

## **His Story, My Story - Session 4**

### **Jesus' Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31)**

#### **Group building question**

This time we are going to look at a few different stories about 'being lost.' Have you ever been lost? Or have you lost something which was valuable to you? Can you tell us about that?

#### **Story**

I am going to tell you a story from the Bible three times.

#### **First time**

As Jesus travelled about, tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to him teach. Many times, Jesus showed acceptance the way people did in his culture—he ate with those people. This annoyed the Pharisees and the teachers of religion. One time they complained to Jesus.

To respond, Jesus told them three stories.

The first story was about a man who owned a hundred sheep. One of his sheep got lost. The man went looking for it. He searched in the wilderness for ages. When he found the sheep, he carried it home on his shoulders. He was so happy.

The second story was about a woman who owned ten silver coins. They were very valuable to her. But she lost one coin. That upset her a lot. She lit a lamp and searched the entire house. When she finally found the coin, she called in her friends and neighbours to celebrate. They prepared food and had a great happy time.

The third story is longer.

#### **The lost son**

There was a man who had two sons. This man had money; he owned a property, he had servants. In those days, when the father died his sons inherited his property. But one day, the younger of the two sons went to his father. He said, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.'

That was mean. It was like saying, 'As far as I am concerned, you are already dead to me. I just want the money; I don't want you.'

But the father agreed, and he gave him half the estate.

A few days later the younger son packed his things and went away to a distant land. There he wasted all his money on wild living. He blew the lot.

After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine and he began to starve. He got a job with one of the locals, who sent him into the fields to feed the pigs. Jews did not keep pigs, and so in their minds this was a horrible, humiliating job. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corn cobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

Finally he came to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I have done wrong—wrong against God and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as an employee.' He got right up and went home to his father.

When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. He felt compassion for his son. With his heart pounding, he ran out to him. In Israel, well-off middle-aged didn't run in public, but the father did. He threw his arms around his son and kissed him.

The son said: 'Father, I've sinned against God and you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

## Home

But the father turned to his servants and said, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Go get the fattest calf and butcher it. Let's have a feast and celebrate because my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and has been found.'

So they had a huge party. And that way, all the people in the village knew that the father had accepted the son home, he had restored him to being his son.

O, I didn't mention when I told you about the man who lost that sheep. Jesus said when the man found his sheep, they had a party. Then Jesus said, 'You can be sure of this; there is more happiness in heaven when one lost person is found, than over 99 people who don't need to be rescued.'

## Second time

As Jesus travelled about, tax collectors and notorious sinners came to listen to him teach. And Jesus often ate meals with them. Which showed he accepted them.



This annoyed the Pharisees and the teachers of religion. One time they complained to Jesus.



In response, Jesus told them three stories.

There was a man who owned a hundred sheep. One of his sheep got lost. The man searched in the wilderness for ages. When he found the sheep, he carried it home on his shoulders. He was so happy.



The second story was about a woman who owned ten silver coins. They were very valuable to her. But she lost one coin. That upset her a lot. She lit a lamp and searched the entire house.



When she finally found the coin, she called in her friends and neighbours to celebrate. They prepared food and had a great happy time.



The third story is longer.

There was a man who had two sons. This man had money; he owned a property, he had servants. In those days, when the father died his sons inherited his property. But one day, the younger of the two sons went to his father. He said, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.'

That was mean. It was like saying, 'As far as I am concerned, you are already dead to me. I just want the money; I don't want you.'



But the father agreed, and he gave him half the estate.

A few days later the younger son packed his things and went away to a distant land. There he wasted all his money on wild living. He blew the lot.



After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine and he began to starve. He got a job with one of the locals, who sent him into the fields to feed the pigs. Jews did not keep pigs, and so in their minds this was a horrible, humiliating job. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corn cobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.



Finally he came to his senses. He said, 'My father's farmhands sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I have done wrong—wrong against God and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as an employee.' He got right up and went home to his father.



When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. He felt compassion for his son. With his heart pounding, he ran out to him. In Israel, well-off middle-aged didn't run in public, but the father did.

He threw his arms around his son and kissed him.



The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

But the father turned to his servants and said, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Go get the fattest calf and butcher it. Let's have a feast and celebrate because my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and has been found.'

So they had a huge party. And that way, all the people in the village knew that the father had accepted the son home, he had restored him to being his son.



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### Third time

OK this time you get to tell the story. Let's tell it together as a group.

### Discussion

We are going to be answering six questions. I am not the only person who will ask the questions. We will take turns to do that. The rule is that everyone answers in a sentence or two.

Here are the questions.

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What can we learn about people from the characters in this story? (sometimes I ask, what choices did the person have? What do we learn about them from the choice they made?)
4. What can we learn about God/Jesus from this story?
5. This week, what do you want to change in your life because of this story? State your answer in the form "This week I want to..."
6. Who else needs to hear this story?



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