

FROM WONDER TO REJECTION: THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

(The Gospel Project Volume 8 Unit 23: Customized from the Preschool, Younger, and Older Leader Guides)

BIG PICTURE QUESTION FOR THIS UNIT:

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

KEY PASSAGE FOR THIS UNIT:



Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.

1 Chronicles 29:11

TODAY'S LESSON: Jesus Taught About God's Love

Let's set the scene: It's Monday morning, you're running late for work, where you have an important meeting scheduled first thing. But before you can make it to work, you have to drop off the kids at school. And before you can drop the kids off at school, you'll need to get everyone in the car, which means you'll need the car keys. And therein lies the problem. Where are the car keys?! A panicked search ensues, sofa cushions are tossed to the ground, bags are emptied, pockets are turned inside out. You have the car, you have the kids, you have the backpacks, lunchboxes, and your wallet, but without the keys, no one is going anywhere.

Every time I read the three parables that Jesus shares in Luke 15—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son—I can't help but imagine such a scene. A valuable target that's worth the risk and resources to go and get.

From these three stories, it's fair to ask, "What is it that Jesus is teaching?" A close look at the context where Jesus shared these parables helps us understand.

Jesus has been approached by tax collectors and sinners. But there's another audience as well. The Pharisees and scribes had gathered. And while they complained about Jesus being with such terrible sinners, Jesus started to make a point.

These three parables illustrate that Jesus is concerned about the far-off sinner who has either wandered from faithfulness or has yet to taste and see the goodness of God. But He is also concerned with the outwardly righteous, inwardly sinful Christians who consider themselves deserving of the grace of God. Both are in great need of the love of God.

As we read Luke 15 it should stir our hope for those around us that are far from God and in need of salvation or restoration. But it should also cause us to see our own need for the love and grace of God.

The love of God is relentless, coming after us in our time of need. Whether He is leading us to Himself in salvation or leading us to repentance from our sin, Jesus is in pursuit. We are all always in need of His love and grace.

TERMS TO KNOW:

Agape: the special unconditional love of God the Father for Jesus (John 3:35), of God the Father for an individual believer (John 14:21), and of Christ's love for a disciple (John 13:23).

PREPARING YOUR CHILDREN FOR GOD'S WORD:

Make sure that your children have a Bible with them even if they are too young to read.
Have your kids sing along with the worship songs that are posted for this week.

THE BIBLE STORY:

JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT GOD'S LOVE

Tax collectors and sinners came to listen to Jesus teach. Jesus told them three parables to teach them about God's love. Jesus said, "If a man has 100 sheep and loses one, he leaves the 99 sheep and searches for the lost sheep until he finds it. Then he tells his friends and neighbors, 'Let's celebrate! I found my lost sheep!' In heaven, there is more joy when one sinner repents and turns back to God than for 99 people who did not wander off."

Jesus also said, "If a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one of them, she lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it. Then she tells her friends and neighbors, 'Let's celebrate! I found my lost coin!'"

Then Jesus repeated, "In heaven, there is joy when one sinner repents and turns back to God."

Jesus told a third story. "A man had two sons. The younger son said, 'Father, give me my inheritance.' The father gave his son his share, and the son went to another country. He wasted his money and lived foolishly. There was a famine, and the people in that country 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 decided to go back to his father and admit he was wrong. He would ask to work for his father like the servants.

"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! 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. The older brother said, 'I never disobeyed you! But you never threw a party for me.'

"The father said, 'Everything I have is yours. We have to celebrate. Your brother was lost and is found.'"

APPLICATION:

In today's story, Jesus used the examples of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and two sons who were lost to teach about God's love. Without Jesus, all people are lost and far from God. But no one is too far from Him to be saved or too lost to be found by Him. He loves each person and wants all people to receive forgiveness and the free gift of salvation.

What happened each time a lost item or person was found? A celebration occurred! Jesus taught that all of heaven

celebrates when a sinner repents and is saved. We repent when we turn away from sin and turn to Jesus.

Jesus told a story of a son who left home, wasted his money, and had nothing to eat but pig's food. He was very lost and had nothing. Then he realized he could beg his father to become a servant. Do you remember how the father responded when his lost son came home? Was he angry with his son? No! He rejoiced that his son was home! He threw a party and invited his friends to share in his joy.

How did the older brother respond to the father celebrating? He was angry. The older brother was just as lost as the younger son. Even though the older brother never left home, his heart showed that he did not truly love his father or his brother. He wanted all that was his father's, but didn't show love toward his father or his brother.

God searches for the lost and rejoices when they come to Him. When we realize our sin and need for salvation, God receives us happily, with open arms, just like the father in the story. When someone repents and asks Jesus to save him, God rejoices that another person has come to Him.

Did the son do anything to deserve or earn the father's love and favor? No, he did not. In fact, he had made many mistakes that dishonored the father, but the son did not have to do anything to earn his father's love.

The same is true for all people. God loves and seeks to save sinners. We do not have to clean ourselves up to come to God or do anything to earn salvation. Salvation is a free gift from God. God demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to take the punishment for our sin on the cross. Rather than try to earn God's love, we live to honor God because we love Him.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

Jesus told these parables to teach about God's love. God sent Jesus so sinners can be forgiven. As Savior, Jesus loves and seeks sinners. He paid the ultimate price—His own life—to save people from sin.

TIMELINE MOMENT:

We have learned that Jesus taught people about His kingdom and how they can live to honor Him. Last week, we read Matthew 6 and learned that how we live reveals what is in our hearts. Jesus taught the crowds that our lives are meant to bring glory to God and show love toward others. When we obey Jesus' teaching, we show others what God's kingdom is like.

As Jesus taught, many who came to listen to Him were those who were rejected by others. In our Bible story, Jesus taught about God's love for all people—even people that were not very well liked. We will learn that God's love is shown to all people through Jesus' saving grace.

FAMILY DISCUSSION STARTERS:

2-5 Year Olds:

What was your favorite part of today's Bible story?

What did you learn about God in today's Bible story?

What things were lost and then found?

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom.

Kindergarten-2nd Grade:

Why did Jesus come to earth?

Guide your kids to understand that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Remind your kids that Jesus didn't come for those who think they don't need Him, but for those who are willing to confess their sin, repent, and turn to Him to be

saved.

How are we lost in our sin?

Help your kids understand that we are all sinners because no one obeys God perfectly. Discuss how sin separates us from the Lord and because of our separation we are lost. Tell your kids that Jesus came to seek the lost and bring them back to God.

How does Jesus bring us back to God?

Prompt your kids to think about the lost coin and the lost sheep and how the woman and the shepherd went searching for them. Remind your kids that this is what Jesus has done for us. Tell your kids that Jesus came to earth to find sinners, tell them the good news of the gospel, and then give His life to save us from our sin. Help your kids understand that Jesus brings us back to God when we place our faith in Him and accept His forgiveness.

3rd-5th Grade:

How was the older brother just as lost in his sin as the younger brother?

Discuss how the older brother dishonored the father through his pride and selfishness. Tell your kids that the older brother revealed that he thought his behavior and service was enough to please his father. Remind your kids that the older brother refused to celebrate his younger brother's return and accused the father of being unloving toward him. Help your kids understand that the older brother also needed to repent and trust in his father's love.

(Option: read Luke 15:28-30.)

Can we be saved without repentance? Why not?

Lead your kids to understand that trusting in Jesus means that we recognize our sin and want to turn away from sin. Help your kids understand that self-righteousness, like the Pharisees showed, reveals that we think our behavior or our present standing is enough to please God. Remind your kids that we can only please God by faith and repentance is an act of faith.

(Option: read Luke 15:7.)

How does the father's love toward his sons help us understand the love God has for us?

Explain that the father showed love through forgiveness, mercy, and an invitation to join him at the feast. Encourage your kids to remember that God loves each of them and invites them to trust Him by faith in Jesus.

(Option: read 1 John 4:10.)

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask your kids if they have ever heard the word gospel. Clarify that the word gospel means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with your kids.

God rules. Explain to your kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell your kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with your kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because

Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell your kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.