

Luke 15:1-10 | The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

InterVarsity Bible Study Guide (60 minutes)

WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: Share about a time when you lost something really important to you.

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Let's remember our group norms as we study together today:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

In our text today, Jesus is addressing a mixed crowd of tax collectors and sinners (religious outsiders), along with Pharisees and scribes (religious insiders). This section is often overlooked because the famous "Prodigal Son" story is next, but let's take some time to listen to Jesus as we engage these first two parables that lead up to that famous parable.

You may want to reference Psalm 119:176, Isaiah 53:6, Jeremiah 50:6, and Ezekiel 34 for more understanding (that the original readers of Luke would already have had).

SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Luke 15:1-10 NIV

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 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.

⁸ “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)

Let’s discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. Compare and contrast the two parables. What is similar and different?
2. This audience includes two groups: religious outsiders, who seem to want to be close to Jesus, and religious insiders, who are “muttering” about Jesus and the people he spends time with. How do you think each group would have received the parables?
3. What do you think Jesus is saying about himself and his followers through these teachings?
4. What response is Jesus trying to provoke in his listeners through these parables?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Jesus tells two parables that draw attention away from the 99 “not-lost” sheep and the 9 “not-lost” coins and toward the one who is lost. The 99 are left alone in the wild while the shepherd seeks the one, but that’s the heart of God! To light a lamp and sweep every inch, searching carefully for the lost one. Jesus is like a courageous and tender shepherd. Jesus is like a careful and meticulous woman. He will go after the lost one. The religious insiders can’t stand that Jesus hangs out with “sinners,” but Jesus will do anything to find a sinner who is ready to turn toward him. Jesus teaches in parables so that even the religious insiders who oppose him might realize their need and join him in going after their lost brothers and sisters.

Jesus is a seeker and finder of those who are lost from him.

Let’s discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group’s discussion of the text.

- A. Describe any sense of “lostness” you are experiencing today. How is Jesus seeking and finding you?
- B. These parables challenge insiders to look out and seek those who are on the outside of the community. What action can your group take to seek others who are experiencing lostness from God? Make a plan.
- C. Have you ever experienced the joy of seeing a friend turn toward Jesus and follow him? Share a story.

CLOSE (2 minutes)

Let’s pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

Tips for leading the group discussion:

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*