

Lesson Nine: The Stories of Lost Things Found

Main idea: God rejoices when lost sinners come to him, and we should too. As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we search for lost sinners and tell them about Jesus.

Teacher preparation:

- Read Scripture references, James 5:20
- Gather: Bible; dry erase markers or chart paper and markers; hand out for each child; crayons, markers, and colored pencils; scissors; small toy or stuffed animal for game
- Take time to meditate on this week's Scripture and think about your own life. Do you work to seek out the lost, or is your attitude more like that of the Pharisees? Do you remember that you too were once a lost sinner?

Scripture references:

- Luke 15:1-32
- John 3:16
- Zephaniah 3:17
- Matthew 28:19-20
- Romans 3:23

Game: Hide and Seek

If you have the space for it, play a game of hide and seek or sardines. To play sardines, one kid hides, and everyone else counts. When a searcher finds the hiding kid, they hide with them until there is only one child left looking for the hiding place. They get to hide next. If you don't have the space to play hide and seek or sardines, play hot and cold. Have a child close their eyes or step into the hallway. Meanwhile, the other kids will work together to decide on a hiding place for a stuffed animal or small toy. When the child in the hall comes in, they have to find the hidden toy. The other kids call out "hotter" if the searching child is getting closer to the toy and "colder" if the searching child is moving in the wrong direction.

Message:

Open in prayer, then say, This is our ninth and final week learning all about the parables. I am so proud of all of you for how hard you have worked these past few weeks as we learn important lessons from the stories Jesus told. We have learned what Heaven is like, what God is like, and what we should be like as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Make three columns on the board: "Heaven," "God," and "Us." As you review the lessons learned, write the main point in the appropriate column.) Heaven is full of people who love and obey God. It's better than anything we could ever imagine, and worth everything we could ever have in this life. God loves everyone. He patiently waits for people to repent of their sins and follow him, but he will punish those who choose not to follow him. He wants everyone to know the truth about his son Jesus so everyone can love and obey him. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we tell others about Jesus, forgive those who wrong us, and obey the commands of the Lord. We use the talents and abilities God has given us to bring him glory, and we show kindness and mercy to everyone.

Today we will learn more characteristics of citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and a characteristic of God. We are going to look at three stories today from Luke 15:1-32. All of these stories have the same main point. What does that tell you? (Allow a student to answer.) If Jesus told three different stories to get this point across, that tells us that this is a very important message. So follow along closely as I read from Luke 15:1-32. (Emphasize the words lost, search, found, and rejoice slightly as you read, so the children pay attention to those ideas.)

"Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. ²This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

³So Jesus told them this story: ⁴"If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. ⁶When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

⁸"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹And

when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.' ¹⁰In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents."

That's our first two stories. This last one is a little longer, but it's one you have probably heard before. Stick with me for a few more minutes.

¹¹To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. ¹²The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³"A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

²⁰"So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

²²"But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

²⁵"Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, ²⁶and he asked one of the

servants what was going on. ²⁷‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

²⁸“The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

³¹“His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³²We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

That was quite a bit of reading, and you all did a great job listening. We have just listened to three stories that Jesus told all in a row. We heard a parable about a man going out to find one lost sheep from his flock and rejoicing when he found it, we heard a parable about a woman who lost a coin and rejoiced when she found it, and last we heard a story about a father who rejoiced when his lost son was found. (As you recap the stories, feel free to draw basic pictures on the board to illustrate the stories so the kids can keep them fresh in their minds. Some illustration ideas include a sheep, a woman with a coin, and a stick man with two shorter stick men next to him.) So who wants to tell me what the main point of these three stories is? (Allow students to answer.) There are two main points in these parables. A good title for all three of them together could be “The Stories of Lost Things Found.” In each story, someone loses something precious to them. When they find it, they celebrate. This tells us something about God. God rejoices when people who are not following him repent and start to follow him. Before we follow God, we are lost sinners. When we choose to give our lives to God and love and obey him as best we can, it’s like being found. This makes God happy, as we see from these three stories. In verse seven of Luke 15 it says, “In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!” In the next story, after the woman celebrates finding her lost coin, verse ten says “In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents.”

We know that God loves us, because he tells us so in the Bible. Who remembers John 3:16? It's one of the most well-known Bible verses. Can anyone recite it from memory? (Allow students to share John 3:16.) "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." God loves us and wants us all to believe in and follow him. Let's have a sword drill to find one more verse about God's love for us. Take all fingers and bookmarks out of your Bible and hold it above your head. When I say go, look up Zephaniah 3:17. Go! (Read, or have a student read Zephaniah 3:17.) "For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs." See? God rejoices over us! That is the first lesson we learn from these stories. God rejoices when lost sinners are found. (Add this to the characteristics of God column on the board.)

Now let's discuss the next lesson we can learn from the "Lost Things Found" Parables. In the story of the lost sheep and the story of the lost coin, what did the people do when they discovered they had lost something? (Allow a student to answer.) They looked high and low for the lost thing until they found it. Here we can learn something that we can do as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. These people searched until they found what they were looking for. We, too, are supposed to search for lost sinners and help them turn to Jesus. Jesus gives us a command in Matthew 28:19-20. He says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus promises to be with us and help us when we work to make disciples of people. As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we search for the lost and tell them about Jesus. (Add this to the "characteristics of the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven" column on the board.) Now in order to help people turn to Jesus and learn to love and follow him, we have to be around people that don't know Jesus. That's how these three parables began in the first place. Luke 15:1-2 says, "Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!" The religious people were upset because they thought Jesus should not be hanging out with sinners. What they were forgetting though, is that we are all sinners. Romans 3:23 says, "For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." All of us have at one time or another has broken God's law and chosen to do what we want to do rather than obey him. We have all been like the lost sheep, the lost coin, or the son

who ran away from the Father. We are all sinners. Some of us have been found by God, meaning we love him and obey him. Some of us are still lost sinners, but we all need Jesus to save us. If Jesus did not die on the cross for our sins, we would all be lost for good. Praise God that he sent his son to die for us!

But sometimes, after we are found by God, we forget about our sinful pasts and feel like we are better than people who have not repented of their sins. Just like the older brother in our last story, the story of the Lost Son. Do you remember how the father in the story reacted when his younger son came home after living a life of sin? (Allow a student to respond.) The father came rushing out to his son in excitement. Verse twenty says he was “filled with love and compassion” for his son. He celebrated and threw a party for him. How did the lost son’s big brother react when he found out his lost brother had returned? Look at Luke 15:28 to find out. (Allow a student to answer.) It says the older brother was angry and refused to go in where everyone was celebrating his little brother being found. He was being just like the Pharisees in the beginning of Luke 15. He didn’t think that a lost sinner is something worth celebrating. But since God celebrates lost sinners being found, we should celebrate lost sinners being found too. As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we help people get to know God, and we celebrate when they give their lives to him. (Add this last detail to the “characteristics of citizens of Kingdom of Heaven” column.”)

Now who can tell me what we have to do to be found, to no longer be a lost sinner? (Allow children to answer, and take these last few minutes before the craft to discuss salvation with your class. Allow time and space for children to accept the Lord, and celebrate if anyone accepts Jesus into their lives!)

End in prayer.

Craft: Mini Book

Every week, students will make a mini book that retells the parable in very basic terms. This ninth mini book in their library reminds the kids that God rejoices when lost sinners are found, and we should too. We should also help to find the lost people in the world and lead them to Christ. To begin, demonstrate how to fold the book. Fold along the solid lines. Start by folding the long side to the long side. Crease well. Keep it folded, then fold in half, crease well, and fold in half again, creasing well. Now unfold it all the way and

fold it in half short side to short side, so the dotted line in the center is folded in half. Cut along this dotted line. Do not overcut! Now unfold the paper and fold it in half again, this time long side to long side. Now for the tricky part. Pinch both short ends of the paper, with the crease facing up. Bring your hands together, causing the cut in the middle of the paper to open up. You should have a plus sign now. The last step is to press all the pages down so the cover is on top. Mush the pages down and crease all the folds. You may need to use a marker or pencil for these creases, as they are all now stacked up on each other. Now that you have a little book, have the kids write their name on the cover. Read each page and have the children illustrate it accordingly.

God rejoices when lost sinners come to him, and we should too. As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we search for lost sinners and tell them about Jesus.

Story Time with Jesus

Lesson Nine

The Parables of Lost Things Found

Name: _____

A man who lost one sheep out of 100 left the whole flock to find the one lost sheep. When he found it, he celebrated. God celebrates when a lost sinner turns to Him.

22 "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.' 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast.' 24 For this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found!' So the party began. 25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house. 26 and he asked one of the servants what was going on. 27 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.' 28 "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, 29 but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. 30 Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf?' 31 "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 32 We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

ministry-to-children.com

sinner comes to Jesus.

A woman who only had ten silver coins lost one. She searched her whole house until she found it. After she found it, she called all her friends together to celebrate. As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we celebrate when one lost sinner comes to Jesus.

11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. 12 The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. 13 "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. 14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. 15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. 17 "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'" 20 "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

about Jesus.

There was once a son who left his father to live a life of sin. When he repented and came back, his father threw a big party. But his older brother was angry. We need to remember that we are all sinners. Some of us have been found and some of us are still lost. It is our job as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven to search for lost sinners and tell them

Luke 15:1-32

Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. 2 This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them! 3 So Jesus told them this story: 4 "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. 6 When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7 In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away! 8 "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.' 10 In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents."