

Three Parables

Bible Passage: Luke 15

Main Point: Jesus is the One who seeks and saves the lost.

Key Passage: Mark 6:34

Big Picture Question: Why did Jesus tell parables? Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom.

Leader BIBLE STUDY

In Luke 19, Jesus went after Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. Zacchaeus was not well liked, but his interaction with Jesus led him to repent of his wrongdoing. Jesus said to him, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Who is “the lost”? What does it mean to be lost? In Luke 15, Jesus told three parables to the crowd of tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and scribes. Jesus’ teaching brought gospel truth to the tax collectors and sinners—those whose unrighteousness separated them from God—and to the Pharisees and scribes—those whose relied on their own righteous efforts for salvation.

The first two parables are similar. In one, a man loses a sheep. He leaves his flock to find the missing sheep, and he rejoices when it is found. In the second, a woman loses a silver coin. The woman carefully searches her home until she finds it. Then, she calls her neighbors and friends to celebrate with her. Heaven rejoices when even one sinner repents. Finally, Jesus told a parable about two sons. The younger son asked for his inheritance, wasted his money on immoral living, and decided to return to his father. Rather than rejecting his wayward son, the father embraced him. The older son, who had always been obedient to his father, reacted with anger.

As you read Luke 15, think about the crowd Jesus was speaking to. The focus is often placed on the younger son—the one with whom the tax collectors and sinners could identify—but Jesus also made a point about the older son. He was like the Pharisees and scribes, focused on his own morality and feeling entitled to his father’s favor.

Jesus taught what God is like. He seeks sinners who have wandered far from Him, and He seeks sinners who try to earn salvation by their good works. As you teach, help kids understand that being lost means not knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior. God loves us, and He actively seeks to bring sinners to Himself.

The BIBLE Story

Three Parables

Luke 15 (bolded text can be read as a shorter version of the story)

Tax collectors and sinners came to listen to Jesus teach. The religious leaders complained because Jesus welcomed sinners, so Jesus told them three parables to teach them about God.

Jesus said, “If a man has 100 sheep and loses one, what does he do? He leaves the 99 sheep in the open field and searches for the lost sheep until he finds it. Then he tells his friends, ‘Let’s celebrate! I found my lost sheep!’”

Then Jesus said, “This is what heaven is like; there is more joy in heaven when one sinner repents and turns back to God than for 99 people who did not wander off.”

Jesus said, “If a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one of them, what does she do? She lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it! Then she tells her friends, ‘Let’s celebrate! I found my lost coin!’ ”

Then Jesus said, “This is what heaven is like. There is joy in heaven when one sinner repents and turns back to God.”

Finally, Jesus said, “A man had two sons. The younger son said, ‘Father, give me my inheritance today.’ So the father gave his son his share. The younger son left home. He wasted his money and lived foolishly. There was a famine, and the people there did not have enough food. The son got a job feeding pigs. He was so hungry, even the pigs’ food looked tasty.

“The younger son made a plan. He would go back to his father and admit he was wrong. He would ask to work for his father like the servants.

“So the younger son headed home. He was still a long way away when his father saw him coming. His father ran to him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son began to apologize. ‘I have sinned against God and against you,’ he said.

“But the father told his servants, ‘Let’s celebrate with a feast! Bring the best robe and put it on my son! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. This son of mine was lost, and now he is found!’

“At this time, the older son came from the fields and heard music at the house. “What’s going on?” he asked one of the servants.

“ ‘Your brother is here,’ the servant said. ‘Your father is celebrating.’

“The older brother was angry! He refused to go to the feast. The father asked him to come inside. ‘Look!’ the older brother said. ‘I never disobeyed you! But you never threw a party for me.’

“ ‘Son,’ the father said, ‘everything I have is yours. We have to celebrate and be happy. Your brother was lost and is found.’ ”

Christ Connection: The religious leaders complained that Jesus welcomed sinners. Jesus told these parables to teach about God’s forgiveness. God sent Jesus so sinners can be forgiven. As Savior, Jesus seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.

