What was the major difference between the attitude of the younger son and the attitude of the older son? Who would you say you're more like?**

**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:

Lord, I trust wholly in Jesus Christ for my salvation. Thank you for paying the price for my sin and rising from the dead to give me new life. Keep me humble so that I don't try to steal Your credit but that I always worship You for giving me salvation!

## Day 6

### TODAY'S THEME: YOU WRITE THE ENDING...

#### Read Luke 15: 31-32

This parable doesn't have a clear ending. There's no real indication of how the older son responded to his conversation with his father. Did he go in and join the party? Did he stay outside and grumble? Jesus leaves that open. And I think He did that on purpose. Essentially, Jesus is giving the Pharisees and scribes an opportunity to respond. He leaves it open ended for a reason. They know that they're the older brother in Jesus' story. How will they respond?

**14. What would it have looked like for the Pharisees to change and join the celebration of the lost being found?**

**15. What would that look like for you today? How can you join in the heavenly mission of seeking the lost? What attitudes or actions would you need to address to make this a reality?**

**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:

Lord, give me a heart for the lost. I don't want to sit idly by as people all around me are living lives that are leading them right to hell. I know Your heart is to save sinners. You saved me! I want to join in that mission to seek out the lost. I want to join that celebration when someone who was lost is found. Open my eyes to the many opportunities You've put before me to do that. Amen.