



**CALVARY**  
TUSCALOOSA

**TEACHING PLAN**  
JANUARY 13, 2019



# REACHING OUT TO THE LOST

LUKE 15:4-7

JANUARY 13, 2019

TEACHING PLAN

---

## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Luke 15:4-7. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**TAKEAWAY:** God is a missionary God who is concerned with and takes the initiative to reach the lost.

---

**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:** We are called to intentionally and sacrificially reach out to the lost.

---

**GOSPEL CONNECTION:** The mission of God is about rescuing the least, last, lonely, and lost (Luke 5:31)!

---

## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.*

- 1 Have you ever lost something and spent hours, day, or even weeks trying to locate it? What happened?
- 2 Why did you spend so much time looking for the item?

If we lose something, the amount of time we spend searching for it is directly related to the value we place on that thing. The more valuable the object, the more sacrifices we are willing to make to locate it. This is similar to the parable of the treasure buried in a field (Matthew 13:44). When a man found the treasure, he sacrificed all that he had to obtain it.

In Luke 15, we read three stories about searching. Today we will consider the first of these. But, it is important to remember that Jesus told them together for a reason. For Jesus to repeat the same main idea through three separate parables back to back to back is more significant than we may realize. It's hard to overstate the emphasis that Jesus placed on the fact that God is a searching and finding missionary God.

## UNDERSTANDING

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

It makes sense that Luke would include these stories in his account of Jesus' life and ministry. Luke was a Gentile. In fact, he is the only Gentile writer in the entire canon. Being a Gentile, Luke knew what it meant to be on the outside, excluded, and lost. He was not a descendant of Abraham. He was not naturally

## ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

**Do you remember the story of Jacob and Rebekah? How long did Jacob work for her in order to marry her?**

**What do you think compelled him to work and wait so long?**

The Bible says that Jacob loved Rachel and the years that he worked for her "seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her" (Genesis 29:20). Jacob loved Rachel deeply, and the sacrifice to have her as his wife was nothing to him.

Similar to the fact that Jacob's love for Rachel compelled him to sacrifice for her, God's love for His people was the basis for His sacrifice for them. Jesus was the fulfillment of that sacrifice and also the herald of it. It is moving to think of Jesus laboring to teach His disciples about the deep love and care that God the Father had for them while He prepared to endure incredible suffering, as the ultimate act of God's deep love and care for them.

included in the covenant, though he was a God-fearer. Luke came first to fear the God of Israel and then to love and trust in Christ.

Notes:

You may have noticed as you have read Luke and Acts that Luke quoted and alluded to the Book of Isaiah often. In fact, Luke quoted or alluded to Isaiah more than he did any other Old Testament book. Why? Isaiah spoke over and over of a light for the Gentiles. Luke read and rehearsed and clung to the promises and prophecies of Isaiah. He was a Gentile who was desperate to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It is no surprise then that in his account of Jesus' life and ministry and the spread of the gospel, he focused on the gospel reaching the Gentiles.

> Have a volunteer read Luke 15:4.

*4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"*

The three parables that Jesus told in Luke 15 are illogical. The people (shepherd, woman, father) are terrible strategists. They risk unnecessarily. They waste time and energy for what seems like a lost cause or a poor investment.

- How many sheep were in the herd? Why would it not make sense to many people to leave the rest of the herd in pursuit of one lost sheep?

In this parable, there were 100 sheep in the fold. One had gotten lost. It is perfectly acceptable for the shepherd to search for it. But, there is something different happening here. Jesus made the point of saying that the shepherd leaves the other 99 to search for the one that is lost.

---

The idea here is that the shepherd's care and concern for his sheep is so overwhelming that he makes a seemingly foolish decision to endanger the 99 to rescue the one. We should not take this to mean that God is foolhardy or unwise in His actions. Rather, the point is that God cares so deeply for His sheep that He will go to great lengths for their rescue.

Notes:

- How long does the text say the shepherd searched for the sheep? Why is this significant?

You may have never noticed this little phrase before: "Until he finds it." We don't know how long it took, but it doesn't matter. That detail is irrelevant. The shepherd's search was not determined by a unit of time, but by the success of the mission.

We, as the sheep of God, can breathe out a sigh of praise and thanks as we reflect on the truth that our Shepherd is strong, and that He will not come up short in His rescue and plans for His people.

> Have a volunteer read Luke 15:5.

*5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders*

- How did the sheep get back to safety? What does this tell us about the shepherd? What does it say about the sheep?
  
- How might this act remind us of God's strength in our weakness?

---

The shepherd carried the sheep on his shoulders. It is possible that the sheep was hurt. Maybe the walk was too far or dangerous. Or maybe the shepherd was making sure that the sheep would not run away again. In any case, this reflects the mercy and kindness of the shepherd. The shepherd, who was strong, carried the sheep, who was weak. The emphasis here is the shepherd's action on behalf of the lost sheep and the compassion and care that compelled it.

Notes:

As we read this parable, and the others, the meaning is clear. The shepherd is God and we are the sheep. Ephesians 2:1 says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Like the lost sheep, we were in desperate need of an all-inclusive rescue. Our salvation wasn't a joint effort between God and ourselves, by which we met God halfway or contributed to the work of our rescue. We were lost, hopeless, and dead. We were in need of nothing less than to be thrown over our Rescuer's shoulder and carried home. Like the lost sheep, the only thing we contributed to our rescue was the wandering that made it necessary.

> Have a volunteer read Luke 15:6-7.

*6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

The parable holds another surprise. Jesus concludes the story with an earthly scene of celebration as well as a heavenly scene of rejoicing. Again, this seems illogical until we consider the value placed on the sheep by the shepherd and the value placed on God's people by God.

- 
- What does Jesus' emphasis on celebration teach us?

### Notes:

It brings great joy to God when one of His sheep is rescued. The mission of God is marked by joy. A proper analogy of our rescue is that of a Father rescuing a beloved son. This rescue is undergirded by love and intimacy; for this reason it involves joy.

- How is God able to have unadulterated joy over the rescue of sinful people? How is payment made for their rejection of Him?

The parable ends with a vision of pure, unadulterated joy. How can this be possible? The sheep had wandered off, causing a good deal of trouble. It seems like a beating would be in order instead of a party, but that's not what happened. This key element of these parables in Luke 15 is especially poignant in the third of the series (vv. 11-32). When the prodigal son returned, the joyful feast infuriated his older brother. The older brother wasn't so much angry at his little brother's actions as he was angry at the lack of ire in his father's response to the return.

The presence of unadulterated joy in these three parables alludes to one of the most important aspects of our rescue: the gospel. How can a holy God who has been deeply offended by a person joyfully celebrate his or her rescue? The key to understanding the joy is in understanding the rescue. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

The joy is void of bitterness because Jesus drank the bitterness on our behalf. The joy is void of punishment because Jesus took our punishment. The joy is void of wrath because Jesus bore God's wrath that we

deserved. We wandered off as sinners and turned to our own way, but the Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). When we were carried back on the Shepherd's shoulders, we were clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Notes:

## APPLICATION

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

- 1 How does the example of the pursuit of the shepherd inform how we are to reach out to those around us?
- 2 In what ways can we reflect the all-inclusive rescue of God in our efforts to reach out to the lost?
- 3 How do this parable and the truth of the gospel change the way we must think of pursuing those who have rejected God?

## PRAY

Pray and thank God that He relentlessly pursues His people. Thank Him for the joy of His rescue that is complete because Jesus took upon Himself the punishment for our sin.

## FOLLOW UP

*Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:*

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - Who has God laid on your heart that you need to pursue as He has pursued you?
  
  - What steps do you need to take?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize Luke 15:4.

## LUKE 15:4-7

15:3-6. Jesus' parables, at first meant to reveal the mysteries of God's kingdom to the disciples and to conceal them from the crowds, have now become tools to teach the opponents (cf. 14:15-16). This parable retains its character as a story, but it is placed in the interrogative mood. The listeners become participants, characters in the story, and must choose a course of action. The story turns the self-righteous, ritually clean scribes and Pharisees into dirty shepherds involved in an occupation that constantly makes them unclean. The rabbis regarded shepherds—along with gamblers, tax collectors, camel drivers, and sailors—as despised, evil, thieving occupations.

Notes:

As a shepherd, you care for one hundred sheep. One night one lone sheep wanders from the fold. When it comes time to count the sheep, you find one missing. What do you do? You leave the ninety-nine to fend for themselves in the relative safety of the open field and begin an immediate search-and-rescue mission for the lost sheep. Having found the sheep, what do you do? Party! Celebrate! Rejoice! Gather all your friends and neighbors and share the good news with them.

15:7. That is what heaven is like. Ninety-nine self-righteous people who keep all the rituals, festivals, and rules bring no joy to heaven. One sinner confessing his sin and repenting sets off party time in heaven. God is concerned about the lost who will admit they are lost and turn back to him. He wants people to put the sinful life behind them and follow him. Pharisees never do this. Why? They never realize they are lost! They always count themselves among the saved, even though they have never repented of their sins. Start the party in heaven today. Repent of your sins and be saved.