

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 15:1-10

As my wife will attest, I am no fun to be around if/when I lose something. The world (or at least my world) basically stops. I fixate to the point of obsession about finding what I've lost—the remote, keys, a book, paperwork, whatever—I hate misplacing things. Come to find out, I'm in good company.

Q. Describe something you recently lost/misplaced. What was your attitude or state of mind upon realizing it was lost? What was your state of being as you searched for it? Did you find it? If so, how did you respond? If not—sorry—how are you dealing with that?

In this passage (and even more so in the next...but we'll get there next week) Jesus puts His heart (and thus the heart of the Father) on display. Jesus tells two parables, one about a lost sheep, the other about a lost coin, to tell His listeners how He really feels about them. (This, again, will continue next week along the same theme.)

We need to understand WHY Jesus told these parables. Luke supplies us with that answer. The religious types were “muttering”, *“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”* (15:2). Jesus was hanging around with the wrong people...at least in the mind of the religious types. A few questions come to mind pretty quickly:

Q. Of the 2 groups of people, the “wrong people”—the tax collectors and “sinners” on one hand, and the “right people”—the Pharisees and teachers of the law on the other, which do you identify yourself with? Explain.

Q. In our modern world, who might be considered the “wrong people”, and who might be considered (or consider themselves) the “right people”? Explain.

Q. As we think about the church today, do we carry along the tradition of Jesus of hanging out with the wrong people, of being a collection of misfits? Or do we (the church/Christians) resemble more the religious types? How would non-believers answer that? Explain.

In the parables that make up this chapter Jesus beautifully and in picturesque fashion lays out His mission...the WHY of His coming/His incarnation, and WHAT He is up to. So we've been in the Gospel of Luke for a year now (went by fast didn't it?). And you've no doubt noticed the slide we have up on the screen every Sunday for this series (if you don't know what I'm talking about, keep an eye out for it at the next service you attend). On that slide we have Luke 19:10, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* But before Jesus point blank states His mission so directly, He illustrates it so poignantly in this chapter.

And what Luke really wants his readers to understand is that as far as Jesus is concerned the “lost” is everyone. The “wrong” vs “right” people are just made up categories by humans, who in so doing simply demonstrate their (our) lost-ness.

Of the two groups of people, we can safely surmise that one group seemed to recognize they needed Jesus...or at the very least desired to be around Him because they enjoyed how He treated them. The other group did not recognize their need for Jesus, and their reason for being around Jesus was more suspect. But I would be willing to bet, in their honest moments, and when they were thinking as individuals and not victims of “group-think”, I bet some of those Pharisees were intrigued by Jesus. How could they not be?

Q. Describe how you first encountered Jesus. What was it about Him that made you want to be around Him, hang out with Him, follow Him?

Q. For those of us who what been part of the church for a long time, think back as best you can to when and how the concept/categories of “us and them” developed in your mind. (It is a learned thing, after all, so how did you/we learn it?)

There are two main thrusts to each of these parables. The first is that the lost items (a sheep and a coin) are so valuable to the person that lost them that everything else gets put on hold until it is found. The second is that the finding of the lost item is occasion for rejoicing.

Do you really grasp how valuable you are to God? Think for a moment about what is most valuable/important to you. Consider what it would be like to lose what you’ve identified. Now think about this: we are made in the image of God. So part of what that means is that our capacity to value something as important has a source...God Himself. And the feelings associated with losing something of value/importance also comes from God. We get that from Him...He’s wired us that way, patterned after Himself. The main difference, really, between us and God in all this is that what He values and finds important is always good and right. In our brokenness, we can place value/importance on lesser things.

So, really, we could say there are 3 categories of people in this passage: the tax-collectors/sinner, the religious types, and Jesus...and the goal Jesus has in mind is expanding His category. He desires for us to take on His value set, His agenda, His mission. He’s on a search and rescue operation and He wants us to join Him. He rejoices when someone repents, and He wants us to rejoice with Him.

Q. What causes you/us excitement, celebration, rejoicing? One of the ways we can evaluate if our values line up with Jesus’ is by reflecting upon what causes us rejoicing and celebration. Do you/we get excited about the same things that Jesus gets excited about? Or perhaps we can ask it the other way around: Does Jesus get excited about the same things we get excited about? Explain

- Q. As you think about your “faith”, your “Christian life”, how do you evaluate/measure it? To what degree is partnering with Jesus in His “search and rescue operation” part of how you evaluate/measure your faith/Christian life?**
- Q. How does functioning/operating from a standpoint that we are on mission with Jesus change how we view others? How we view ourselves? How we view life?**
- Q. These parables describe for us what is valuable/important to God. Do you/we value what He values? How so? How can we organize our life around what is important to God? What would/could that look like?**